

【資料】

Investigating Extensive Reading Practices at a Japanese Women's University

——Phase 1: Background Survey and Data Collection——

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日本の女子大学で多読プラクティスの調査

——フェーズ 1：バックグラウンド調査とデータ収集——

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Abstract

During semester 2 of 2015, I designed two surveys for first and second-year Reading Strategies students in Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University's Global Communication Department (GCD) in order to gauge the students' interests regarding extensive reading (ER) and to collect background information to get a better idea of their preferences and individual reading styles. My motivation for this research began with a desire to improve student satisfaction and attempt to peak their interest in reading. I would like to apply the data collected from these surveys to put together campaigns in the Bunkyo English Communication Center's (BECC) Self Access Learning Area (SALC) to make choosing graded readers more fun and easier for students who often find the task of choosing books to read difficult. Also, taking an inventory of the graded reader books and book levels we currently have in our center's SALC and tailoring them more toward the levels and interests of our students will hopefully help them find more books they enjoy reading, thus making reading more fun and engaging rather than a joyless activity they have to do because it is a class requirement and a large part of their class grade. After all, "the success of extensive reading depends largely on enticing students to read" (Day & Bamford 2002: 137)

Context

The Global Communication Department at Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University

Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University is a small, private women's university located in the suburbs of Hiroshima. The Global Communication Department is one of five departments at the university. Global Communication students are English majors and take English courses at the BECC all four years of their study at university, as opposed to the obligatory two years for non-English majors.

Reading Strategies

Reading Strategies is one of the mandatory classes for GCD students that they take over the course of four semesters (parts I, II, III, IV). In these classes students learn reading skills such as skimming, scanning, predicting, making inferences and so on, using a text book chosen by the teacher. Students also study vocabulary based on a TOEIC word list and have several online quizzes during the course of the semester.

Extensive reading and the graded reader quizzes (30%) and the corresponding book reports (20%) are significant portions of their class grade.

I will use the following definition of extensive reading offered by (Susser & Robb 1990) as:

A language teaching/learning procedure that is reading (a) of large quantities of material or long texts; (b) for global or general understanding; (c) with the intention of obtaining pleasure from the text. Further, because (d) reading is individualized, with students choosing the books they want to read, (e) the books are not discussed in class (165). (Based on Bamford, 1984a, pp. 4; Bamford, 1987; Barnett, 1989, p. 167; Brumfit, 1984, p. 84; Dawes, 1979; Dubin & Olshtain, 1977, pp. 77ff; Eskey, 1973, p. 173; Grellet, 1981, p. 4; Hedge, 1985, pp. vii, 68, 70; Krashen, 1982, pp. 164–167; Krashen & Terrell, 1983, p. 134; Norris, 1975, p. 208; Olshtain, 1976, pp. 39ff; Rivers, 1981, pp. 37, 278; Thompson, 1984, p. 21.)

Students use graded readers available in the BECC's SALC and must currently read a minimum of 30,000 words per semester to achieve an average score for this portion of their grade. Hill and Thomas (1988: 44) define a graded reader as a book "written to a grading scheme," either a simplified, shorter version of an existing work or an original work utilizing simplified language. Students use M-Reader (<http://mreader.org/>) to take their graded reader quizzes throughout the semester. Some class time is set aside for extensive reading, although most of it is expected to be done on the students' own time outside of class.

The Surveys

I created two short surveys using SurveyMonkey (www.surveymonkey.net) and implemented them in first-year Reading Strategies I and second-year Reading Strategies III classes about midway through semester 1, 2015.

Part I: Extensive Reading Background

The first survey was designed to collect data about students' extensive reading history and habits in both English and Japanese. For example, the kind of books they like to read and how often they read both English and Japanese books.

Part I Survey Results

This survey consisted of 10 questions, with question (1) asking for students' consent to use their data. Questions (2) and (3) asked students what kind of books they enjoy reading in English and Japanese. Both questions (2) and (3) included many genres that were identical except for the option of "manga" in the Japanese book genre choices.

Students could tick a box for as many genres as they liked. 64 students responded to these questions. The results can be seen in *Figure 1* and *Figure 2*:

Figure 1: Question (2) "What kind of books do you enjoy reading in English (You can check as many boxes as you like.)"

Answer Choices	Responses
Drama	56.25% 36
Romance	45.31% 29
Mystery	48.44% 31
Thriller/Horror	25.00% 16
Adventure	59.38% 38
Non-fiction/Biographies	12.50% 8
Fantasy	56.25% 36
History	7.81% 5
Science Fiction	14.06% 9
Comics	43.75% 28
Comedy	62.50% 40
Children's Books	25.00% 16
Total Respondents:	64

As indicated by the results, drama, adventure, fantasy, and comedy were all highly ranked English book genres by students.

Figure 2: Question (3) "What books do you enjoy reading in Japanese? (You can check as many boxes as you like.)"

Answer Choices	Responses
Drama	50.00% 32
Romance	45.31% 29

Mystery	62.50% 40
Thriller/Horror	20.31% 13
Adventure	35.94% 23
Non-fiction/Biographies	26.56% 17
Fantasy	51.56% 33
History	21.88% 14
Science Fiction	14.06% 9
Manga/Comics	68.75% 44
Comedy	43.75% 28
Folk Stories	12.50% 8
Total Respondents:	64

As indicated by the results, both manga/comics and mystery were ranked highly by students for genres of Japanese books.

Question (4) and (5) asked students how often they read for pleasure in both (4) English and (5) Japanese. The results of the survey can be seen in *Figure 3* and *Figure 4*:

Figure 3: Question (4) "How often do you read English books for pleasure?"

