

What Motivational Strategies Can Teachers Use to Encourage Reading in an L2 for Pleasure?

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Introduction

In many Asian countries including Japan, reading in a foreign/second language (L2) is taught intensively at secondary and tertiary levels of education. Intensive reading focuses on vocabulary and grammar forms embedded in the chosen text and uses comprehension questions to test understanding of specific details and general points in the text. In Japan, short texts in English are often translated word for word into the first language by learners which is checked for accuracy by the teacher using an answer key. These traditional teacher centred approaches are thought to prepare students to pass important English entrance exams for high schools and universities. In contrast to intensive reading, extensive reading (ER) has been defined by Hafiz and Tudor (1989) as “the reading of large amounts of material in the second language over time for personal pleasure or interest, and without the addition of productive tasks or follow up language work” (p. 4).

There are an abundance of articles on the positive effects of ER on reading motivation (Apple, 2005; Takase, 2007); reading fluency (Grabe, 2010); spelling and vocabulary (Krashen, 1983) and autonomous learning (Nishino, 2007). Less widely reported in the literature are articles on the dynamic changes in motivation learners experience during an ER course and demotivating factors that obstruct learners from gaining success in a course. How to identify these factors and from this knowledge be in a better position to engage all learners in ER is the interest of this author. This paper will look at the evidence of the benefits of ER on language proficiency and reading motivation and discuss the motivational strategies identified in engaging all learners in such programmes.

The review will be concerned with English as a foreign language (EFL) learners who have less opportunities to interact with English speakers outside the classroom and require more language input. As stated by Nuttall (1982), “the best way to improve one’s knowledge of a foreign language is to go and live among its speakers. The next best way is to read extensively in it” (p. 168). The review will include studies from Japan, China, Taiwan, Indonesia, Singapore and Malaysia where traditional teacher centred approaches endure. The influence of the first language on second language learning and related cultural implications are beyond the scope of this paper.

ER and the Benefits of ER

Extensive reading involves students reading easy texts quickly, individually and silently while the role of

the teacher is to orient and guide students in their reading choices (Day & Bamford, 2002). According to the ER foundation (www.erfoundation.org) intensive reading complements extensive reading as intensive reading focuses on form and extensive reading gives practice in the new vocabulary and grammar structures. ER programs are often based on the use of graded readers which are written for language learners and controlled for vocabulary, grammar, illustrations and complexity of plot (www.erfoundation.org). Low frequency words are removed from classic stories, biographies and other genres while more useful words appear more frequently to help learning. The ten principles of extensive reading are based on reading for general meaning and enjoyment (Day & Bamford, 2002), however this concept has been criticised by Green (2005), who argues the importance of focusing on form to consolidate and build on learners' ability to use target language. In terms of implementation, while some ER programs simply have students borrow books from school libraries, others employ web-based management systems such as MReader (www.mreader.org) and Xreading® (www.xreading.com) which allow teachers to track student reading activity outside of the classroom and involve students taking short, timed quizzes on the completion of graded readers to accumulate word counts. The use of such web based management systems while making monitoring convenient and students accountable through word count targets, interferes with the original premise that 'reading is its own reward' (Day & Bamford, 2002, p. 138).

The benefits of L2 ER have been widely reported in the literature. The seminal paper by Elley and Marubai (1983) on the flood book project involving 380 9–11 year old children at 12 primary schools in Fiji showed the clear benefits of reading extensively. The flood book project introduced colourful illustrated children's books to eight rural Fijian schools while four schools continued learning English through oral and written practice drills. After eight months the experimental groups made substantial gains in reading and listening comprehension in post test results compared to the control classes and a follow up study 12 months later demonstrated that the gains had further improved and spread to related language skills (Elley & Marubai, 1983). The simple idea of giving children access to high interest books and time to read them increased L2 literacy in this context. Numerous similar control studies have been carried out at secondary and especially tertiary level. The reported benefits include improvements in second language proficiency in all four skills, increased motivation and interest in the L2 and promotion of autonomous learning. These claims will be discussed further.

