Are Individual Attention and Modeling More Effective than Whipping?: Longitudinal Case Study of Engagement Patterns and Motivating Factors for University Students' Extensive Reading

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The paper reports findings of a two-year qualitative study into university students' learning processes and possible motivating factors which play key roles in determining their learning patterns. Multiple data such as interviews with students, students' word counts, their responses to survey questions, and TOEIC scores were used. The results showed that factors such as big gaps in teaching methodologies from high schools and challenging workloads changed their perception about reading in a foreign language after the first semester. However, teacher related factors seemed to have played major roles in determining their motivation for reading and their engagement patterns in the following semesters, in addition to other factors such as peer, external, and learner factors. It was suggested that the participants' motivation and learning behaviors have changed as different factors interacted, leading to different patterns of engagement with ER. Pedagogical implications will be provided based on the findings of the study.

Since extensive reading (ER) has been known to provide learners who study English as a foreign language (EFL) with massive amounts of comprehensible and meaningful English input, ER programs are increasingly viewed as an effective reading pedagogy for Japanese EFL learners who have limited exposure to English (e.g.Takase, 2007; Waring, 2001). Because of such recognition of ER, ER programs have been widely implemented at various institutions from elementary schools to universities as an instructional element of a curriculum or individual English class in Japan (e.g.Robb & Kanno; 2013; Waring, 2001). Numerous studies have shown that extensive reading offers a wide range of learning benefits to second language (L2) and EFL learners (e.g. Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2009). In addition to the big impact of ER on learners' language proficiency, the positive influence of ER on affect has been also reported (e.g. Kondo-Brown, 2006; Takase, 2007; Yamashita, 2013). Although many studies have attempted to unravel the impact of ER on L2 development (e.g., Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2009; Takase, 2007; Yamashita, 2013), there is a paucity of research investigating the detailed picture of individual experience, especially in a large-scale implementation of extensive reading (ER) in a university setting in Japan. Therefore, this paper will attempt to qualitatively show the patterns of university students' learning processes and possible motivating factors which played key roles in determining their learning patterns.

Background

The Effects of ER on Language Performance

Day and Bamford (1998) defined extensive reading in a second language as an approach to the teaching and learning of second language reading in which learners read large quantities of books and other materials that are well within their linguistic competence. Numerous studies have shown that extensive reading offers a wide range of learning benefits to second language (L2) learners (e.g., Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2009; Waring, 2001). In addition to the gains on reading fluency, automatized lexical access, listening proficiency, writing ability, and good reading habits, positive attitude toward L2 reading have been widely reported (e.g. Kondo-Brown, 2006; Takase, 2007; Yamashita, 2013).

The Two-year Extensive Reading Program at a Private University in Japan

The study was conducted in a large-scale extensive reading (ER) program in a private university setting in Kyoto, Japan, where all students were expected to read outside of class as part of their course requirements. The ER program at the university has been run through the web-based management system called MReader originally developed from the earlier Moodle Reader package (Robb & Kano, 2013). MReader allows teachers to track student reading activity outside of the classroom and makes assessment teacher-friendly by having students to take short, timed quizzes with randomized questions after they finish reading a book for ER.

Although the module was expanded to non-English majors, International Studies majors, and the students in the junior college affiliated to the university, the ER program has been integrated into a required class called Academic English Skills for freshmen and sophomores majoring in English, where students can engage in Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) and 20 % of their course grade is decided based on their ER performance. Since there are 44 classes for the freshmen and sophomores, more than 30 different teachers are involved with ER programs. A teacher training session at the beginning of the year and occasional teaching guidance and consultation have been given, for both technical support of MReader and pedagogical guidance of ER instruction.

Books for the ER program consist of graded readers, leveled readers, and children's books which are registered as books for which quizzes have been prepared on MReader. All the ER books were labeled with the standardized levels for MReader called the Kyoto Scale, which is different from levels given by individual publishers and from the yomiyasusa levels (YL) (Furukawa, 2014a). Students are assigned the levels they should start reading and minimum word count goals they should reach, depending on their TOEIC scores and their year. The Kyoto Scales were developed largely through the headword counts provided by publishing companies and adjustment was made with reference to YL. It is comprised of 10 levels ranging from Starter to 9.