Answer Choices	Responses
I read English books for pleasure a lot when I am not busy.	14.06% 9
I sometimes read English books for pleasure.	42.19% 27
I don't read English books for pleasure very often.	15.63% 10
I only read books in English because it is a class requirement.	28.13% 18
Total	64

Figure 4: Question (5) "How often do you read Japanese books for pleasure?"

Answer Choices	Responses
I read Japanese books for pleasure a lot when I am not busy.	28.13% 18
I sometimes read Japanese books for pleasure.	54.69% 35
I don't read for pleasure very often, in Japanese or English.	10.94% 7
I never read for pleasure, in English or Japanese.	6.25% 4
Total	64

Questions (6) and (7) ask students how long they read (6) English and (7) Japanese books for in one session. The survey results can be seen in *Figure 5* and *Figure 6*:

Figure 5: Question (6) "How long do you usually read in one session when you read English books?"

Answer Choices	Responses
Less than 10 minutes	0.00% 0
10–20 minutes	10.94% 7
20–40 minutes	28.13% 18
Less than 1 hour	29.69% 19
Between 1 and 2 hours	25.00% 16
Between 2 and 3 hours	3.13% 2
More than 3 hours	3.13% 2
Other	0.00% 0
Total	64

Figure 6: Question (7) "How long do you usually read in one session when you read Japanese books?"

Answer Choices	Responses
Less than 10 minutes	1.56% 1
10–20 minutes	9.38% 6
20–40 minutes	14.06% 9
Less than 1 hour	23.44% 15
Between 1 and 2 hours	29.69% 19
Between 2 and 3 hours	10.94% 7
More than 3 hours	10.94% 7
Other	0.00% 0
Total	64

The results were somewhat higher for Japanese books read in one session as expected.

Questions (8) and (9) asked students to write the title of the last (8) English book and (9) Japanese book they read.

Question (10) asked students to write the number of books they read a year in English. Again, 64

students responded to this question. The percentages are represented in *Figure 7*:

Figure 7: Question (10) “How many books do you read a year in English (Not Manga)? Please write a number.”

Answer Choices	Responses
10 or less	39% 25
I don't know	5% 3
Between 11–29	48% 31
30 or more	8% 5
Total	64

Part II: SALC Graded Reader Survey

The second survey was designed to collect data about students' graded reader usage and their opinions about graded readers available in the BECC's SALC.

The SALC is an English-only learning environment where students can talk with BECC teachers, study, and make use of the various resources available, including CDs, DVDs, books, and graded readers. The SALC is staffed with two full-time employees as well as student staff called “SALCers”. The two BECC learning advisors also have offices here to support students when necessary.

Part II Survey Results

The first three questions of this survey began with asking students for (1) their consent to use data (2) their student identification numbers and (3) their current M-Reader level. The majority of our students' M-Reader levels range from 1 to 3, which is fairly low.

Question (4) asked students to indicate how they choose graded readers in the SALC. The results appear in *Figure 8*:

Figure 8: Question (4) “How do you usually choose Graded Reader books in the SALC?”

Answer Choices	Responses
Length/Words	58.06% 36
Genre	45.16% 28
Content/Story	74.19% 46
Difficulty	38.71% 24

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Friend's Recommendation	11.29% 7
Cover	33.87% 21
Other (please specify)	1.61% 1
Total Respondents:	64

Question (5) of *Part II* asked students if they thought there were enough graded reader books available in the SALC at their level. Out of the 62 students who responded, 29 agreed, 24 somewhat agreed, 8 somewhat disagreed, and 1 disagreed.

Another survey question of interest from *Part II* is (8) *I would be interested in student/teacher book recommendations in the SALC*. These recommendations would be from BECC teachers or SALC staff/workers. They would introduce a book they enjoy every month or so and recommend a graded reader to students. Out of the 62 respondents, 57 answered that that would be interested. Some student comments indicated that recommendations from teachers and SALC staff would help them choose graded readers, something they often find difficult. Several students also commented that it would be interesting and fun, perhaps alleviating the stress from choosing something good and/or appropriate for them to read.

The last question from *Part II* I will include here is (10) *I would be interested in participating in graded reader book campaigns in the SALC*. Book campaigns would involve SALC points and prizes for the most graded reader books read over the course of a semester for example. Students could win prizes or gift cards at the end of these types of campaigns. Out of 62 respondents, 52 indicated that they would be interested. Students need to be motivated to read, and a little external, reward-based motivation such as this might get some students reading more.

Next Steps: Phase 2

Graded Reader Inventory

During semester 2, 2015, I will take stock of the graded reader books and levels we currently have in the SALC to see if they match the skills and interests of our students based on semester 1 survey data. Perhaps the other reading teacher(s) and I can weed out some of the older books and order some new ones that are more appropriate for our students both genre and level-wise.

SALC Campaigns

As mentioned earlier, potential campaigns in the SALC would consist of students getting points for most graded readers or words read throughout a given semester using a point card system or raffle where students could win prizes and the admiration of their peers and teachers. The SALC often has similar campaigns with a great deal of student participation. Students find these events

and campaigns fun, and it is a great way to familiarize them with the resources in the SALC in a fun environment where they can practice English.

Conclusion

Extensive reading is not always an enjoyable or easy activity for students. Often it is viewed as quite tiring or monotonous. Sometimes it can be difficult for teachers to dress up reading as a fun or pleasurable activity, because sometimes reading is quite tough and it is difficult for students to make progress. Students need an abundant variety of books that are easy and fun to read. What we can do is try to provide students with ample books and genres they find interesting at a wide range of levels best suited for them. We can also teach by example and exude a genuine love of reading that will hopefully be contagious. I plan to read more graded readers myself so I have something to discuss with my students, perhaps strengthening the positive classroom reading community we already enjoy. I look forward to the challenge of improving our reading resources and instilling a more positive attitude towards reading among students that will hopefully last a lifetime.

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