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【資料】

Using Online Quizzes to Encourage and Assess Extensive Reading

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Abstract

In the first semester of 2011 a new methodology for fostering and assessing intensive reading was introduced across all reading classes in the Global Communication Department at Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University. This article details the implementation and results of using online reading quizzes to track student extensive reading across one semester. While the use of quizzes proved to be a more efficient and detailed means of tracking extensive reading, problems were identified with setting student reading levels and with students procrastinating with their required reading. In the second semester of 2011 the system will be change by having students take compulsory quizzes in class. Also, in the 2012/13 academic year student starting reading levels will be lowered to ease their adjustment to extensive reading.

Extensive Reading (ER)

Extensive reading (ER) is an approach to second language learning (L2) in which learners are encouraged to read a large amount of simplified L2 material (Grabe, 2009). For English language learning, ER materials are generally graded readers (GRs). GRs are series of books with simplified vocabulary and grammar divided into levels according to reading difficulty. In the extensive reading approach students are encouraged to find and read material of personal interest by choosing from a range of GR titles. Thus, extensive reading is intended to build a habit of L2 reading for pleasure (Day & Bamford, 2002).

The Benefits of Extensive Reading

Research has demonstrated multiple benefits of ER for L2 learning. These benefits include: increased reading comprehension, increased reading speed, incidental vocabulary learning, better motivation, and gains on English language proficiency tests. Selected studies in each of these areas are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Reading Comprehension

Several studies have shown statistically significant correlations between the amount of ER and scores on standardized reading comprehension tests. For example, Tanaka & Stapleton (2007) implemented a five month intensive reading program with Japanese high

school students. Their study included an experimental group (n=113) to which teachers read short, tailor-made passages which students were then expected to finish reading for homework. The experimental group was also encouraged to read graded readers in their free time. A control group (n=113) worked with a regular reading textbook in class without any take-home reading. Participants in both the experimental and the control group were given pre and post tests of the reading comprehension section of the Society for Testing English Proficiency (STEP) test. The extensive reading group performed statistically significantly ($p=0.01$) better than the control group. The mean score of the experimental group increased by 9.6% compared to an increase of just 2.7% for the control group. Similarly, Takase (2007) examined the effects of an extensive reading program with 219 female high school students over one academic year. In her study the reading comprehension section of the Secondary Language English Proficiency (SLEP) test was used to measure participants reading comprehension gains. (The SLEP test is aimed at high school students and is produced by ETS the same company that produces the TOEIC and TOEFL exams.) Takase found a significant correlation ($p<0.01$) for improvements between the pre and post SLEP tests and the amount of words read in extensive reading.

Reading Speed

Extensive reading has also been shown to increase reading speed. Bell (2001) compared increases in reading speed with a pre and a post test between two groups of learners in Yemen. The control group did intensive reading with a textbook, while the experimental group did extensive reading with GRs. After two semesters the ER group (n=14) had increased reading speed statistically significantly more than the intensive reading group (n=13) ($p<0.01$). The mean reading speed gain in words per minute was 14 for the intensive reading group and 59 for the extensive reading group. Al-Homoud & Schmitt (2009) also found a statistically significant difference between reading fluency gains between an intensive reading group (n=23) and an extensive reading group (n=47) of Saudi students after ten weeks ($p<0.05$). The extensive reading group increased reading speed by a mean of 33.5 words per minute, while the intensive reading group increased by a mean of 26.1 words per minute.

Vocabulary Gains

An innovative study by Horst (2005) demonstrated vocabulary gains from extensive reading. Horst looked at vocabulary gains of EFL learners (n=21) reading graded readers in Canada. Horst designed tests of word recognition for words contained in GRs which learners had read making sure that the words were neither on the 2000 most common word list nor on the academic word list: the assumption being that learners were unlikely to encounter these words in other contexts. Participants made a mean gain of ten off-list words after six weeks of extensive reading and the gains were statistically significant ($p<0.01$).

Motivation

There is some evidence that a well-implemented extensive reading program can be more interesting and motivating for learners than textbook-based reading skills lessons (intensive reading). For example Robb & Susser (1989) compared an experimental group which read extensively in class and read at least 500 pages of English text for homework to a 'skills' group which worked from a reading skills textbook. The extensive reading experimental group reported that their homework was more interesting and more useful than did the 'skills' group, and the differences were statistically significant ($p>0.5$).

