

New Challenges to Motivate Remedial EFL Students to Read Extensively

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Although one of the keys to improving language ability lies in the continuous and prolonged exposure to the target language, providing learners with the opportunities in the EFL environment is not easy. For Japanese learners of English, in fact, the amount of input of English is severely limited. Additionally, it is hard for them to keep motivating themselves to study English as the use of the language is often not requisite in the society. This paper explains that extensive reading (ER) is an effective method for learners with low proficiency and poor motivation to learn English, provided that Start with Simple Stories (SSS) and Sustained Silent Reading (SSR) methods are guaranteed (Takase 2008). SSS requires learners to read books written in easily comprehensible English, and SSR secures learners certain amount of time to read in class under the guidance of instructors. The paper shows the improvement of ER students' English ability after three-months of ER courses, where SSS and SSR were employed, and how they started to be motivated to read extensively during the courses. The participants of the study are eighty-one Japanese EFL students, who had failed to pass an English course in the previous year mainly due to their low English proficiency. They kept reading relatively easy books extensively for eighty minutes once a week over one academic semester. Statistical analysis of the results of pre- and post-tests demonstrates that their English proficiency significantly improved.

Keywords: extensive reading, motivation, remedial education, implicit learning

1 Introduction

1.1 Learning environment of Japanese EFL students

One of the biggest issues which accompanies learning English in the EFL environment is that learners have limited exposure to English in their daily life. Learners of English in Japan are no exception; they hardly ever use English outside of class. Little opportunity to use English makes it hard for learners to find a reason to study the language; in other words, learners often do not see the

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point in studying English. Additionally, the grammar-translation or *Yakudoku* (Hino 1988) method, which is the most common approach adopted at secondary schools across Japan, does not provide learners with working knowledge of English. *Yaku* means ‘translation’ and *doku* means ‘reading’ in Japanese. According to Hino, *Yakudoku* is

...a technique or a mental process for reading a foreign language in which the target language sentence is first translated word by word, and the resulting translation reordered to match Japanese word order as part of the process of reading comprehension (Hino 1988: 46).

In this method whereby teachers have the initiative in studying, the emphasis is put on translating English text into Japanese word by word, rather than appreciating the content of the text. Moreover, the main goal of English education for both teachers and parents is for students to succeed in passing the entrance examination to higher education. The majority of university entrance examinations are multiple-choice tests, which consist of grammar-oriented questions and comprehension questions of short difficult passages. Although the number of exam questions asking for a translation of English sentences into Japanese or vice versa has been reduced recently, students still practice translation in order to make a correct choice among several alternative answers for comprehension questions. Once, then, they have passed the examination, it is easy to lose motivation for studying English, because there are still a considerable number of English classes conducted by utilizing a grammar-translation or *Yakudoku* method, which they do not enjoy.

1.2 Remedial students

These social and educational circumstances surrounding English education in Japan have generated unmotivated and reluctant students. After they have found studying English difficult, stressful, boring, uninteresting or even useless at secondary schools, they go to institutions of higher education, where they often fail to get credits in English classes and end up registering for remedial or repeater classes. Takase and Otsuki (2011) reported that in the faculty at a Japanese university where they work, approximately 5-10% of the students out of 1,600 freshmen and sophomores become repeaters of English courses every year, as they fail to obtain the credit they were supposed to get in the previous year. Among the various reasons for their failure, two major reasons were poor performance in class and examinations and lack of attendance, which is also attributed to their failure to follow the lessons provided in class. On the other hand, there are always some medium or high level students, if not many, who fail to pass the course with other reasons than lack of English proficiency.

Currently, many repeater courses at universities focus on providing another opportunity to study grammar, under the name of ‘remedial education.’ Although the textbook titles for remedial education often include Simple English Grammar or Essential Grammar, repeaters’ earlier experience about English education is ignored in the sense that the focus is still on the formal teaching of grammar, which they have found difficult or uninteresting. As a result, it could turn out to be a replication of the painful or boring experience they had

previously. Here, the question arises whether the course serves as a real ‘remedy’ for those two types of repeaters, students who lack enough English proficiency to follow the lesson and those who have already fully acquired basic grammar; that is, whether they are motivated to study English and really improve their English proficiency. In order to motivate the abovementioned repeaters, the researchers implemented extensive reading (henceforth ER) in their curriculum.

2 Extensive reading

2.1 *Extensive reading versus the traditional approach to reading*

ER is defined as ‘reading in quantity ... to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading (Richard, Platt & Platt 1992: 133).’ This approach is opposite to the grammar-translation method, which, as discussed above, still prevails in Japan in many ways. The differences in implementation between the two approaches are summarized as found in Table 1.

Table 1. Differences between traditional approach to reading and ER (Takase 2010a: 24, translated by the authors)

Item	Traditional approach	ER
Choice of textbooks	By teachers	By learners
Amount of reading	Limited	Substantial
Comprehension of the content	Partial, fractional	Complete
English in text	Complex	Relatively simple
Speed of reading	Slow	Fast
Manner of comprehension	Via translation	As it is (without translation)

In the class where the traditional grammar-translation approach or Yakudoku method is implemented, textbooks which are rather difficult for learners are chosen by the instructor. As the English in those textbooks is complex, students try to analyze each sentence and depend on translation for comprehension. Therefore, they can cover one or two pages in one lesson, which is only a part of the whole story. By the time they finish the story, the first part of the story is often forgotten.

