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著者	JOHNSON Yoko
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Attitudes towards EFL Learning and Extensive Reading in Japanese Engineering Students

Yoko JOHNSON

日本人工学部生の外国語としての英語学習と 英語多読に対する態度

ジョンソン陽子

Abstract : The aim of this paper is to describe Japanese engineering students' attitudes towards EFL learning. Data for this study was derived from two different sources, a questionnaire with open-ended items, and reading journals. The questionnaire asked students across proficiency levels about their preferences and attitudes in English learning, while the reading journals traced intermediate learners' weekly reactions to out-of-class extensive reading assignments. It was found that: 1) the ratio of students who like English and their reasons differ according to their proficiency levels, 2) students who are either in the advanced classes or those who like English in the beginner and intermediate classes wish to develop oral communication skills (i.e., speaking and listening), whereas those who dislike English in the lower classes have a greater desire to improve their receptive skills (i.e., reading and listening) and vocabulary, and 3) even though the majority of students said they didn't like English at the beginning of the semester, most of them responded positively towards extensive reading after twelve weeks of out-of-class extensive reading assignments.

Keywords : attitudes, EFL learning, extensive reading, reading strategies

1. Introduction

A number of scholars have identified attitudes toward the target language as an important component of language learning motivation, and as such exerting a strong influence on learning behavior (Gardner, 1985; Dornyei, 1996, 2001). Dornyei states that learners with more favorable attitudes toward the second language and its speakers are likely to be more successful in the language learning than otherwise (1996). Therefore, it is crucial for language instructors to acknowledge students' preferences and attitudes towards the target language in order to better understand and provide for students' needs in the language learning. In this study two methods of data collected have

been employed to ascertain preliminary information on Japanese engineering students' attitudes towards learning English. The first employs a questionnaire to gather general information on students' attitudes towards English. This is meant to provide a broad overview of attitudinal characteristics of this segment of learners. The second method, reading journals, was used to track ongoing attitudes toward specific skills and tasks as students engaged in EFL learning over the course of a semester. The rationale for examining attitudes towards extensive reading arose from the results of questionnaire (which was administered and analyzed prior). The results of the questionnaire indicated that "vocabulary learning" was the most endorsed reason why students disliked English, yet this was the very skill they said they would most like to improve followed by "reading skill". A substantial amount of research has indicated that vocabulary acquisition is best accomplished through reading, and graded readers have been particularly recommended in this regard due to their level-appropriated vocabulary load, as well as their systematic recycling of new words (Schmitt, 2010, p.32). While the disparate nature of these two data collection approaches might better lend themselves to two distinct studies, these preliminary results are offered as starting point from which more task- and subject-specific inquiry into EFL learner attitudes can be conducted.

2. Attitudinal Questionnaire

2.1 Participants

A total of 168 second-year undergraduate students completed the attitudinal questionnaire. They were all engineering majors with sub specialties in civil engineering/architecture, mechanical/aerospace/materials engineering, applied sciences, and information/electronic engineering. The students were enrolled in either beginner (n=52), intermediate (n=60), or advanced (n=56) classes according to the results of placement test taken at the end of the previous semester.

2.2 Data collection and analysis

An anonymous open-ended questionnaire was developed and administered. It was filled out by the participants in the first class session of the spring semester in 2011 and it took approximately ten minutes. The questionnaire items are as follows.

- 1) Do you like English? Why or why not?
- 2) Do you consider English necessary to you or your future?
- 3) What English skills (i.e., speaking, listening, writing, reading, grammar, vocabulary, etc.) would you like to improve?
- 4) Can you name any English learning strategies which you have acknowledged as useful?

2.3 Findings

For the first question "Do you like English?", only 17.3% of the students in the beginner classes responded "yes", but the number doubled to 35.0% in the intermediate classes. In the

advanced classes, 41.1% of the students responded that they liked English. On the other hand, the percentage of students who responded “no” decreased from 78.7% in the beginner classes to 56.7% in the intermediate classes. The number decreased down to 42.9% in the advanced classes. Thus there seems to be linear relationships between students’ English proficiencies and their general preferences to the language (Fig.1).