ER and Second Language Proficiency

The traditional methods of workbooks and drills have not produced proficient English speakers in Japan (Nishino & Watanabe, 2008). Could extensive reading be the answer educators have been looking for? Georgiou, Tsubota, Sugimoto and Dantsuji (2012) state in their paper on a high school extensive reading course that ER could help Japanese learners become more proficient learners of English where six years of preparing for entrance exams does not appear to have succeeded. In addition, Hsu and Lee (2007) collected data on vocabulary and reading comprehension at three stages throughout an academic year at a junior

college and found that by the final exam, students in the experimental ER classes had significantly outperformed the control group continuing with traditional intensive reading classes. Hsu and Lee (2007) concluded that ER programmes can be as beneficial at junior college level as university level although it must be noted that the students took other English classes which may have had varying effects. Yamashita's (2008) investigation into the effects of ER on English reading and linguistic ability demonstrated a significant improvement in the former though not the latter suggesting that the effects of ER may be evident earlier in general reading skills than linguistic proficiency in a foreign language. More longitudinal studies are necessary to confirm if linguistic ability would also improve in the long run. Yoshikawa, Takase and Otsuki (2018) studied the effects of ER on grammatical knowledge and reading fluency. There is little research on grammatical knowledge compared with reading fluency, and the authors report empirical evidence that extensive reading helps Japanese EFL learners to develop their grammatical ability, improving as reading amount increases. In terms of achievement in language proficiency as tested by TOEIC (testing of English in international communication) scores, a four year longitudinal study by Nishizawa, Yoshioka and Fukada (2010) found that word count was the most significant factor and identified that students needed to read a minimum of 200,000 words over two years to improve on TOEIC. In his meta-analysis of 34 ER studies, Nakanishi (2015) concluded that ER has a medium positive effect on learners' reading proficiency and recommended it be part of a language learning curriculum.

While there is an abundance of data on gains in language proficiency, few papers on extensive reading programs report non-significant results in reading progress. Nakanishi (2015) points out the twin problems of data being skewed positively through the 'file drawer' affect of non significant data not being published and publication bias in favouring research with significant results. In addition, numerous variables in the studies make direct comparisons problematic. The key variables of length of study and amount of reading varied considerably. Nakanishi found that of the 34 studies 47% were less than three months long. As to the volume of reading, some studies have students read less than the one book a week or more as recommended by the ER foundation. The number of short term studies with positive results is all the more surprising since reading researchers maintain that the ability to read fluently with understanding requires "the development of automaticity, a large recognition vocabulary, and extended periods of implicit learning. This skill set is only learned gradually and is not always easy to detect in shorter training studies" (Grabe, 2010, pp. 72–73).

In addition to reading volume and the time period of the study, other variables in ER program research include whether or not students' reading is monitored, if reading takes place in or out of class, if the ER program includes reading-related activities, the types of pre and post tests used to assess language achievement and if the students are purely reading for pleasure or if they are being assessed on word count or classwork based on the books read. In short, how to implement an ER programme is interpreted in many different ways and a recent clarifying paper by Waring and MacLean (2015) presents the four essential core attributes of ER. Waring and MacLean (2015) emphasize that there is no one right way to implement an ER course but that the following four core attributes should be met: fluent comprehension, high reading speed,

reading large amount of texts and focus on the meaning of the text (p. 162). While ER programs vary across contexts, key factors in success of a course include the attitudes towards reading in the second language, motivation levels of learners and the motivational techniques of teachers.

Attitudes and Motivation Towards L2 Reading

Teachers lament the difficulties in motivating Japanese students to study English due to a lack of opportunities for students to use English out of the classroom (Sugita & Takeuchi, 2010). Additionally Chang and Liu (2015) report the low motivation Taiwanese students experience when studying overly difficult texts to pass exams. Day and Bamford (2002) maintain that reading motivation increases when learners are allowed to follow their interests and learn through content that engages and satisfies them. Day and Bamford (2002) identified four major reading motivation variables that influence the decision to read in an L2: reading materials, reading ability in the L2, attitudes toward reading in the L2 and the sociocultural environment. However as Lake (2014) points out becoming a strong second language learner takes much time, effort and motivation.

There are many studies which purport to demonstrate that learners have more positive attitudes towards learning after participating in an extensive reading program (Takase, 2007; Tien, 2015). Mason and Krashen (1997) introduced extensive reading to an EFL junior college class retaking a failed English course. In the previous semester the students had failed to hand in homework and attendance was poor. In reading diaries students reported amazement with their improvement over the semester and many of the reluctant EFL learners became avid readers (Mason & Krashen, 1997). While this was a robust study, other studies use small samples or are conducted over a short period of time such as three months or less (Nakanishi, 2015) or do not enforce the recommended reading volume. A recent long-term study by Tien (2015) over two semesters involved a total of 5,711 students and 36 English teachers, however since the students only read four graded readers per semester very little time was spent on ER out of class compared to students' two hours of intensive reading classes per week. The positive attitudes attributed to ER as a result of the program were just a taste of ER and cannot have taxed the university students much.