On the other hand, ER is an approach to language teaching whereby learners read a great deal of relatively easy books (Bamford & Day 2004). As the English is relatively easy, learners can read the book rapidly without using a dictionary or translation, comprehending the whole story as it is. As for the amount of reading, Sakai (2002) reported that one million words is a turning point to become an independent reader, who can choose his/her book and enjoy reading without any help of an instructor, which usually takes two or three years.

Reading one million words is a sharp contrast with the average number of words in school textbooks which pupils are exposed to during their six years of English education at secondary schools, that is, 30,000 - 50,000 words in total.

2.2 Implicit learning using ER materials

One of the most unique features of ER is that it includes implicit learning of the language. Unlike the traditional grammar-translation method, ER encourages learners to learn the target language by receiving a great amount of input of English. Otsuki and Takase (2011) compared English picture books used for ER (Oxford Reading Tree) and English textbooks authorized by the Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) and widely used at junior high schools across Japan, in order to find out differences in description of English observed in these two types of material. They reported that there is a marked contrast between them in the following respects.

First, whereas English in picture books is provided with appropriate contexts, in Japanese school textbooks it is found in rather unnatural contexts. The range of grammar and vocabulary available to write school textbooks is limited by the MEXT. Therefore, the setting in which the grammatical features and words are exploited can be quite awkward or even abnormal. On the other hand, picture books include storylines, which make the use of the lexico-grammatical features sound quite natural.

Second, whereas particular grammatical features and words or phrases repeatedly appear in picture books, it is not the case with Japanese school textbooks. One example is that the same exclamatory sentence appears five times in a book of 24 pages which contains one short story consisted of 188 words. The high concentration of a particular sentence structure like this will help learners acquire the pattern and its usage. In short, books used in ER can make it possible to learn English expressions or vocabulary terms that are actually used in context, which will result in acquiring natural English and enhance learners' working knowledge of English. This is compatible with the ways in which learners develop their reading proficiency by encountering recurring patterns of lexico-grammatical features which is made possible by extensive exposure to the target language (Grabe 2009).

2.3 Extensive reading motivation & demotivation

It is well known that motivation works as one of the most important factors in foreign language learning and acquisition (Dörnyei 2001). In the field of second or foreign language (L2) reading, ER is said to be one of the most effective strategies in motivating L2 language learners. Needless to say about the impact on reading proficiency (Cho & Krashen 1994; Elley & Mangubhai 1981; Grabe 2004; Hafiz & Tudor 1989; Kobayashi et al. 2010; Mason & Krashen 1997a; Nishizawa et al. 2010; Rob & Susser 1989; Suzuki 1996; Takase 2003, 2004b, 2008a, 2009, 2010a; Yamashita 2004), it is reported that ER also brings about effects on other skills including writing ability (Irvine 2011; Janopoulos 1986) and vocabulary (Lai 1993). Among various effects of ER, what should be noted is that ER has an effect on learners' positive attitudes towards learning English, and various studies have been reported confirming the effectiveness of ER on

learners' motivation to read English (e.g., Elley & Mangubhai 1981; Hafiz & Tudor 1989; Kobayashi et al. 2010; Robb & Susser 1989; Mason & Krashen 1997; Takase 2008b, 2009, 2010a). Takase (2010a) reported that more than 95% of her students took a positive attitude toward ER. Their comments include: 'ER is fun as I can choose books to read,' 'I didn't realise that I was reading English,' 'I'm starting to feel like talking to foreigners.'

The problem lies, however, with the fact that there are always a certain number of students who seem to have been suffering from several demotivational factors ever since they first stumbled in their earlier English education. Along with entrance examinations to higher institutions, other critical factors seem to create negative attitudes and demotivation in the majority of these reluctant students; that is the instructional material and method used in the classroom. As Dörnyei defines, 'demotivation' is "specific external forces that reduce or diminish the motivational basis of a behavioural intention or an ongoing action" (2001:143) in contrast to 'amotivation,' which refers to the absence of motivation caused by individual's experiencing feelings of incompetence and helplessness (Deci & Ryan 1985). Empirical support for this belief was provided by Ushioda (1998, 2001), who conducted a qualitative research on her Irish students to find that teaching methods and learning tasks were the two factors that demotivated them from learning French.

By investigating students' reading motivation through interviews on 81 out of 219 secondary school students over three years, Takase (2003, 2004a) found several demotivating factors that hindered her students from reading extensively: 1) the time-consuming post-reading summary, 2) lack of easy books, and 3) lack of reading time outside of class. For the purpose of motivating them to read more, she, then, started deleting these demotivating factors one by one until she finally succeeded in having the majority of her students read an abundance of books extensively. First, the post-reading summary was replaced by writing in a reading log with one or two sentence comments or opinions. Second, easy materials were gradually purchased on a priority basis and provided to students so that they were able to read an abundance of easily comprehensible books, namely the Start with Simple Stories (henceforth SSS) method. Finally, students were given time for Sustained Silent Reading (henceforth SSR) in the library once a week for securing their reading time (Takase 2004b, 2005). Among the three factors, SSS and SSR methods showed the greatest impact on motivating students to read in quantity.