Previous Research

Extensive Reading and Motivation

Numerous studies have reported a positive influence of extensive reading on affect (Waring, 2001), and recent studies have pointed out the lack of systematic attention to the affective dimensions of second language reading and suggest that motivation for ER changes, too (Judge, 2011; Takase, 2007). In line with recent developments in second

language motivation research that have highlighted complex and dynamic nature of L2 motivation, there are studies which have attempted to approach the development pattern of their affective aspect while engaging in ER activity longitudinally and qualitatively (de Burgh-Hirabe & Feyok, 2013; Asraf & Ahmad, 2003; Nishino, 2007). However, there is a paucity of research on the detailed picture of individual experience, especially in a large ER program integrated into the curriculum of a language program.

Influential Factors for a Successful Large Scale ER program

Loh (2017) argued that there are four key aspects for a successful reading program: Reading models, reading environment, reading integration, reading equity. Shoaib and Dorney (2005) and Heitzmann (2009) emphasized the importance of class environment as an influential ER factor in large scale ER programs. In Day and Bamford (1998), ten principles for successful extensive reading programs are listed and they point out that the teacher should be a role model for students of a reader as an active member of the classroom reading community, demonstrating what it means to be a reader and the rewards of being a reader.

Motivation for the Study and Research Questions

Campbell, et al., (2015) reported strong correlations between students' achievement in the ER program and their gains in English proficiency reflected on such achievement tests as TOEIC and top readers' positive behaviors and attitude toward ER. However, they have failed to investigate how average students or poorly motivated students actually go about the ER activity and what factors drive them to read and what factors inhibit them

from reading. Therefore, it is necessary to conduct an in-depth examination of individual students' learning patterns as well as look at how non-top readers engage in ER in a qualitative manner. This will help to provide a detailed picture of individual experience in a large ER program integrated into the curriculum of a language program. The present study was driven by the following research questions:

1. How do students go about the 2-year ER project?

2. What factors motivate or demotivate students to read for ER?

In order to answer these questions, an interview-based case study was carried out over two years.

Method

Participants Selection Procedures

Out of the 2015 cohort of freshmen, three cases were chosen for this study, all of whom showed extreme changes on particular groups of items related to learning motivation shown in factor analyses of their responses to the questionnaires administered before the program started and after a 4-month intervention through the ER program (2015 April questionnaire 1 and 2015 July questionnaire 2). The 15 items were created with a five point Likert-scale and used for both questionnaires to elicit students' responses to statements about English reading activity (see Appendix). In order to identify the underlying factors present in the students' questionnaire responses, the scores on both questionnaires underwent a factor analysis. A principal components analysis (PCA) with Varimax rotation was conducted on the 15 items to determine factors which load together. The results produced four

factors with eigenvalues greater than 1.0, the cutoff point of .30 for loading and Cronback's alpha higher than .50 as the reliability estimate. The four extracted factors were labeled Autonomous learners (corresponding question items are "I read every day"; "I talk about English books with my friends"), Fluency in reading (corresponding question items are "I forget reading in L2" and "I try to guess the meaning of unknown words"), Intrinsic motivation (corresponding question items are "ER is fun"; "ER is beneficial"; "ER is easy"), and Inefficiency in reading (corresponding question items are "I use dictionaries"; "I take memos"). Based on the change on the factor scores of the Intrinsic motivation factor, the six cases were originally chosen because their responses to the items changed significantly either negatively or positively. However, only three out of the six cases were chosen for interviews because only these three participants were able to join all interview sessions. Table 1 summarizes the background information of the three participants (each participant was assigned a pseudonym).