Gains on English Language Proficiency Tests

Several studies have shown statistically significant correlations between the amount of ER and gains on standardized English language proficiency tests. For example Nishikawa, Yoshioka & Fukuda (2010) implemented an extensive reading program with engineering students at Toyota Kosen, a technology college in Tokyo. They found that 300,000 words was a threshold reading amount to correlate with significant gains on the TOEIC test. After reading 300,000 words their participants' TOEIC scores increased by an average of 18 points on TOEIC per 100,000 words read. After reading 660,000 words the gains reduced to an average of 9 points on TOEIC per 100,000 words. In addition, Constantino, Lee, Cho & Krashen (1997) had 43 students from 14 different countries complete survey with questions about the amount of free reading done in English before taking the TOEIC. The amount of free reading in English correlated positively and significantly with TOEIC scores ($p<0.01$).

Extensive Reading at Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University

An extensive reading program was first implemented with Global Communication Department (GCD) English classes in the 2010/11 academic year. First year GCD students were required to read six graded readers per semester and to fill out a book report for each graded reader. The book report required writing a short opinion of about one paragraph, a personal response to the book of around one paragraph, as well as noting down some vocabulary from the book and making discussion questions about the book.

However, reading class teachers noted some problems with assessing extensive reading through book reports. Firstly there was a problem with plagiarism. Several students would copy the blurb of a book, or copy a summary from the internet rather than writing the required original summary. Other students seemed to copy sentences from different parts of the book which they strung together to make their summary. Furthermore, it was very difficult for teachers to tell if students had actually read a book or not based on the book reports. In addition, a few students complained that they found writing the book reports quite difficult. This is consistent with Takase's (2004) research with Japanese, female high school students in an extensive reading program in which many students found summary writing to be "annoying" and "time consuming".

An Alternate ER assessment strategy

Given the well-documented L2 benefits of extensive reading outlined above as well as the problems that had been observed using book reports to assess ER in GCD reading classes, I was interested in finding an alternative method which might track student ER more effectively for assessment purposes as well as to encourage students to read more graded readers. I attended the MoodleMoot 2011 conference in February, 2011 at Kochi University of Technology where I was lucky to attend a presentation by Professor Thomas Robb of Kyoto Sangyo University. In this presentation I was introduced to the Professor Robb's MoodleReader module (Robb, 2011), which seemed to offer a superior alternative to book reports for assessing extensive reading.

The MoodleReader module

MoodleReader is a module for a popular Course Management System (CMS) called *Moodle*. (A useful introduction to Moodle is available from the Moodle website ("Moodle," 2011)). MoodleReader allows for individualized tracking of student ER progress by having students take a simple online quiz to show that they have finished a GR. The quizzes are automatically graded, and both students and teachers are able to see which quizzes have been passed and the total count of words read. MoodleReader quizzes test recall of factual information from a book in order to show whether or not a student has actually read the book. The quizzes are open-book with a time limit of fifteen minutes.

The MoodleReader module allows teachers to set a word count reading goal for ER. It also tracks student progress toward a reading goal, by adding a GR word count for each quiz passed to a running total. As such, MoodleReader appeared to offer an efficient way to track student ER, as well as perhaps a means to encourage students to read more through the extrinsic motivation of assessment.

Introducing MoodleReader quizzes for GCD reading classes

Book reports were replaced with MoodleReader quizzes across all GCD reading classes for extensive reading assessment in the first semester of the 2011/12 academic year. Two first year GCD reading classes contained a total of 29 students, and one second-year GCD reading class had 19 students.

In an attempt to encourage students do more extensive reading the minimum reading word count was set at 30,000 words with 50,000 words being the goal for full marks. The extensive reading proportion of students' total reading class grade was set at 40%. Students were expected to self-pace their ER with a single deadline to complete their reading and quizzes set at the end of semester.