2.4 Start with Simple Stories (SSS)

It is vital that learners start reading books which are written in easily comprehensible English which is lower than their English proficiency level, or a comfortable level that they can read without using a dictionary or translation. By reading an abundance of easy English books, learners form a habit of reading English as is, which leads them to break the habit of translating English into Japanese for comprehension. Theoretically, the aim of SSS lies in acquiring automaticity for processing basic English vocabulary and phrases. Plainly speaking, if comprehension of English at the basic level is improved, it will bring about more effective reading. By encountering fundamental expressions

numerous times, readers will be able to focus on more complicated expressions which are vital for comprehension of the text (Kadota & Noro 2001).

Another effect exerted by SSS is on learners' mentality. Unlike reading one or two paragraphs during one lesson in class with the grammar-translation method using a designated textbook, completing a whole English book, however easy it may be, brings learners a sense of accomplishment, which can be a source of confidence (Takase 2007, 2009); therefore, they would soon find themselves successful readers and feel self-efficacy (Bandura 1986) as ER experience proceeds. They are also allowed to choose materials according to their tastes and interest, which gives learners experience of joy of reading. Moreover, what is likely to occur is that however reluctant and unmotivated learners are, through their social needs they have surely recognized the value of acquiring English skills including reading in English; therefore, if reading materials are manageable and ample time for reading is provided in class, they would expect to succeed in achieving what they value. Thus, their expectancy-value would become high (Atkinson 1957; Bandura 1986).

Finally, when they encounter books by which they are fascinated, they can have a flow-experience (Csikszentmihalyi 1991). There are always some students who comment in the open-ended questionnaire at the end of the course that 'First, I was reading books to obtain the credit of the course, but gradually I came to feel reading English books as a fun pastime, and I often can't stop reading till the story ends.' By this time their extrinsic motivation to pass the course by fulfilling the requested task, which is reading in quantity, has changed to intrinsic motivation or as Dörnyei (2001) stated, intrinsic motivation can coincide with extrinsic motivation. Additionally, learners who are exposed to many relatively easy books at an early stage of their ER experience are likely to show a smooth development of their reading proficiency (Takase 2007, 2009).

2.5 Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)

Recently, more practitioners have been introducing ER in their classroom for the last decade in Japan. However, the method which each practitioner adopts for implementing ER varies depending on the teaching context. In some institutions where ER is implemented, students are instructed to read books mainly outside the classroom. Providing books and instructing students to read them, however, does not automatically guarantee students' participation in reading nor improvement in their English proficiency. The environment in which current students are placed does not encourage them to read books outside the classroom for the following reasons: they are busy with associations and club activities or many students do not have a habit of reading. In order to utilize the abovementioned SSS method effectively and encourage learners to read in quantity, another critical teaching method should be applied together with SSS, that is SSR.

According to Krashen (2004), reading proficiency can be improved by free voluntary reading (henceforth FVR) not only in the learners' first language, but also in their second or foreign language. SSR, one kind of FVR, refers to any in-school program where students and teachers simply engage in reading for a short period of time without any after-reading requirements. The effectiveness of giving a certain period of in-class time regularly for SSR on learners' reading

proficiency development has been reported by many teachers and practitioners both in their L1 (e.g. Henry 1995; Pilgreen 2000) and the ESL and EFL contexts (Nishizawa et al. 2006; Sakai & Kanda 2005; Takase 2008a, 2008b, 2009, 2010b). SSR works by bridging the gap between the beginning and advanced levels by consolidating the learners' foundation in the language and allowing them to acquire higher levels of proficiency (Krashen 2004).

The effect of SSR is also demonstrated by the number of words which students read in a year. Takase (2009) reported that in the SSR environment (40-45 minutes) 200,000-400,000 words are read on average, while in the non-SSR environment learners read approximately 50,000-100,000 words. As students who have 45 minutes for SSR usually read approximately 150,000 words in class per year on average (Takase 2010b), words beyond that number are considered to be read outside of class. This explains that students who have time for SSR in class read approximately 50,000 - 250,000 words outside of class, which means those who have SSR read out of class more than those who do not have SSR. During the time for SSR, learners concentrate on reading, creating "the most beautiful silences on earth" (Henry 1995: ix). This concentration is often carried out of class, when they have to stop the book in the middle, in particular, and let learners keep reading in their own time. Thus, SSR not only makes it possible for students to concentrate on reading books in class, but also motivate them to read outside of class. From the teachers' side SSR makes it possible for teachers to observe how students read books and also demonstrates the importance of reading by showing how reading can be done (Day & Bamford 1998; Krashen 2004).

It goes without saying that the ER programme would be successful when students read in quantity, as people "learn to read by reading" (Smith 1997: 79). In order to pursue the goal, providing students with designated time and a place for reading as well as teachers' guidance for selection of an appropriate level of books to read would be inevitable. Implementing SSR makes it possible for teachers to initiate students into ER so that they are trained to choose books suitable for them as well as form a habit of reading.