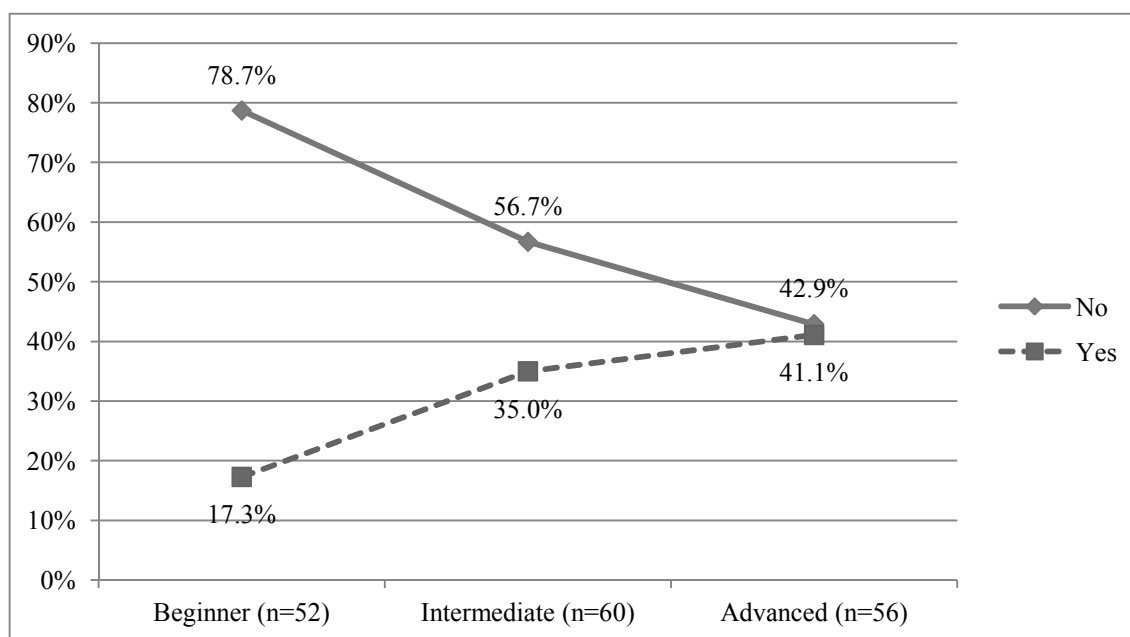


Fig.1 “Do you like English?”

Regarding reasons why the students liked English, the most endorsed answers were “useful knowledge/skill to have” (44.4%) for the beginner classes, “fun/enjoyable” (19.0%) in the intermediate classes, and “desire to interact with English-speaking people” (34.8%) in the advanced classes. These responses suggest the presence of instrumental, intrinsic, and integrative motivational orientations in the sample. “Cool” was the second most listed reason for liking English in both the beginner and intermediate classes, whereas “positive confidence” second most frequent for the advanced classes.

As to the question asking why they disliked English, “vocabulary learning” was the most common response in the beginner and intermediate classes (41.5% and 35.3% respectively). In the advanced classes, 20.8% of the students who disliked English said vocabulary learning was the reason they didn’t like English. Other common reasons for disliking English included “perceived difficulty” (22.0% in the beginner, 23.5% in the intermediate, and 50.0% in the advanced classes) and “grammar learning” (22.0% in the beginner, 14.7% in the intermediate, and 12.5% in the advanced classes) (Table 1).

Table 1. Top 3 reasons why students like and dislike English.

Top 3 reasons why like English		Top 3 reasons why dislike English	
Beginner class (n=52)			
1. Useful knowledge/skill	(44.4%)	1. Vocabulary	(41.5%)
2. Cool	(20.0%)	2. Perceived difficulty	(22.0%)
Interested in language	(20.0%)	Grammar	(22.0%)
Intermediate class (n=60)			
1. Fun	(19.0%)	1. Vocabulary	(35.3%)
2. Cool	(9.5%)	2. Perceived difficulty	(23.5%)
Interested in culture	(9.5%)	3. Grammar	(14.7%)
Wish to live overseas	(9.5%)		
Advanced class (n=56)			
1. Interested in people	(34.8%)	1. Perceived difficulty	(50.0%)
2. Positive confidence	(13.0%)	2. Vocabulary	(20.8%)
3. Interested in culture	(8.7%)	3. Grammar	(12.5%)
Interested in language	(8.7%)		
Useful knowledge/skill	(8.7%)		

The responses were quite uniform for the second question “Do you think English is necessary?” Most students in all three proficiency level groups, whether they said they liked English or not, recognized the necessity of having English skills (Table2).

Table2 “Do you think English is necessary?”