Interview Procedure

Semi-structured interviews were conducted in Japanese four times during their first two years after each semester: 2015 July, 2016 January, 2016 July, and 2017 April. Each interview took about 30 minutes on average. The items in the interview guideline were translated into English as following: 1) How did you carry out ER this term? 2) What kind of intervention did you have from your teacher? 3) Were there any opportunities where you can share your experience with other students? 4) What (de)motivates your ER? 5) Are there any changes or impact on your English or learning invited by ER?

Results

Analysis

Recorded audio data was transcribed into written data, segmented based on idea unit, and coded based on main themes found in the data. There are about seven codes for every independent factor; Teachers, Peers, Program, Books, External factors, Previous experience, Affective factors, English performance. Because of the limited space, mainly the most frequently mentioned factors will be discussed in this paper. The data analysis will be described within each case after the cross-case analyses. Based on the results, implications will be presented.

Cross-case Analysis

The interview data after the first semester showed overall patterns in terms of perceived changes in their L2 performance as the possible effect of ER in their reports, such as improvement in fluency, efficiency

Table 1. The Profile of Participants

Name	Gender	TOEIC score (April)	TOEIC score (July)	Intrinsic Motivation (April)	Intrinsic Motivation (July)
Taku	M	605	700	4.7	3.0
Nana	F	415	625	4.2	2.8
Rin	F	360	475	1.0	3.3

Note: Intrinsic Motivation means scores on Intrinsic Motivation Factor; April means before the first semester and July means after the first semester.

in information processing, listening skills, prediction skills and analytic skills and decrease in reliance on dictionaries. Their interview data also suggested that they experienced such a strong impact of ER after the first semester at university possibly because there was a big difference between teaching methodologies from high school and the challenging workload at university. These were identified as factors which changed their perception about reading in a foreign language. It was also shown that they have faced other challenges caused by such external factors as extracurricular activities, and factors concerning self-regulation.

Within-case Analysis

1. Taku: influenced by motivating teachers and peer pressure

Taku gave a high score on the question items which indicate "intrinsic motivation" toward reading in L2 but showed negative change on the same items after the first semester. Table 2 shows how Taku went about the ER project, showing how many words, how many books, and what level of books he read for the class requirement and his changes in TOEIC scores. In the first semester, his teacher constantly gave a lot of encouragement and individual attention to him by asking how much he read in the last week and how many words would he try to read by the next class. Although his reaction to L2 reading negatively changed,

his achievement in ER was more than the minimum goal required while he was receiving individual feedback and constant encouragement from the teacher:

> *My teacher always checks my progress every week and sets up an achievable goal for me. So, naturally I reached the goal just by trying to meet her expectation.*

He is explicitly aware of the outsized impact of teacher's intervention:

> *My teacher could have told us a lie as if the half of our grade would be based on ER or given us a bit higher goals.*

Not only the teacher factor, but peer factors were also found to be substantial. He reported that all the students had to share their weekly achievements and exchanged encouragement with each other in his class. Peer pressure that everyone else in his class was making progress and improving English drove him to read even more as the following excerpt showed:

Everybody in my class is trying to read a lot as if they were competing. They are also improving English. So I feel I should too.

Despite his encounter with the motivating teachers and peers, the teachers and teaching styles changed in the second semester, and after this change he did not receive as much attention from the teacher

Table 2. Taku's ER Performance and Reading Pattern

	1st semester	2nd semester	3rd semester	4th semester
TOEIC score	700	645	-	-
Word count (minimum goal)	147,125 (100,000)	132,317 (135,000)	0 (110,000)	52,375 (130,000)
N of books (Kyoto-scale level)	22 (3, 4, 5)	16 (4, 5, 6, 7)	1 (6)	9 (3, 5, 6, 7)

and peers. Although the teacher he had in the second semester frequently checked students' achievements, and gave warnings to the low-achieving learners and some kind of rewards (bonus words, tokens) to high achievers, no other intervention was given. As a result, he barely reached the minimum requirement. In the third and fourth semesters, furthermore, he almost gave up on ER activities since the third semester teacher did not explain the ER tasks explicitly enough as a course requirement nor give any encouragement or individual attention to him in his report. It seems that no other treatment was conducted to promote ER except announcing about the word count goal for the semester at the beginning of the course. As a result, a sharp drop was observed in ER progress.