Motivation is a dynamic construct (Dornyei, 2001), yet most research surveys on learner motivation are only filled out at the beginning and end of an ER program. The limitations of such surveys is the capture of motivation at one point in time and Chien and Yu (2015) suggest that gathering qualitative data from student journals, teacher conferences and reading logs could give more in depth insights into the behavioural aspects of attitudes towards ER. In addition, Mikami (2017) found ER motivation was not fixed or stable among Japanese university students and that it was difficult for them to maintain positive motivation. Qualitative studies by Kanda (2007; 2009) have also shown the changing attitudes of learners as an ER programme progresses.

Motivation in relation to second language acquisition has been categorised as integrative where learners study a language to assimilate with that culture or instrumental where proficiency in the language can lead

to a better grade or job (Ortega, 2009). Junior and high school students are instrumentally motivated to pass entrance exams to win places in respected schools whilst junior college and university students may hope English can help them in their future careers (Takase, 2007). On the other hand, intrinsic motivation describes learning for the enjoyment of the activity. In a study to identify influential motivating factors at a Japanese high school, Takase (2007) found that intrinsic motivation for L2 reading and intrinsic motivation for L1 reading rated highest after one academic year of extensive reading although a positive relationship between L1 reading motivation and L2 reading motivation was not observed. While most research has focused on the positive effects of ER programmes and positive attitudes to reading brought about due to ER compared to intensive reading, in fact motivational factors vary widely and change over time and not all ER programmes have met with success (Tagane, Naganuma & Dougherty, 2018). What factors should ER practitioners be aware of to optimise success in their programmes?

Motivational Strategies in Practice

Is reading motivation different from general motivation? In a study which hypothesized that motivation to communicate in an L2 may be different from motivation to read in an L2, Mori (2002) found that reading motivation was not independent of general motivational constructs and displayed the same multidimensionality. This indicates that the motivational strategies for language learning generally can also be used to encourage extensive reading. Kanda (2009) states that reading enjoyment is the key to success and that easier reading materials well within the linguistic competence of the students be introduced initially. Since improvement is dependent on the amount students read, how can teachers get learners hooked on reading and maintain that motivation during and beyond the end of the course? The literature on extensive reading and motivation demonstrates teachers have much influence on the success of an extensive reading programme (Croker & Yamanaka, 2012; Yoshida, 2018). Motivational strategies teachers use in classroom practice include: the teacher as a reader model; ensuring learners understand the benefits of ER; attention to students' goals and progress; providing access to high interest materials; awareness of demotivating factors and the inclusion of class activities to engage learners in the ER programme.

The Role of the Teacher as a Model and Guide

Teachers should model being 'good readers' by reading aloud to students, reading silently while students are reading and by being knowledgeable about the books they are recommending. However a study by Day (2015) re-examining the ten principles of extensive reading revealed that the two principles 'teachers orient and guide their students' and 'teacher is a role model of a reader' were the least mentioned in the 44 articles analysed (p. 295). Hadiyanto (2018) gathered data on the importance of teacher modeling from both teachers' and students' point of view through interviews and questionnaires. While teachers who were interviewed commented positively on teacher modeling, it was thought of as one of the motivating factors

but not the most important one. In questionnaires filled out by students on their perceptions of ER, the class activities such as projects and book reports were ranked highest in terms of motivating them to read due to the necessity of completing the tasks to achieve term grades.

Grabe (2010) states that many reading skills such as a large recognition vocabulary are built up as a result of implicit not explicit learning and that this implicit learning is an ongoing process over time as grammatical forms and vocabulary are repeatedly met in the texts. It is important that ER instructors ensure learners understand that extensive reading is a long-term investment in order to maintain reading motivation throughout and beyond the course. The results of taking the time to describe and advocate for ER was outlined in a study by Croker and Yamanaka (2012) comparing two reading courses at the same university. In one, the Japanese teacher explicitly and repeatedly explained the benefits of ER to the students. In the other, the native teacher dived straight into the course. The students who understood the benefits of ER well (demonstrated by answering survey questions) performed better than those who did not (Croker & Yamanaka, 2012).