Beginner class (n=52)

Do you like English?		Do you think English is necessary?	
Yes	9 (17.3%)	Yes	8 (88.9%)
		No	1 (11.1%)
		Neither	0 (0.0%)
No	41 (78.7%)	Yes	36 (87.8%)
		No	3 (7.8%)
		Neither	2 (4.9%)
Neither	2 (3.8%)	Yes	2 (100.0%)
		No	0 (0.0%)
		Neither	0 (0.0%)

Intermediate class ($n=60$)

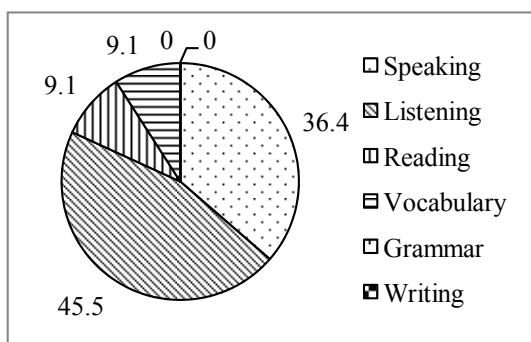
Do you like English?		Do you think English is necessary?	
Yes	21 (35.0%)	Yes	21 (100.0%)
		No	0 (0.0%)
		Neither	0 (0.0%)
No	34 (56.7%)	Yes	31 (91.2%)
		No	3 (8.8%)
		Neither	0 (0.0%)
Neither	5 (8.3%)	Yes	5 (100.0%)
		No	0 (0.0%)
		Neither	0 (0.0%)

Advanced class ($n=56$)

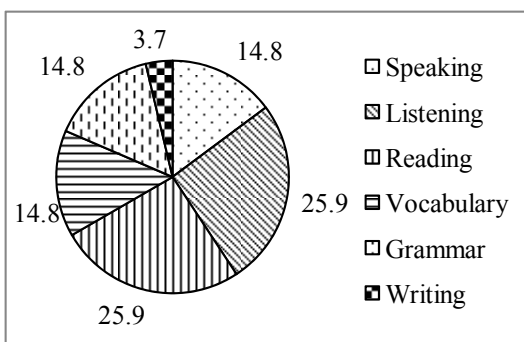
Do you like English?		Do you think English is necessary?	
Yes	23 (41.1%)	Yes	23 (100.0%)
		No	0 (0.0%)
		Neither	0 (0.0%)
No	24 (42.9%)	Yes	21 (87.5%)
		No	2 (8.3%)
		Neither	1 (4.2%)
Neither	9 (16.1%)	Yes	9 (100.0%)
		No	0 (0.0%)
		Neither	0 (0.0%)

The most common responses for the third question “What English skills would you like to improve?” were “speaking and listening” for the students in the advanced classes plus those who like English in the beginner and intermediate classes. On the other hand, the most endorsed response by the groups who don’t like English in the beginner and intermediate classes were “listening and reading” and “vocabulary and reading” respectively. Therefore students who are either at advanced levels or those who are fond of English, even though their proficiency may be lower, seem to have a desire to improve their English skills for oral communication, whereas those who don’t like English in the beginner and intermediate classes wish to develop their receptive skills more (Fig.2).