3 The present study

The purpose of the present study is to explore effects of extensive reading on remedial students, who had failed to pass their former English course with different reasons and were enrolled in the repeater classes. It examines the improvement of general English proficiency of different levels of repeaters and how they have changed their attitude towards studying English through three months of extensive reading. By doing this, the possibilities of extensive reading as an alternative to the current approaches found in remedial courses are explored. Thus, the following research questions are posed:

- 1) Will any level of remedial students improve their general English proficiency on the post-test after three months of extensive reading?
- 2) Is extensive reading effective to motivate any level of learners in remedial courses to read?

3) Will remedial students' attitudes and motivation toward English studies change after the three months ER course?

3.1 Participants

Participants were 81 (69 male, 12 female) 1st-4th year non-English major EFL university students in Japan who had failed to pass their former English course. They participated in extensive reading for one academic semester, which lasted for approximately three months. Their English levels varied from beginner to high intermediate. Their TOEIC scores, which 53 participants out of 81 (65.4%) had taken during the past few years, varied from 190 to 625 ($M = 355$, $SD = 106.7$). They are roughly converted to CEFR levels from A1 to B1.

3.2 Materials

3.2.1 Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading (EPER) Placement/Progress Test

The Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading Placement/Progress (henceforth EPER) Test (From A) was administered as the pre-test to find out participants' English ability and the post-test in order to examine the improvement of participants' general English language proficiency. The EPER Placement / Progress Tests, semi-fixed open-ended cloze tests, were developed in the Institute for Applied Language Studies in the University of Edinburgh in 1992 in order to measure general English language proficiency. There are three versions, each composed of more than 10 paragraphs taken from different levels of graded readers and arranged in order of increasing difficulty. Although there have been arguments among language testing researchers about what cloze tests measure, empirical research has demonstrated that cloze tests can measure both lower level (e.g. within clause) and higher level (e.g. across sentences) reading abilities (Bachman 1985) and on the participants' proficiency level (Chihara et al. 1994; Sasaki 1993, 2000; Yamashita 2008) including micro-level linguistic competence such as vocabulary, spelling and morphosyntax, as scoring criterion is limited to the list of given answers. As graded readers are widely used materials for ER by EFL and ESL learners of various proficiency levels, the EPER Placement/Progress Tests are considered as appropriate tests to measure learners' reading proficiency and their improvement.

Among the three versions of the tests, Version A, which is the easiest and most used among ER practitioners worldwide was employed in this study. Version A consists of 12 short passages (on average around 80 words) with 141 deletions at the rate of 4 to 12 ($M = 6.30$, $SD = 1.16$). The raw test scores (141) are converted into standard scores (100).

3.2.2 Reading materials

Two kinds of reading materials were used: 1) leveled readers (LR) and picture books for L1 children published by Oxford, Longman, Random House, Scholastic, Usborne and other major publishers; and 2) graded readers (GR) containing vocabulary ranging from 200 to 1200 headwords. They were mainly Foundations Reading Library (FRL) by Cengage, Macmillan Readers (MMR) by

Macmillan, Oxford Bookworms (OBW) by Oxford, and Penguin Readers (PGR) by Pearson Longman. LR are written for L1 children to learn reading and writing, and GR are written for language learners to learn English in ESL and EFL settings.

3.2.3 Questionnaires

For the purpose of investigating participants' context including the cause of failure of the former course and their attitudes toward English study in particular, a partial open-ended questionnaire was administered at the beginning of the course. After the course, a five-point Likert scale questionnaire pertaining to the participants' attitudes toward extensive reading, motivating factors to read and demotivating factors that prevented them from reading, was constructed and administered at the end of the course.

3.3 Procedure

All the students participated in ER for one academic semester, approximately three months. The classes met once a week for 14 sessions in a designated room in the library, during which students were occupied with Sustained Silent Reading (SSR), for approximately 80 minutes with reading and 10 minutes for keeping their reading log. At the onset of the course, ER was introduced in order to raise student awareness of the necessity and effectiveness of reading English books extensively with the emphasis on experiencing the joy of reading. The requirement of the course was to read at least 100 easily comprehensible books using Start with Simple Stories (SSS) method during the course, and to keep a reading log of every book they read including the date, title, series, level, word count of each book, the time used for finishing the book, and a short impression or remark about the book. During the time for SSR, participants were given individual guidance when necessary. It should be noted that SSR in this paper is not exactly the same as what Krashen (2004) defined as mentioned above, but is a slightly modified SSR in that the teachers usually engaged in reading with their students only after they observed students' reading performance and checked their reading logs. In addition, the time for SSR concerned is much longer than what is mentioned by Krashen.

4 Results and discussion

4.1 Pre-questionnaire

At the onset of the course, a survey was constructed by the authors and administered in order to explore students' learning context including their causes of failure of the former course, and attitudes toward English studies.

Table 2. Participants' learning context and attitudes toward English studies

Items	Yes (%)	So-so (%)	No (%)
1. Do you like English? (<i>N</i> = 81)	14 (17.3)	39 (48.1)	28 (34.6)
2. Are you good at English? (<i>N</i> = 81)	2 (2.5)	27 (33.3)	52 (64.2)
Those who chose 'No' to Item 2 (<i>N</i> = 52)			
2.1. Difficult area of English for you (multiple responses accepted)			
Grammar	Listening	Reading	Vocabulary
28 (34.6%)	17 (21.0%)	16 (19.8%)	13 (16.0%)
Writing	Speaking		
11 (13.6%)	8 (9.9%)		
2.2. Time when English became difficult and you started failing			
Junior HS* (aged 12-14)	Senior HS* (aged 15-18)	University	
19 (23.5%)	26 (32.1%)	7 (8.6%)	
3. Major reasons for failing the former course (multiple responses accepted)			
Poor Grade	Lack of attendance	Other reasons	
36 (44.4%)	59 (72.8%)	15 (18.5%)	
Those who chose 'Lack of attendance' (<i>N</i> = 59)			
3.1. Reasons of absences			
Difficult lessons	Part-time job/Sports	Sickness	Others
23 (39.0%)	21 (35.6%)	7 (11.9%)	8 (13.6%)

*HS = High School (English education starts at junior high school.)