2. Rin: Encounter with a modeling teacher and peer

Rin, who showed large gains on the items which represent intrinsic motivation (from one to three points), read just above the minimum requirement in the first semester. In the second semester, due to constant encouragement and public praise from a new teacher, she read much more than the minimum requirement (115,000 words for 90,000-word requirement) to please him and to get more recognition by that teacher. She reported how encouraging and beneficial his information was through such activities as book talks and giving other types of information resources about ER. The following excerpt shows how influential her teacher was:

> *My teacher often emphasizes the importance of ER and shared his experiences and recommendations. He knows everything. I read a lot to please him and get praised by him. I would have read more, if I was still in his class.*

In the third semester, however, the teachers changed and the new teacher did not give as much encouragement and did not provide explicit instruction about how ER is integrated into evaluation. So, her reading performance was far lower than the minimum requirement in this semester. Her stagnation may have been due to the lack of teachers' monitoring, and explicit explanation about the requirement, which may have been caused by the teacher's lack of understanding of ER. In the fourth semester with the same teacher, however, she almost reached the requirement because of the inspiration from her close friend who is an avid reader and highly motivated language learner. This peer read a massive amount independently and was trying to achieve much higher goals than the minimum requirement. The following excerpt shows how her friend inspired her:

> *I have a friend who likes reading Shakespeare. She does not care about the requirement or evaluation. She just keeps reading.*

Table 3. Rin's ER Performance and Reading Pattern

	1st semester	2nd semester	3rd semester	4th semester
TOEIC score	475	500	480	465
Word count (minimum goal)	73,490 (70,000)	114,954 (90,000)	75,507 (70,000)	119,716 (90,000)
N of books (Kyoto-scale level)	32 (2, 3)	26 (3, 4)	20 (4, 5)	22 (3, 4, 5)

Table 3 shows her learning pattern and her achievement. The changes in her TOEIC scores over the two years may reflect her ER performance because the gains in TOEIC score are consistent with the changes in her engagement pattern (i.e. when she was reading more than the requirement, her score went up, but when she was reading much lower than the minimum requirement, her score started to go down.)

3. Nana: Self-motivator and strategic survivor

Nana, who showed a sharp decrease in reactions to questionnaire items representing intrinsic motivation, constantly read very close to the minimum requirement (see Table 4). It seems that she had never had influential teachers, but she always tried to motivate herself, though relatively extrinsically. In the first semester, she was making progress from the beginning because she was not sure how strict the college course work could be. So from the second semester, she decided to take it easy for a while, which finally put her under pressure. At the last minute, she managed to reach just above the minimum requirement.

In the third and fourth semester, she managed to reach just above the minimum requirement by using the test taking strategies she had acquired in her first two semesters. So, she managed to pass the course strategically. Her case may show a typical pattern of students who tried to motivate themselves extrinsically to the degree that they can pass the course though they were not influenced by teachers or peers or intrinsically motivated by ER.

Discussion

The results showed such factors as materials, factors led by perceived gains in language performance, factors concerning self-regulation, and external factors such as extracurricular activities and increasing workload from other classes as mildly demotivating factors, as shown in previous research (i.e. Takase, 2007). Here, I would like to focus on discussing the two major demotivating factors found: teacher factors and peer factors.

Teacher Factor

As the argument above shows, it seems that the teacher factor may play a significant role in learners deciding to read or not read. There seems to be mainly three types of teachers according to students reactions to them: teachers who can boost learners' ER, teachers who can mildly motivate learners, and teachers whose approach toward ER activities lead to stagnation in learners' ER progress.