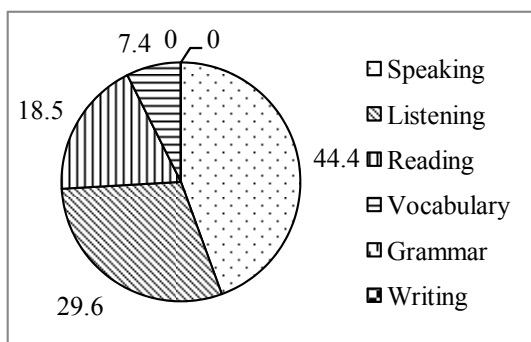
Beginner class - like English



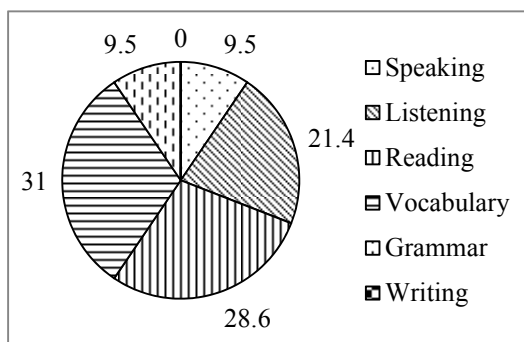
Beginner class - dislike English



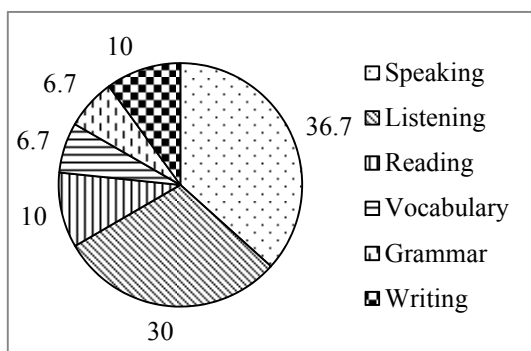
Intermediate class - like English



Intermediate class - dislike English



Advanced class - like English



Advanced class - dislike English

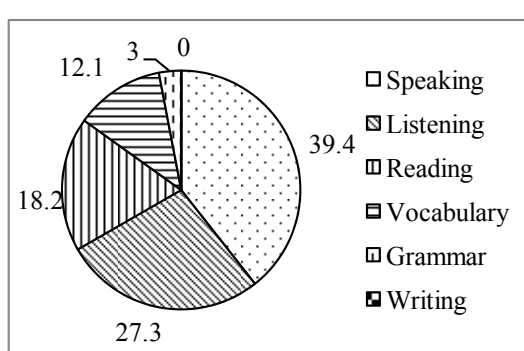


Fig.2 “What English skills would you like to improve?” (%)

When asked to list English learning strategies they thought useful, only 13.5% of the students in the beginner classes and 28.3% in the intermediate classes were able to come up with any answer. For the advanced classes, the number increased to 44.6% and their strategy lists included “watching English movies/dramas” and “shadowing”. The most frequently listed learning strategies

from the intermediate and beginner classes were “listening to English songs” and “reading English newspaper/comics”, and “slash reading” and “rote memorization” respectively. Research shows that the more learning strategies are employed, the better the learning outcomes achieved (Anderson, 1991; Dreyer & Oxford, 1996; Goh & Foong, 1997; Oxford & Burry-Stock, 1995; Park, 1997). These findings reflect results of the present study. Thus English learning strategy instruction may be beneficial, particularly for learners in lower level classes.

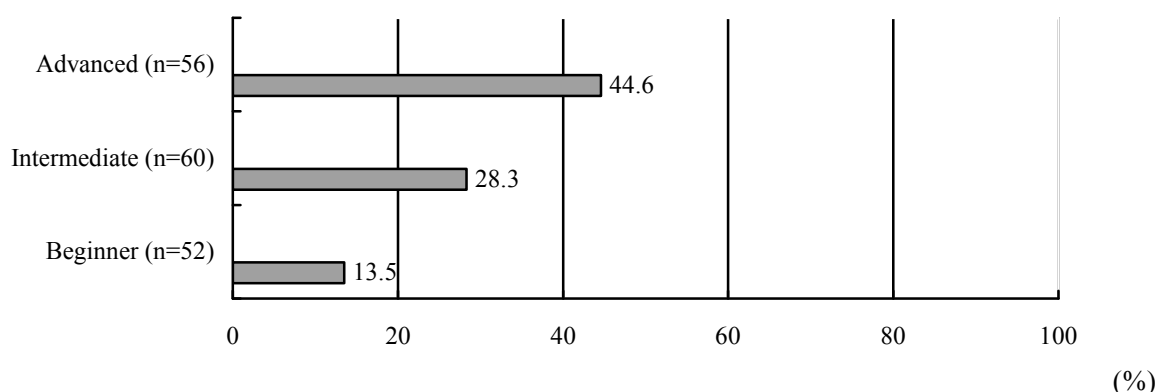


Fig.3 Responses (%) to the question “Can you name any English learning strategies you have acknowledged as useful?”

2.4 Discussion

Linear relationships were found between learners’ English proficiencies and their preferences towards the language. The higher the student’s proficiency level, the more they seem to enjoy English, and vice versa. Only 17.3% of the students in the beginner classes like English, which is quite disappointing, yet almost all of the students, even who dislike English recognize the importance of acquiring the language for their future. Therefore, there is still some hope, particularly in terms of appealing to learners’ instrumental motivational orientation (Dornyei, 1990).

Also, some distinct patterns were observed in learners’ EFL learning needs according to their preferences across proficiency levels. For example, learners across all proficiency levels who like English demonstrated a desire to improve their oral communication skills (i.e., speaking and listening) whereas those who dislike the language in the beginner and intermediate classes would like to improve their vocabulary and receptive skills such as reading and listening. These preferences should be kept in mind in planning and designing class content so that it may better meet the learners’ specific needs at different proficiency levels.