Grades for ER Word Totals

50,000 words	40 marks
43,750 words	35 marks

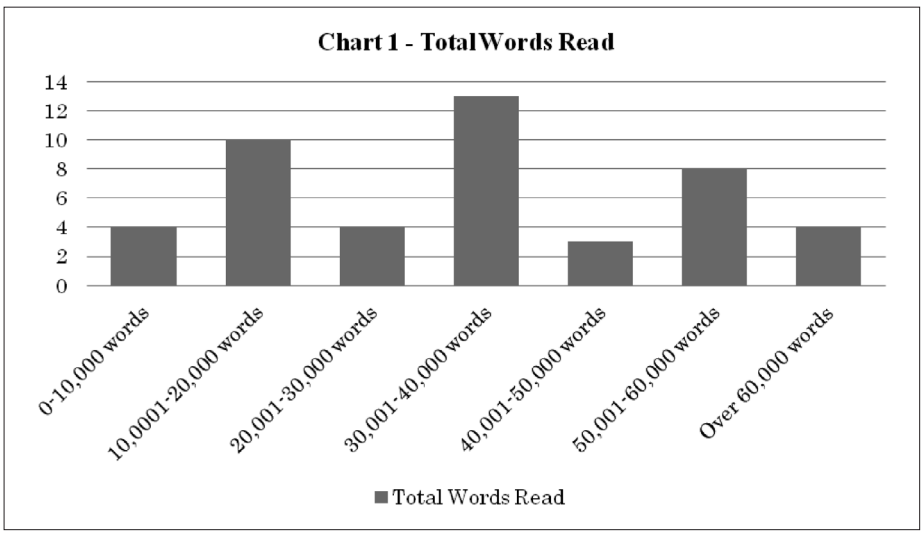
37,500 words 30 marks
30,000 words 24 marks
Students were also awarded an extra mark for each 1250 words that they read over 50,000 words.

To support an expanded ER program, GCD reading teachers ordered over 300 new graded readers from a variety of genres, levels and publishers for the Bunkyo English Communication Center (BECC) Self Access Learning Center in the first semester of 2011. A good variety of graded readers of a suitable level with subject matter of interest to students has been shown to be a key to a successful extensive reading program (Takase, 2009). All of the new graded readers had quizzes available on the MoodleReader module.

Setting Reading Levels

MoodleReader has a default setting which divides GRs into nine levels based on the difficulty of vocabulary and grammar. Students were required to take online placement tests provided by the GR publishers Macmillan and Cambridge in order to set their starting level. The resultant student starting levels were lowered by one level in an effort to ensure that the reading would be within the student's reading ability, as extensive reading is intended to be easy for students (Day & Bamford, 2002). Student starting levels in MoodleReader ranged from level 2 to level 5.

Results



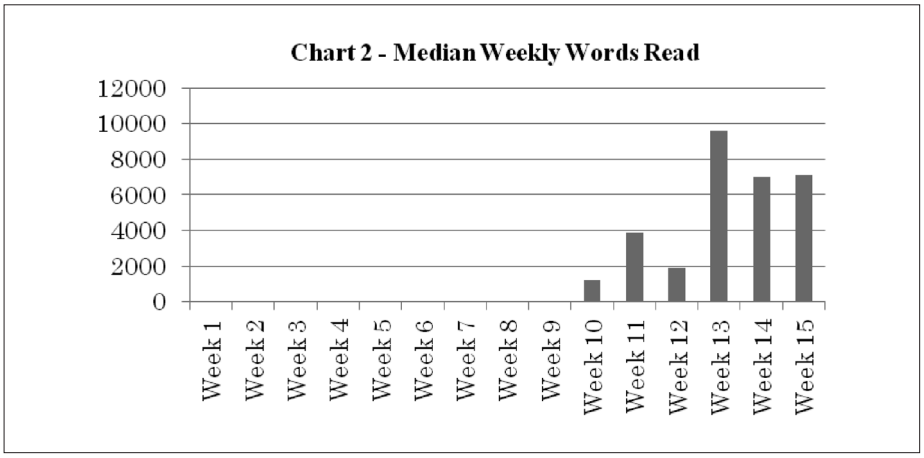
The average amount of words read was 33,589, and the average amount of books read was 5.9 books. Chart 1 shows that while many students were able to meet and exceed the minimum set goal of 30,000 words, unfortunately 18 students (37.5%) did not meet the set goal. As a result the minimum word amount for a pass was changed to 20,000 for first-year

students and 12,500 for second year students. Those students with fewer than 10,000 words were allowed to pass by doing extra homework.