Teachers who can boost learners' ER may be those who keep emphasizing the importance of ER, those who pay attention to individuals (i.e. setting achievable/challenging individual goals or complimenting

Table 4. Nana's ER Performance and Reading Pattern

	1st semester	*2nd semester*	*3rd semester*	*4th semester*
TOEIC score	570	625	620	680
Word count (minimum goal)	67,007 (70,000)	91,396 (90,000)	110,766 (110,000)	146,061 (130,000)
N of books (Kyoto-scale level)	15 (3, 4, 5)	11 (3, 4, 5)	16 (4, 5, 6)	23 (3, 5, 6, 7)

individually), those who monitor students' progress constantly and let them know by praising or encouraging them, and those who model by sharing reading experience, enjoyment, and strategies.

In addition, the teachers who can mildly motivate learners are those who clearly explain how ER is assessed, those who often remind students of the assignment, compliment high achievers in public, give warnings to the low achieving learners, constantly check students' progress, and give some kind of rewards (bonus words, tokens). These may suggest that those who can mildly motivate learners can extrinsically motivate learners.

On the other hand, teachers whose students' progress stagnates may be those who do not explain the importance, requirements and assessment of ER explicitly. The causes for Taku and Rin's declines in progress may be due to the lack of teachers' monitoring, lack of understanding of ER, or lack of explicit explanation about the course requirement and evaluation system. These findings suggest the impact of teacher factors in a large scale of ER program. As Day and Bamford (1998) suggested as one of the ten principles for successful extensive reading programs and as Loh (2009) pointed out as possible sources of book choice, the teacher's modeling can play an important role, acting as an active member of the classroom reading community.

Peer Factors

The analysis of interview data also suggests that peer factors are considered to be the next most influential factor in the ER program in terms of driving learners to read more. This was observed in Taku's case where everyone else in his class was making progress and improving English and Rin's

case where her close friend in another class was an avid reader and high-achiever.

These findings showed the importance of having teachers and peers as reading models, which is consistent with what Loh (2017) pointed out in her model of four factors for the success of a reading program and the previous studies which pointed out that interactions between these motivational factors clustered around the teacher and the learning group (e.g. Shoaib & Dorney, 2005; Heitzmann, 2009). As Day and Bamford (1998) also pointed out these factors as favorable feelings for and experiences with the L2 classroom environment, this study also shows that classroom environment factors such as the teacher, classmates, and activities were found to forge learners' positive attitudes toward L2 reading and help them to voluntarily engage in ER.

Conclusion

The present study has qualitatively examined through case studies possible influential factors which drive learners to decide to read or not to read in a large ER program integrated into the curriculum. The interview data from three cases after the first semester found that they experienced big gaps from their previous reading experiences such as difference between intensive reading (IR) and ER and the integration of ER into the curriculum. The data after the second and third semesters showed that teacher related factors, such as their modeling and frequent individual feedback, and peers' factors, such as classmates who are avid readers or peer pressure from highly motivated classmates, seemed to have played major roles in determining their motivation for reading and their engagement patterns. It was suggested that the participants' motivation and learning

behaviors have changed as different factors interacted, leading to different patterns of engagement with ER. One of the pedagogical implications suggested by the results is providing teacher training for better understanding of the importance of modeling and more effective intervention, and developing an ER community where learners can foster a reading culture. Finally, the study has also shown the importance of triangulating methodologies with multiple measurements for program evaluation.

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Appendix

Questionnaire items about their perceived attitude toward extensive reading

1. I read in English every day.

2. I carry English books with me wherever I go.

3. I talk about English books with my friends.

4. I can imagine the scene as if I was watching movies when I read English.

5. I forget about reading materials written in a foreign language as if I was reading in my native language when I read English.

6. I guess the meaning of the unknown words without looking up in the dictionary.

7. I am confident in reading English.

8. I try to choose easy materials when I read English.

9. Reading English is fun.

10. I am highly motivated to read English.

11. Reading English is helpful.

12. I often look up in the dictionary when I read English.

13. I often take memos when I read English.

14. Reading English is easy.