3 Attitudes Toward Extensive Reading: Reading Journal and Questionnaire

3.1 Participants

A total of 58 participants from the intermediate classes contributed reading journals for this study. As mentioned, 35.0% of the students in this group responded “yes” to the question “Do you like English?”, and 56.7% of them said “no”. The most common reason why they didn’t like English was “vocabulary learning”, which is also the skill they wished to improve most at the same time. These characteristics suggested that this group of learners might benefit from extensive reading practice.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

Students were required to read a title from several graded reader series and write a weekly reading journal (brief book report) as independent (out-of-class) homework. Several rules were laid out, which included:

- 1) Students check out a book of their own choice from the university library.
- 2) They start a book which contains approximately no more than 5% of unknown vocabulary (less than one unknown word for every 20 running words) for incidental vocabulary learning and reading skills development (Nation, 2001, p.150).
- 3) The amount of reading was entirely up to the students.
- 4) Students were free to exchange books if they found the book uninteresting or too difficult. Thus they could keep reading through a same book over a stretch of a few weeks, or they could try different ones each week (to avoid demotivation).
- 5) Students were required to submit a reading journal every week. The content included the book title, publisher’s name, number of pages read, a brief summary, comments about the book, a list of unknown vocabulary they encountered, and the student’s guesses of the unknown words. Students were advised to just jot down unknown words they encounter and their guesses of the meaning of the words in the reading journal while reading, and check the words with their dictionaries only after they had finished reading so that interference during the reading was minimized.

The author collected the journals every week (for 12 weeks) and provided feedback to each student. The students were also asked to write some overall comments about their feelings towards extensive reading in a questionnaire at the end of the semester. This questionnaire was administered anonymously, with students not being required to identify themselves on the instrument.

3.3 Findings and discussion: Students’ comments from weekly reading journals

3.3.1 Amount of reading

On average, students read 65.2 pages (SD=44.9) in twelve weeks. It ranged from minimum of 15 pages to maximum of 232 pages. Some students continued reading books they found interesting,

taking as much time as needed, others switched books more often before finishing previous ones (one student even tried a different title each week). A few students simply found pleasure in extensive reading and read books one after another.

3.3.2 Guessing unknown words

Over the twelve weeks of extensive reading assignment, a total of 760 unknown words were listed in the students' book reports. Of these, 49.6% (377 words) were inferred correctly.

According to Schmitt, lexical inferencing is one of the most frequent strategies employed by learners when encountering unknown vocabulary while reading despite its relatively low success rate (2010, p.32). Nation suggests that the low success rate of guessing from context actually is a benefit rather than a cause of concern. He argues that learners should remain flexible and not jump to conclusions in inferring the meanings of unknown words since the source of information about a word which a single context provides is usually inadequate. He adds that small and gradual increments of word learning from context allow learners to make later revisions if necessary before finalizing the meanings of words, and thus avoid maintaining an initial, strong but incorrect interpretation (2001, p.238).

3.3.3 Students' comments in Reading journal

Since students were told to feel free to write anything in the comment section on the weekly book report forms, a variety of information on students' thoughts, feelings, and opinions were obtained.

3.3.3.1 Book choice

One thing in common among many of the students was that they tend to avoid books that contain words such as "kill" and "die". Those students said that they felt uncomfortable reading stories that describe shootings, tortures, or murders (student A, comments #1&2). Some expect stories to have happy-endings, and even expressed dissatisfaction or disappointment when the stories turned out otherwise (student B, comment #3; student C, comment #4). A few actually returned the books soon after they had learned that the stories were going to be dark (student D, comment #5; student E, comment #6; student F, comment #7).

Some students exclusively picked books which they had some sorts of background knowledge about. For example, student G chose the title *Pirates of the Caribbean* which he had already seen as a movie with Japanese subtitles, and said he was interested to see how it was written in English for comparison (comment #8). Another participant, student H, checked out *Jaws* and he said having read the book made him want to watch the movie again more closely to check his comprehension (comment #9). He then read two more movie titles in a row (*Mr. Bean* and *Pirates of Caribbean*). Titles written about countries and cities seemed to be a favorite choice for those who

took world history classes in high school. Student I commented that it was fun to find the names of places he had learned in high school history class in graded readers (comment #10). Another participant, student J, took out *Scotland* and said his background knowledge from high school history class helped him comprehend the content of the book, and the book also helped him deepen his knowledge about the country (comment #11). The book he read next was *New York*.

Attractive pictures on the front cover could be an important factor in attracting learners who are not fond of English to particular readers as indicated in student K's journal. The eye-catching cover provided incentive for her to read several titles within the same series (comments #12&13).

Students who like mysteries enjoyed titles written by their favorite authors or titles about them. Student L wrote in his journal that he immediately picked a book which is about his favorite writer, Agatha Christie, when he saw it on a bookshelf in the library (comment #14). Student R liked *Sherlock Holmes* and wrote not only the summary of the story up to where he had read, but also made his own predictions about what would happen next in the story.

3.3.3.2 Benefits of ER

Many students mentioned benefits of extensive reading in their reading journals. The five most frequently cited benefits included enjoyment, reading skill improvement, reading strategy practice, opportunity to encounter different writing styles, and metacognition. Each of these is described briefly below.