The results of the survey in Table 2 illustrate that 28 participants (34.6%) did not like English, and 52 participants (64.2%) were not good at English. This indicates although approximately two-thirds of the participants like English to some extent, a little less than two-thirds of the participants had found it difficult. Among these 52 participants with low self-esteem, 28 responded that they had difficulty in understanding Grammar, followed by Listening (17), Reading with grammar-translation method (16), Vocabulary (13), Writing (11) and Speaking (8). It is interesting to note that compared to listening or reading, fewer participants found writing and speaking difficult, which apparently require higher English skills. These results could be attributed to the English education system in Japan. At junior and senior high school accuracy of English is weighed much more heavily than fluency. In order for students to acquire English with correct grammar and nearly 100% comprehension of the content, most of the classes are conducted using grammar-translation method. Therefore, students have less opportunity to practice producing English, which, ironically, lead the

participants of this study to be unaware of their difficulty. Out of 52 participants with low self-esteem, as many as 45 repeaters (86.5%) had been suffering from low-performance and poor academic grades in English since junior or senior high school.

The participants' major reason for failing the former course was twofold. One was a lack of English ability to pass the test (36 participants: 44.4%) and the other was a lack of attendance (59 participants: 72.8%). Among them, 23 participants (39.0%) chose both items, stating that they became hesitant to attend the class because they were not able to follow the lessons taught in class. The rest of the students whose attendance was not sufficient missed classes due to their part-time jobs, university/social activities or sports (21), or due to illness (7). Thus, the biggest cause of the failure was their low English ability.

4.2 Data analysis

First, based on the pre-EPER cloze test (Form A) scores, the participants were divided into three groups for analysis: upper level group, middle level group, and lower level group. Then, the descriptive statistics of the EPER cloze test scores for the pre- and the post-tests for each group were calculated using the standard scores. Second, one-way repeated-measures factorial ANOVA was conducted in order to examine the effects of ER on general English proficiency using SPSS Version 19 (2011). Third, in order to investigate the differences of reading amount and reading style between the three groups, the reading volume of the participants was calculated in terms of the number of books read, the number of words read, and the average word count per book which each group of students read during the semester. Lastly, the results of the questionnaire were analyzed using the average scores of the responses in each group.

Based on the pre-EPER scores, participants were divided into three groups of roughly equal size: upper group ($N = 25$), middle group ($N = 30$), and lower group ($N = 26$). Table 3 illustrates the descriptive statistics of the pre- and the post-EPER tests. The same EPER tests were administered at the beginning and at the end of the course.

Table 3. Descriptive statistics for the pre- & post-EPER tests

Group	<i>N</i>	Pre <i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min-Max</i>	Post <i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Min-Max</i>
Upper	25	21.72	5.47	17 - 40	27.36	5.22	21 - 43
Middle	30	14.07	1.36	12 - 16	18.30	3.68	11 - 24
Lower	26	7.42	2.25	3 - 11	12.19	5.28	2 - 23

As illustrated in Table 3, the mean standard scores of the EPER tests were, from upper group to lower group: 21.72 ($SD = 5.47$), 14.07 ($SD = 1.36$), and 7.42 ($SD = 2.25$) for the pre-test, and 27.36 ($SD = 5.22$), 18.30 ($SD = 3.68$), and 12.19 ($SD = 5.28$) for the post-test, respectively, with a great variance of scores between upper and lower groups. Each group gained a great deal on average.

In order to examine statistically more in detail, a repeated-measures ANOVA was conducted on the EPER pre- and the post-test scores (Table 4). The between-subjects factor was groups (upper, middle, lower) and the within-subjects factors were the EPER pre- and post-test scores.