Both teachers and peers can influence the amount of reading achieved. A recent longitudinal study by Yoshida (2018) tracked the dynamic motivation patterns of university students over two years (four university semesters). She used early survey results to identify three students with extreme changes in motivation over the initial four months and conducted more in depth interviews with them. These students reported feeling more motivated when given individual attention from teachers, through the setting of achievable weekly goals and in one case being inspired by a friend who enjoyed reading beyond the semester goals (Yoshida, 2018). Decreased reading scores were found when teachers merely gave the semester reading goals and spent little time with individuals on their reading goals. In a reminder of how positive attitudes do not necessarily translate into action, Loh (2007) found that while teachers at a primary school in Singapore believed in the positive effect modeling reading and reading aloud could bring, few actually practised the method in class.

Interest in Materials and Learner Autonomy vs “Accountability”

Reading relatively lengthy books rather than extracts of texts in textbooks in a foreign language may be a first for many language learners. While some students embrace the challenge others may feel that it is an overwhelming task. Day and Bamford (1998) used expectancy-value theory in their proposed model for L2 motivation where expectancy was divided into L2 reading ability and the quality of the reading materials (how interesting, language level, attractiveness, and availability). Expectancy-value theory describes how the behavior of individuals is a function of the expectancy that an individual has and the value of the goal toward which the individual is working (Judge, 2011). Thus a key factor in encouraging learners to take the first step in reading is providing access to interesting and engaging materials in a variety of genres and at all reading levels.

Extensive reading allows learners to self select reading materials which has been found to contribute

positively to motivation to read (Takase, 2007). Judge's (2011) avid readers were also driven to find reading materials that were personally interesting to them. In a qualitative study, Nishino (2007) observed the reading behaviour of two students she tutored over 2.5 years. The two girls identified books they were interested in reading, such as Harry Potter, which maintained their motivation until entrance exam tests interrupted their time for reading. Nishino's study also showed the importance of helping students find books that they are interested in as the two students lost motivation when they had finished their favorite books. The freedom to choose books encourages learner autonomy but the extent to which a teacher monitors reading varies greatly from programme to programme. Reading for pleasure mostly or solely takes place out of class in ER programmes and may or may not be monitored by the teacher depending on the ER principles followed. In a study where students documented their own out of class reading but did not have targets to adhere to, Chien and Yu (2015) found that students prioritised other class homework that would be graded so that an attitude survey revealed negative results for attitude and behaviour. It may be the case that students have heavy workloads from other classes and ER is considered an extra burden and not reading for pleasure (Chien & Yu, 2015). Although the students understood how they could benefit from ER practice, without reading goals this positive attitude did not translate into action. Mason and Krashen (1997) exerted a weak pressure on students in ER programs to write book summaries in either English or Japanese (L1) and complete diaries in Japanese "recording their feelings, opinions and progress" (p. 92) with the number of books read going towards course credits and grades. The authors point out that it remains to be determined to what degree accountability affects reading progress. Nishino (2007) observed in her case study that the factors contributing to motivation were the realization of achievement, increasingly independent reading and confidence in L2 reading. In high school and university classes it may be necessary to make ER part of assessment or it may not be prioritized while in Nishino's (2007) case study of private tutoring the student's were able to receive the complete attention of the teacher and enjoy reading with no other pressures.

Class Activities to Encourage Reading

According to Day and Bamford's (2002) ten principles, the purest form of ER does not involve testing reading comprehension. However, the authors suggest including class activities which extend reading experiences in interesting and useful ways. Kusanagi, Kobayashi and Fukuya (2018) introduced an idea exchange method known as World Café discussion (Brown, Isaacs & World Café Community, 2005) to an ER class to the enjoyment of the students involved. The students in groups of four read and discussed a book chosen for high interest and hidden messages. After making notes on a large piece of paper, all but one student in each group moved to the next table to further exchange ideas until all the students had visited each group. In sharing collective discoveries the high school students reported that they understood the book in more depth and others commented that it increased their motivation to read in English.

Mason and Krashen (1997) included writing activities in an ER course with three experimental groups. One group wrote book summaries in Japanese, another in English and a third comparison group did not participate in ER but continued traditional intensive reading in class time. Interestingly, though significant gains in post test scores were found between the ER and comparison group there was not a significant difference between students writing summaries in their first language or in English. The writing process itself in reflecting on the book may have helped students assimilate what they had read in the book, thus could be a useful class activity. Writing in the first language could take the pressure off the task, also increasing enjoyability.