Finding pleasure in reading English books was one of the benefits of ER students expressed. For example, student M found himself unexpectedly enjoying his first graded reader although he never expected so when he had started (comments #15-17). Student N wrote that once he had been drawn to the story, he couldn't put down the book (comment #18). Student O said meeting a good book made him want to improve his English reading ability (comment #19).

Reading skill improvement was another merit of ER noted by students. For example, some students mentioned comprehension improvement, (student P, comment #20; student O, comment #21; student L, comment #22), others an increase in reading speed (student Q, comment #23; student O, comment #24), still others vocabulary and guessing ability development (student I, comment #25; student L, comment #14; student O, comment #26).

Extensive reading was good for reading strategy practice. Student B said he tried to guess unknown words through context even though it would have been easier for him just to look them up in a dictionary (comment #27). Student O mentioned that having kept reading easy books helped him abandon his word by word translating habit into Japanese (comment #26). Student S wrote that he had realized he could read passages with some unknown words using clues (comment #28).

Some students mentioned that extensive reading was also a good way to meet books written in different styles, particularly conversation script, which was something new to them (student T, comment #29; student P, comment #30; student L, comment #31). They said it was useful to learn

oral expressions through reading (The participants in this study were in the first semester in their sophomore year, which means they hadn't started oral communication classes yet in the university at that time).

As students had read books of their own choices for some time, some of them began to realize what kinds of reading (levels, length, genre, etc.) were good for them. For example, student U said he chose a book one level lower than the previous one, which he thought was a little too hard for him, and enjoyed his new choice much more (comments #32-34). Student T said that he found it was best for him to read lots of short stories rather than a few longer stories (comment #35). Student O said he discovered that he was not good at comprehending stories which have many different characters and thus should work on this kind of reading to improve his reading skill in this area (comment #36).

3.4 Students' comments from questionnaire

An anonymous open-end questionnaire was administered at the end of the semester. It asked participants for their overall impressions of the extensive reading assignments and also inquired about students' general feelings and attitudes towards English learning. Three students out of 58 perceived extensive reading negatively, writing "Reading books in English was a hassle", "I felt tired after reading English even for a short time", and "I often got lazy in doing my reading homework". Some offered suggestions such as "we should have set our own goals like reaching a certain level by a certain day or so" and "It might have been better if we had recommended books we thought interesting to each other". The majority (78.0%) of the students viewed extensive reading as beneficial, some cognitively and some affectively. Cognitive benefits students listed include vocabulary growth (comment #43), fluency development (comment #44), and comprehension improvement (comment #50). A few of those who found extensive reading effective in learning English stated they would continue to read even after the semester was over (comments #49,53,57,61).

Many students mentioned affective benefits of extensive reading, and the most noticeable thing here is that they attribute the enjoyment and motivation for reading to "choice". Most students noted that the reading assignments were fun because they got to choose what and how to read. Some wrote that they discovered that reading English could be interesting if they chose the "right book". That is, a book that matches their interests and levels (comments #42,45,46,58). A few students expressed gratitude saying that they were pleased to realize that they could actually comprehend English books that were suitable for their levels. Others mentioned "feelings of freedom from pressure or enforcement" with their own choices of reading amount and pace, and they stated that they were actually motivated to read more because of that (comments #54,59,60). These comments suggest that the students had experienced intensive (as opposed to extensive) reading exclusively in the past, where reading teacher-selected texts at inappropriate levels caused them have negative

self-efficacy or anxiety towards English reading. Extensive reading assignments provided these non-English majors the opportunity to be exposed to the pleasure of reading. As one student wrote “I was worried when the class started because I never experienced reading outside the class, but it turned out to be fun” (comment #64).

Overall, extensive reading was perceived positively by the participants. It provided the students a good opportunity to read English outside the class (comment #41), and in doing so promoted autonomous learning. Since students were free to choose books of their interests at their own comprehension levels, their self-confidence in reading in English increased, which in turn promoted their motivation to read.

4 Conclusion

Understanding students’ attitudes and their contributing factors is particularly important to teachers as it enables them to better understand and meet learners’ specific needs. The participants in this preliminary study exhibited a range of attitudes towards learning English, with attitudes, and their contributing factors, varying across proficiency levels. Students’ fondness for English correlated positively with their proficiency levels, with lower level students voicing the strongest dislike for English. Graded readers were shown to be a possible means for overcoming a factor, vocabulary learning, strongly contributing to negative attitudes towards learning English. Students demonstrated a preference for the freedom of choice and varied content provided by independent graded reader assignments. While the preliminary and limited nature of this study prevents widespread generalization of its findings, it does provide some direction for teachers trying to overcome negative attitudes in non-English major EFL learners.