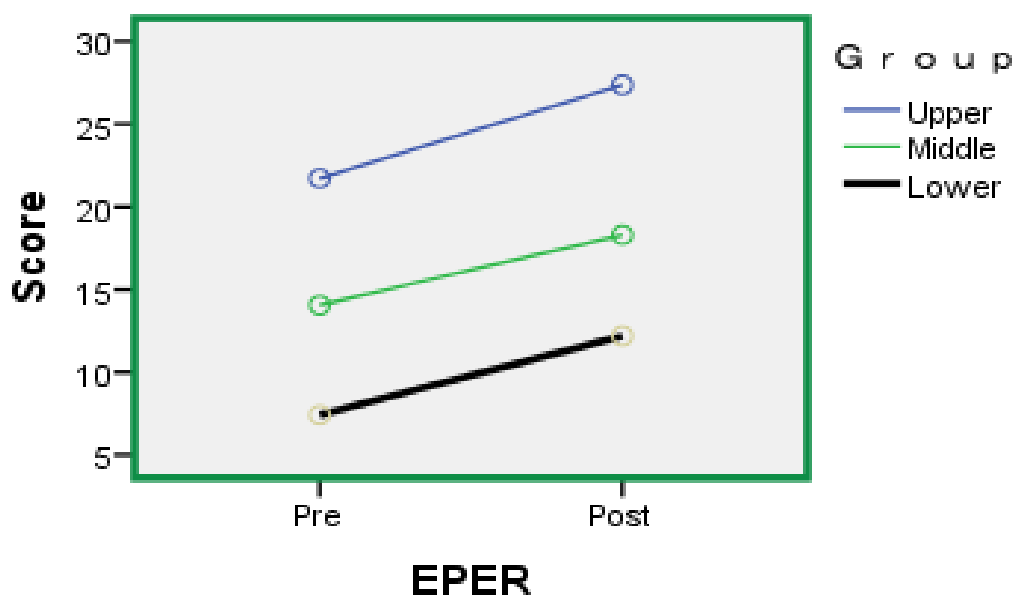
Table 4. Repeated-Measures ANOVA on the pre- and the post-EPER tests

Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Subjects					
Group	5559.49	2	779.82	104.22	.000**
Error	2080.48	78		26.67	
Total	7639.97		2806.49		
Within Subjects					
EPER Test	968.92	1	958.92	133.36	.000**
EPER x Group	13.59	2	6.79	.95	.393
Error	560.87	78	7.19		
Total	1533.38				
TOTAL	9173.35				

** $p < .0001$

As illustrated in Table 4, the results of the analysis indicated a significant main effect for each group ($F = 104.22$, $df = 2$, $p = .000$), a significant main effect for the EPER test ($F = 133.36$, $df = 1$, $p = .000$), and an insignificant interaction effect between the EPER test x group ($F = .95$, $df = 2$, $p < .393$). The results revealed that there were significant between-groups differences, significant changes between the pre- and the post-EPER tests, but the EPER test factor and group factor showed no interaction. This can be seen in the parallel lines in Figure 1.

Figure 1 shows the changes of the EPER pre- and the post-test scores of three groups (upper, middle, lower). Parallel lines indicate that the two factors were not interacting.

**Figure 1.** Changes in the EPER pre- and post-test scores

As shown in Table 4 and Figure 1, the results of this analysis revealed that each group showed a significant improvement in English proficiency after only three months of ER using SSS and SSR methods in the library. Even though their proficiency levels were quite varied, participants selected books which were appropriate to their English proficiency with the help of the instructors. ER was effective for all levels of repeaters for improving their English proficiency when they were occupied with SSR for 80 minutes a week utilizing books appropriate to their level. Thus, Research Question 1 (Will any level of remedial students improve their English proficiency on the post-test after three months of extensive reading?) is confirmed.

4.3 Participants' reading amount

Table 5 shows the participants' reading amount in terms of the number of books and words and the average word count per book.

Table 5. Participants' reading amount

Group (N)	Item	M	SD	Min	Max
Upper (25)	Books	81.3	40.6	13	163
	Word	68,022.6	36,461.8	17,855	124,901
	W/B	1,665.0	2,434.2	162	9,485
Middle (30)	Books	106.3	23.5	46	176
	Words	43,513.3	21,646.0	13,017	100,499
	W/B	421.3	209.5	136	882
Lower (26)	Books	111.2	34.0	60	238
	Words	40,939.1	33,675.0	10,280	166,010
	W/B	352.0	215.6	127	1,075

*W/B = Word count per book

As illustrated in Table 5, the upper group read the largest number of words, 68,023 on average and the smallest number of books, 81.3, resulting in 1,665 words per book. On the other hand, both the middle and the lower groups read a relatively large number of books; 106.3 and 111.2 with smaller numbers of words; 43,513 and 40,939, respectively, which makes relatively a smaller word count per book; 421 word for the middle group and 352 words for the lower group. These results suggest that participants in the upper group read longer books with approximately 1,700 word count on average, whereas those in the middle and the lower groups read over 100 shorter books which contained less than 500 words, which were appropriate to their English proficiency level. Participants in the middle and the lower groups with low English proficiency were motivated to read over the required number (100) of books, as they chose relatively short and easy books, whereas the participants in the upper group chose longer books which were appropriate to their English proficiency level. This suggests that extensive reading was effective to motivate learners of remedial classes, which consisted of students with various proficiency levels, to read English. Thus, research question 2 (Is extensive reading effective to motivate any level of learners in remedial courses to read?) is confirmed.

4.4 Post-questionnaire

The five-point Likert scale questionnaire, which was developed based on one of the authors' former studies (Takase 2007, 2008a, 2009) and Yamazaki (2008), included 50 items pertaining to 1) Reaction and attitudes toward ER, 2) Self-perception of effectiveness of ER on English studies, 3) Motivating factors to keep reading, 4) Demotivating factors that prevented them from reading more, 5) Reading strategies used, and 6) Reasons for choosing books. For the purpose of this paper, the first four sections are discussed. The participants' responses are: 5 = strongly agree, 4 = agree, 3 = cannot decide, 2 = disagree, and 1 = strongly disagree, and the average responded scores of each item in each group were calculated.