Tagane, Naganuma and Dougherty (2018) suggest having the entire class read the same book in order to more deeply discuss the book content and promote understanding. Also, assigning the same book to the entire class would allow the teacher to highlight reading strategies and help students guess word meanings in a given context by referring to a specific part of the same book. Renandya and Jacobs (2002) recommend avoiding the laborious task of writing book summaries or reviews and instead propose post reading activities such as poster presentations, role plays of the story or designing a bookmark to suit the book. Finally an ER exchange between engineering students in Vietnam and Japan had students share their opinions on books read using online forums in hopes of improving language skills before a visit to Vietnam. The students were motivated to exchange ideas before and immediately after the cultural visit took place but interest waned several months after the exchange (Ichikawa & Ho, 2018). As teachers become familiar with students' interests, integrating stimulating activities into the ER program may result in continued engagement with the course.

EFL Learners Unmotivated by ER

In any course or subject there are always some students who do well and others who struggle. Despite the 'reading is its own reward' mantra, ER is still viewed as schoolwork and not pleasure by some students. A further demonstration that not all students are engaging in the core principles of ER is evidence of cheating (Tagane, Naganuma, & Dougherty, 2018). Incidences of academic dishonesty in order to increase word or book counts and thus receive a passing grade for the course may reveal a lack of motivation or engagement with the course, time pressures preventing the learner from attaining the target or personal life circumstances. Tagane, Naganuma and Dougherty (2018) asked students directly how they were cheating and how to stop cheating in an ER program at a Japanese university and used the results to make suggestions as to how the findings could be used to enhance the ER experience and discourage dishonest practice.

Much research has shown the links between motivation and language proficiency. However there is less research on the effects of demotivating factors. Dörnyei (2001) states the importance of subtracting demotivating factors from positive variables and questions the validity of tests that are based on positive

motivational techniques only. In the Japanese context, where English is learned to prepare for high school and university entrance exams, interest in studying English may be suffocated by the focus on vocabulary, grammar and reading comprehension over meaningful communication. Falout & Maruyama (2004) examined the demotivating factors experienced by high and low English proficiency students prior to studying English at college. In a survey grouped into six factors, Falout and Maruyuma (2004) found that the sections on course contents and pace and teacher influence, had the most significant demotivating influence for both high and low proficiency groups. Thus an awareness of how students view studying a second language coming into an extensive reading course can help the teacher understand learner attitudes and adapt the curriculum accordingly. The negative experiences reported included humiliation and ridicule when offering mistaken answers in class. The authors conclude that “we must remain sensitive to and guard against the loss of motivation in learners at all proficiency levels (p. 7)”.

Takase (2007) stated in a study of factors that motivate Japanese high school students to read English extensively, that interviews with students gave insights into aspects of reading motivation that the quantitative data did not reveal. The use of interviews, reflective logs or journals could give a clearer picture of the causes of negative attitudes towards ER (Chien & Yu, 2015) thus helping teachers remove those barriers to learning. Further, Yoshida (2018) argued the need for more qualitative studies to get a better picture of individuals experience of large scale university ER programmes. Yoshida (2018) followed three learners over two years in a longitudinal study that showed the effect of teachers and peers on motivating or demotivating learners in ER activity. She found that two major demotivating factors were related to teachers and peers. Replication of case studies like this one in different contexts would give valuable insights into the dynamic motivation of learners struggling to improve L2 proficiency.

Conclusion

Although there are many studies on reading motivation and language proficiency, what is missing from the literature are more studies on the impact of specific motivational techniques that can be implemented by teachers in ER programs and more investigation into the barriers to ER that some students continue to experience. It is vital to consider the individual students and the dynamic nature of motivation when designing a programme. While some students may benefit from extrinsic motivators such as accumulative word counts and grades, others may be intrinsically motivated to read their choice of materials for pleasure. There is a need for more qualitative surveys to gather rich and insightful data on how learners read, how teachers can maintain or instill motivation in reading and to gain understandings on students perceptions of the benefits of ER. In particular, there is a paucity of qualitative studies on unmotivated learners. A clearer understanding of the barriers to engagement in extensive reading for reluctant readers could lead to teachers using more effective motivational strategies in the classroom.

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