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執筆者紹介

氏名：ジョンソン陽子

所属：室蘭工業大学非常勤講師

Email : johnson.yoko@yahoo.com

Appendix 1

Student comments from weekly reading journals.

- (1) The previous book I read had a dark ending (killing), which I didn't like, so I picked a title that sounded more cheerful and fun this time. However, children were running away from soldiers from the beginning of the story. I'm starting to feel anxious... (Student A, week8, *The children of the new forest*)
- (2) I was worried if someone was going to be killed while I was reading the book. I will change the book if the situation gets worse. (Student A, week9, *The children of the new forest*)
- (3) All three short stories in this book had sad endings. I want to choose a story with a happy ending next time. (Student B, week6, *Too old to rock and roll and other stories*)
- (4) This story was very clear and readable, but I didn't feel satisfied after reading because it didn't have a happy ending as I expected. (Student C, week12, *Kim's choice*)
- (5) I'd like to change the book because words such as 'die' and 'kill' are often used in this book which makes me feel uneasy. (Student D, week3, *The witches of Pendle*)
- (6) There are dark sentences from the very beginning... I think I'm going to return this book and get a different one. (Student E, week4, *The witches of Pendle*)
- (7) I'm going to return this book because I feel a sad atmosphere from this book. (Student F, week8, *Remember Miranda*)
- (8) I already knew the content because I had seen the movie, but I wanted to see how

the story was written in English. (Student G, week4, *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead man's chest*)

- (9) Now that I've read the book, I'd like to watch the movie again to check my comprehension. (Student H, week6, *Jaws*)
- (10) It was fun to find the names of places that I learned in world history class in high school. (Student I, week1, *London*)
- (11) I took a world history class in high school, so I understood most of the content. The book also deepened my knowledge about the country. (Student J, week2, *Scotland*)
- (12) I chose this book because the picture of the cover was cute. I thought it might help me want to read even though I don't like English. (Student K, week1, *The wrong trousers*)
- (13) I picked the same series as the last one. I'm looking forward to reading through it. (Student K, week7, *A close shave*)
- (14) Since I like Agatha Christie's novels, I instantly decided to read this book when I saw it in the library. From this book, I found how she had spent her life. I also got some information about one of her books I hadn't known, but which I would now like to read. Moreover, I learned the meaning of some words I encountered in the past which I didn't understand at that time. So, this book was a very informative one for me. (Student L, week6, *Agatha Christie, woman of mystery*)
- (15) To be honest, I didn't expect this book to be interesting when I started, but I'm getting excited. I'm going to read through it. (Student M, week2, *Just like a movie*)
- (16) I've read up to chapter 4 now, and I'm beginning to think that reading an English book can be fun if it is comprehensible. (Student M, week6, *Just like a movie*)
- (17) I've finished this book at last. It was quite interesting. I liked the way the last line of the story was the title of the book! (Student M, week8, *Just like a movie*)
- (18) It was a very strange story and it made me want to find out what was going to happen, so I ended up reading through to the end even though I hadn't planned to. There were lots of pictures used in this book, which helped me imagine the story. (Student N, week2, *The lost ship*)
- (19) I didn't have much time this week, but I managed to concentrate on the reading in a short period of time since the story was fun. I found meeting unknown words while reading could be distracting especially when I was trying to concentrate. I'd like to improve my reading skill so that I can read books I like without stopping. (Student O, week 3, *Twenty thousand leagues under the sea*)
- (20) I really feel I can read better now than before I started this class. (Student P, week9, *Five plays for today*)
- (21) I was happy to be able to guess who the culprit was as I was reading the book. Now I can understand books of this level like my L1. (Student O, week4, *The missing coins*)