Table 6 shows participants' reactions and attitudes toward ER.

Table 6. Reactions and attitudes toward ER

Items	Upper (SD)	Middle (SD)	Lower (SD)
1. Reading LR/GR was good for my English.	4.4 (.60)	4.3 (.79)	4.2 (1.83)
2. I enjoyed reading English books.	4.1 (.91)	3.9 (.95)	3.9 (1.02)
3. I read a lot of books.	4.0 (.67)	3.9 (.81)	3.8 (.97)
4. I have become accustomed to reading English books.	4.0 (.94)	3.8 (1.04)	3.6 (1.18)
5. I want to continue reading English books.	3.7 (.82)	3.4 (.99)	3.3 (1.38)
6. I have come to like English after the ER course.	3.5 (1.07)	3.3 (1.28)	3.2 (1.14)

As seen in Table 6, the upper group responded most positively to all the questions, followed by the middle group and the lower group. The average scores of the responses of three groups to Item 1 (*Reading LR/GR was good for my English.*) were 4.4, 4.3, 4.2, out of 5, respectively, which indicates that a large number of the participants found ER effective for their English study. Their responses to Item 2 (*I enjoyed reading English books.*) were a little lower than Item 1, but still quite high: 4.1, 3.9, 3.9, respectively, although the responses to Item 3 (*I read a lot of books.*) was slightly lower for Upper and Lower groups. 'A lot' does not give a specific number of books or words, as it is a vague expression; however, they seemed to have felt 'a lot' when they had read one hundred books or more. It is amazing that responses to Item 5 (*I want to continue reading English books.*) from upper, middle, and lower groups were 3.7, 3.4, and 3.3, respectively. Even from the lower group approximately two-thirds of the participants responded affirmatively.

Table 7 illustrates how participants felt about the effectiveness of ER on their English studies.

Table 7. Self-perception of effectiveness of ER on English studies

Items	Upper (SD)	Middle (SD)	Lower (SD)
7. My reading skill has improved.	3.7 (.99)	3.3 (1.08)	3.3 (.92)
8. My reading speed has increased.	3.6 (.68)	3.4 (1.07)	3.5 (1.01)
9. My overall English skills have improved.	3.5 (.61)	3.2 (.99)	3.1 (.70)
10. My writing skill has improved.	3.3 (.81)	2.8 (.79)	3.0 (1.00)
11. My grammar knowledge improved.	3.3 (.56)	2.8 (.91)	2.9 (.79)
12. I have learned many words.	3.2 (.98)	2.9 (.93)	3.0 (.80)
13. My speaking skill has improved.	3.0 (.82)	2.8 (.79)	2.7 (.91)
14. My listening skill has improved.	2.6 (.84)	2.7 (.84)	2.7 (1.02)

It is quite natural that participants from all three groups felt either Item 7 (*My reading skill has improved*) or Item 8 (*My reading speed has increased.*) benefited the most. What should be noted is that in any item, concerning other skills than reading (Items 9 – 14), more than half of the participants from all three groups felt they have gained, despite that no such instructions or practices as writing, grammar, vocabulary, speaking, or listening were given in class. The results seem to have brought about from implicit learning by reading an abundance of easy books.

Table 8 shows the factors that motivated learners to keep reading for the whole course.

Table 8. Motivating factors to keep reading

Items	Upper (SD)	Middle (SD)	Lower (SD)
15. I felt a sense of accomplishment after reading a book.	3.9 (.90)	3.7 (1.07)	3.7 (.87)
16. It was the class assignment.	3.8 (.99)	3.6 (.93)	3.6 (.64)
17. I wanted to improve my English.	3.7 (.90)	3.1 (.88)	3.1 (.85)
18. I enjoyed reading English.	3.4 (.61)	2.8 (.91)	3.3 (.96)
19. I like reading.	3.4 (.77)	2.7 (1.16)	3.5 (.81)
20. I like English.	3.3 (.76)	2.6 (.95)	3.0 (1.08)
21. I enjoyed seeing my reading amount increase.	3.1 (.96)	3.4 (1.12)	3.5 (1.29)

The biggest factor was Item 15 (*I felt a sense of accomplishment after reading a book*), which was followed by Item 16 (*It was the class assignment.*) for all the three groups. It is interesting to know that the lower group responded to Item 19 (*I like reading*) and Item 21 (*I enjoyed seeing my reading amount increase.*) most positively (3.5) of the three groups. As was true to the lower group, the response of the middle group to Item 21 was more positive (3.4) than the other 4 items (Items 17, 18, 19, & 20). It indicates that keeping reading logs seemed to have motivated lower and middle groups to read more than the upper group.

Table 9 illustrates the demotivating factors that prevented participants from reading more.