The Outlier

There was one clear outlier in this data set. An exceptional second-year student read just under 116,000 words and passed quizzes for 18 books in first semester. This student's TOEIC score also went from 195 to 390 from February to July of 2011. While it is not possible to prove a direct causal relationship between this students increased extensive reading and her remarkable gains on the TOEIC test as she was taking several other English classes in addition to reading; it is reasonable to suspect that extensive reading may have been instrumental in her test gains. This student's TOEIC score had not increased across an entire academic year from March 2010 to February 2011, however, a hefty gain in her TOEIC test score coincided with her exceptional amount of extensive reading, so it seems likely that ER was a factor in her gains on the TOEIC test, especially considering previous research showing correlations between the amount of extensive reading and gains on standardized test scores (Constantino, et al., 1997; Nishizawa, et al., 2010).

Students were also told that reading done over the summer break would contribute to their grades for semester 2. This student continued to read through the summer vacation of 2011, and read a further 62,000 words over the summer break. It is unlikely that this student would have read this amount without the incentive provided by the MoodleReader module.



The median was chosen rather than the mean for Chart 2 because the outlier started reading relatively early and skewed the results somewhat. This chart shows clearly that the majority of students left their extensive reading until the end of semester.

Discussion

The initial results of implementing MoodleReader quizzes to assess extensive reading with GCD classes at Hiroshima Bunkyo Women's University were mixed. This discussion section first outlines the positive results of implementing online quizzes, followed by a discussion of problems with the system as implemented. Finally, changes planned for the use of MoodleReader quizzes in semester 2 of the 2011/12 academic year, and semester 1 of the 2012/2013 academic year are detailed.

On the positive side it can be seen that MoodleReader quizzes allow motivated and autonomous students to do extra reading and to be rewarded for their effort with extra grades. The outlier student and three other students who read over 60,000 words are evidence of this. GCD reading teachers also found that MoodleReader was an efficient way to track student extensive reading. Quiz grading and word count tracking is automated which frees up teacher time for other grading and class preparation.

However, some problems with the system as implemented are apparent. The clearest problem is student procrastination. GCD students are very busy with homework for other English classes as well as part-time jobs and club activities. As such, students seem to prioritize homework that is due immediately rather than planning ahead to pace their ER evenly across the semester. The majority of students left their ER until the end of semester. This is a common problem with Japanese university students (Robb, 2002). ER procrastination is not a desirable outcome, as the goal of extensive reading is to read consistently over a long period of time. Reading consistently results in regular revision of vocabulary, which facilitates acquisition better than long gaps between word encounters (Waring & Takaki, 2003).

A second problem identified was that many students found the graded readers at their assigned level too difficult. Japanese researchers have found that the levels assigned by western graded reader placement tests start Japanese students at a level which is too difficult (Nishikawa, Yoshioka & Itoh, 2006). Students were told that they could ask their teacher to lower their reading level if they were struggling, and several students approached their teachers at different times through the semester to have their reading level lowered.

To rectify the problems identified with the first use of MoodleReader quizzes two major changes are planned. Firstly, in the second semester of the 2011/12 academic year MoodleReader quizzes will be given in class once every two weeks, rather than having students take all their quizzes at their own pace outside of class. This change should encourage students to read more consistently. In addition, having students take quizzes in class will minimize the chance of students cheating by having a classmate take a quiz for them. GDD reading teachers in first semester were a little suspicious that some students

were taking quizzes for each other due several students reading the same titles. The minimum reading required to pass will change to seven GRs or 30,000 words. Of course, students will still be encouraged to take more quizzes outside of class for bonus marks to improve their final grade.

Secondly, in the first semester of the 2012/13 academic year, incoming first-year students will be started at MoodleReader levels one, two or three. It is hoped that this lower level assignment should put the reading materials well within students' ability level and thus will ease students into the graded reading process. Students will read around six books at this level to build their confidence in reading, before moving up to more challenging levels. This approach has been recommended to train students out of a habit of direct translation acquired by learning through the grammar/translation method for six years in high school (Takase, 2009).

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