- (22) I've been reading mostly mysteries so far. I'm realizing that I can guess what is going on behind the scene or what is going to happen next just like I do when reading in Japanese. (Student L, week5, *Dead Man's Island*)
- (23) I feel like my reading speed is increasing every time I read. (Student Q, week4, *Jurassic Park 3*)
- (24) I was surprised to finish the book in under ten minutes. I didn't particularly try to read fast, but I could read really smoothly. Again, I thought my reading ability could be improved if I continue to read. I should keep reading English even after the class is over. (Student O, week 12, *The wrong man*)
- (25) No unknown words! It may be time for me to advance to the next level! (Student I, week9, *Sherlock Holmes and the sport of kings*)
- (26) Since I have chosen simple books, I'm beginning to understand English passages without translating into Japanese, and I can guess unknown vocabulary somehow even though my guesses aren't always right. (Student O, week6, *Amazon rally*)
- (27) I like the content, but I sometimes got confused because the names of animal species that I didn't know came up from time to time. I could have looked words up in the dictionary but I thought it was also a good practice for me to guess what kinds of animals they were from the sentences explaining them. (Student B, week9, *The jungle book*)
- (28) I really got the feeling that I could still read even if there were some unknown words if I used clues. (Student S, week6, *The Barcelona game*)
- (29) A lot of spoken language was used in this book, which was rather new to me. I enjoyed it. (Student T, week7, *Around the world in eighty days*)
- (30) I found it interesting that this story consisted of conversations which was different from the books I had read before. I think it is good to try books with different writing styles. (Student P, week8, *Five plays for today*)
- (31) The story was about a trial and consisted mostly of conversations, so it was useful to learn expressions that are specific to spoken English. (Student L, week2, *The murder of Mary Jones*)
- (32) The story was fun, but I think it was a little too difficult for me. I think I should go back to the previous level for a few more times before starting the next one just to get more used to it. (Student U, week7, *Hulk*)
- (33) I read a title one level lower than the one I had last time, so I was able to read very smoothly. I think it is better for me this way. (Student U, week8, *Theseus and the Minotaur*)
- (34) I was into the story so much, I read it twice. (Student U, week9, *The cup in the forest*)

- (35) It was the best one so far. I've found that it is more fun for me to finish short stories at once than to read a long ongoing story. So I'm going to read a lot of short stories rather than a few long ones. (Student T, week6, *The lost ship*)
- (36) I'm still reading level 1 books because I don't have much time. However, I can really feel my reading speed is increasing. As I continue to read, I have also realized what genre of books I'm not good at. For example, I often get confused with stories which have different characters in them, so I should work on this. (Student O, week 10, *Theseus and the Minotaur*)
- (37) I knew about the festival because I had seen it on TV. There are many local festivals in Japan too, and there are special meanings and thus they are very important to the people in those areas. So I understood the local people and participants' feelings towards the cheese rolling races as I was reading the story. (Student W, week3, *Cheese rolling races*)
- (38) I had never known this animal, which is an endangered species. I'm glad that reading English books not only improves my English, but also gives me new knowledge about the world. (Student T, week9, *Puffin rescue!*)
- (39) The last book I read was a little too difficult for me, so I picked a simpler one this time. Since this book was easy to understand, I was able to read it stress-free. The content was fun too, so I even wanted to read more. (Student O, week2, *The Troy stone*)
- (40) This time, I was really into the story, so I was able to write the summary very easily because the story was entirely in my head. Since I've been doing this out-of-class reading assignment, I think my reading accuracy and fluency in the reading class (English E) are also improving. (Student O, week 11, *Ned Kelly: a true story*)

Appendix 2

End of the semester comments regarding extensive reading assignments.

- (41) It was a good opportunity to read English books. (12 counts)
- (42) It was fun because I could choose books that matched my interests. (4counts)
- (43) It helped me increase my vocabulary and reading speed. (3counts)
- (44) It was good for reading for fluency and practicing skimming.
- (45) I was happy to discover that I could actually read English if the book is right for my level.
- (46) I found that reading was interesting, even if written in English, if you choose the right book.
- (47) I've found a good book!

- (48) I'm glad that I actually enjoyed reading English.
- (49) I would like to read more if I had more time.
- (50) It was good because I could see my reading comprehension improving.
- (51) I think I can guess the meaning of unknown words better than before.
- (52) It was fun because there were some things I got to know through reading.
- (53) I thought reading English books regularly would be a pain in the neck at the beginning, but I could feel my English improving as I kept reading. I would like to continue even after the class is over.
- (54) It didn't feel like homework because I could set my own pace. I would like to read more.
- (55) I read books that were of my own interests, so I could read and understand without much difficulty.
- (56) I felt reading regularly was effective for learning English.
- (57) I liked the reading assignments. I would like to read more during the summer break.
- (58) I liked the way I could choose books for my level.
- (59) I didn't feel like I was forced to read English because I could pick a book at my level and read it at my own pace. It made me want to read.
- (60) I didn't have to feel pressure because I could decide how much I would read, which was nice. (4counts)
- (61) Making a habit of reading regularly was good. I should continue.
- (62) I thought Graded Readers were readable and comprehensible, and effective for English learning.
- (63) I could read English on my own without any help because I could choose the level of the book and the amount of reading.
- (64) At the beginning, I was worried because I never had experienced pleasure reading, but it turned to be fun. I read voluntarily.
- (65) I thought it was a good way to learn English.
- (66) I felt closer to English than before.