Table 9. Demotivating factors that prevented from reading more

Items	Upper (SD)	Middle (SD)	Lower (SD)
22. I had to study subjects of my major.	2.8 (.074)	2.8 (1.00)	3.1 (1.00)
23. I wanted to read books in Japanese.	2.3 (1.34)	2.3 (1.04)	2.5 (1.21)
24. I couldn't concentrate on reading English.	2.1 (.91)	2.5 (1.19)	2.7 (1.25)
25. I was busy working part-time.	2.1 (1.05)	2.4 (1.19)	2.5 (1.57)
26. I couldn't find interesting books.	2.1 (.91)	2.4 (.99)	2.5 (1.09)
27. I am poor at English.	2.0 (.71)	2.7 (.93)	2.6 (1.15)
28. I don't like English.	2.0 (.74)	2.6 (.94)	2.6 (1.22)
29. I don't like reading.	1.9 (.71)	2.6 (.94)	2.3 (1.33)
30. I couldn't enjoy reading English books.	1.9 (.79)	2.3 (1.01)	2.3 (1.03)

It should be noted that the upper group responded the least negatively to all the factors among the three groups. The biggest demotivating factor for all three groups was Item 22 (*I had to study subjects of my major.*), the lower group showing the biggest score. Concerning Item 23 (*I wanted to read books in Japanese.*) half of the participants in the lower group responded negatively (2.5). It is assumed that they often read books in Japanese as Item 19 (*I like reading.*) shows. As for Item 24 (*I couldn't concentrate on reading English.*), the lower group responded the least positively (2.7), which is followed by the middle group (2.5), and upper group (2.1). It can be assumed that participants from the Upper group were engaged in reading longer books

In general, participants in all three groups showed positive attitudes toward ER. One of the reasons for their favourable attitudes toward ER could be attributed to the level of the books they read. As mentioned before (pp.16-17), 64.2% of the participants felt English difficult and 44.4% of them had failed the former classes because grammar-translation English lessons had been difficult to follow. Therefore, it can be assumed that the books recommended to them, which were easy enough to read without using a dictionary, lowered their affective filter and the participants were motivated to read over 100 easily comprehensible books. By doing so, they experienced a sense of accomplishment every time they completed a whole book, however easy and thin the books were. They gradually gained self-confidence and by the time the goal of 100 books was approaching, they began to feel self-efficacy (Bandura 1986). Oftentimes they experienced the flow situation (Csikszentmihalyi 1991) when they kept reading for 80 minutes non-stop without any interruption. Then, they came to find out expectancy-value (Atkinson 1957; Bandura 1986) of ER. Although the participants were affected by some demotivating factors, motivating factors were greater for them. This could be attributed to the ample time and the appropriate place they were provided for reading regularly, as they were reading with peers with no disturbances during the given time.

Study question 3 was 'Will remedial students' attitudes and motivation toward English studies change after the three months ER course?' Considering the participants' attitudes and motivation toward English studies, which showed in the questionnaire at the onset of the course (Table 2: 10), and the responses to the post-questionnaire (Table 6: 14, Table 8: 15), participants' attitudes and motivation toward English studies have improved through extensive reading. Their attitudes toward ER were favourable and they were

motivated to read English books extensively. ER was effective on remedial students to improve not only their English proficiency but also their attitudes and motivation toward English studies.

5 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to examine whether remedial students would improve their English proficiency after attending three-months of ER courses and whether ER would help motivate remedial students to read English books extensively, as well as to find out reactions to ER by investigating their attitudes and motivation towards ER. The quantitative analysis of the results of the pre- and post-tests showed that repeaters who experienced ER using SSS and SSR methods significantly improved their English ability. What should be noted is that this significant improvement in English was observed with repeaters with various levels of English ability (their TOEIC scores range between 190 and 625). The analysis of the number of books and their word counts also illustrated that the students of the three groups became motivated enough to succeed in reading over the required number of books in accordance with their English proficiency level. It was also suggested that those remedial students showed quite positive attitudes towards ER; they gained self-confidence through reading easily comprehensible books, which eventually led them to feel self-efficacy.

The findings also seem to indicate that ER contributes to remedial students learning English implicitly. The results of the EPER cloze test can be quite strong support for this claim. In addition, many participants felt that their general English skill, specifically writing skills, grammar knowledge and vocabulary acquisition as well as reading skills, improved (Table 7). By reading numerous books which have completeness of the storyline, not excerpt-like appearances typically observed in school textbooks, remedial students had an opportunity to encounter the optimum use of grammar and vocabulary in particular contexts. In short, it appears that the students could enhance their working knowledge of English by reading extensively, which was reflected in the results of the post-test. It is also relevant to investigate the EPER cloze test, whereby context provided plays a vital role to give answers. Further research is then needed into which aspects of English proficiency (e.g., grammatical knowledge, reading comprehension) the EPER cloze test evaluates.

To sum up, it seems reasonable to conclude that learners who have negative experience in studying English could not only develop their English proficiency through ER but also enjoy reading English extensively. Moreover, the effects of ER are found in learners with any level of English ability. Given the results of the analysis reported in this research, ER could be a practical option to run remedial courses, many of which at the moment focus on giving another opportunity to study what remedial students already found uninteresting in their early English education.

Finally, there are several limitations of the present study. First, there is no control group to this study. As remedial classes are oftentimes taught using different styles depending on the nature of classes and teachers, it was difficult to find a control group. In addition, from the authors' former experiences, extensive reading was considered to be the most effective teaching method for

reluctant students, specifically in classes of mixed proficiency levels, so it would not be ethical to create a control group for the purpose of study. Second, the two questionnaires conducted on students at the beginning and the end of the course had different items. Therefore, it was not possible to compare the change of attitudes or motivation accurately. A further study is necessary to examine the changes of motivation and attitudes toward extensive reading more in detail.

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