

## 〔研究ノート〕

## 京都産業大学における多読クラスの調査

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## 要 旨

本稿は、2003年に京都産業大学において行った多読の授業をもとに、日本の学生の英語力向上に、多読がどの程度効果的であるかを検証したものである。このクラスは再履修クラスで、大半の学生は、英語の授業としては、一週間に一度行われるこのクラスしか履修していない。したがって、このタームの最初と最後に行ったクローズテストに見られる学生の読解能力の推移は、この授業の結果を正確に反映するものとなっていると思われる。実際、この授業を通して、学生の英語を読むスピードは向上し、クローズテストの結果は、読解力向上を示した。更に、事後のアンケートによると、多くの学生が、伝統的教授方法である精読方式よりも、多読形式を好むという結果もでた。この調査は、日本の大学生においても、多読が相当程度、効果的であることを示した。

## A Research on an *Extensive Reading* Class at Kyoto Sangyo University

Motohiro Kojima

Krashen, the advocate of *input hypothesis* (the exposure to comprehensible input, which contains structures that are slightly advanced for a learner's current level of competence, is the necessary and sufficient cause of second language acquisition), earnestly recommends reading many books as a *comprehensible input*. Comparing *direct instruction* (skill building & error correction) and *free voluntary reading* (school free reading & self-reported), Krashen (1993) argues that *free voluntary reading* is more effective than *direct instruction* in improving students' language abilities such as reading comprehension, writing style, grammar, spelling, and vocabulary (p. 1-32). Thus, he concludes:

Reading is good for you. The research supports a stronger conclusion, however: Reading is the only way, the only way we become good readers, develop a good writing style, an adequate vocabulary, advanced grammar, and the only way we become good spellers (Krashen, 1993, p. 23).

As shown here, Krashen sometimes tends to adopt an extreme view, but many foreign researchers have supported his ideas, particularly that of extensive reading, and have practiced it in the classroom (See Day, 1998, p. 34). Currently, in Japan, many people have become interested in this method owing to the influence of Kunihide Sakai, who presides over an extensive reading group, SSS Eigo-Gakushu-Ho Kenkyu Kai (See, [www.seg.co.jp/ssss/](http://www.seg.co.jp/ssss/)).

However, not many studies have been conducted thus far on extensive reading in university classrooms in Japan, although we have some exceptionally good reports (e.g., Mason, 1997; Robb, 1989). In this study, in order to determine the effectiveness of extensive reading for Japanese university students, I investigated an English class in which extensive reading was implemented at Kyoto Sangyo University. The class was designed for students who had failed the required English classes, termed as the *Sai Rishu* class. Of the 14 students in this class, 10 students, who were in their second, third, and fourth years, took only one English class a week. This ruled out the possibility of the results being affected by other English classes. As Robb states, since his students were taking a total of 6 English classes, the results might be contaminated. In my case, the results are supposed to be caused purely by the extensive reading class.

#### *The practice of reading graded readers.*

The classes were held once a week, each lasting 90 min; 15 classes were held over the latter semester of 2003. In a class, the students spent approximately 70 min reading Penguin Graded Readers (200 word level, 300 word level, 600 word level, and 1200 word level), around 100 books of which were purchased for the class. In the class, the students were required to read some books that they wished to read (they were recommended to replace one book with another one when they found it uninteresting) and were also required to write short synopses of the book in Japanese. Each time a student finished reading a book and wrote the synopsis, he/she handed in the reading card to the teacher, and they discussed the book. The teacher advised the students to move to the next grade when they could read at a speed of approximately 80 words per min<sup>(1)</sup>.

#### *The reading speed.*

The purpose of this instruction was to prevent students from reading too carefully as many of them had been trained to do for their entrance examination. So, in the class, students were advised to refrain from translating the text into Japanese (even mentally) and from consulting a dictionary, so as to read as fast as possible while understanding the plot. The reading speeds of the 10 students, who continued to attend the class until the end of the term, are listed in the tables below:

Table 1

*Reading Speed (words/min)*

Easy Starters (200 words level)

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th
A	81	128	64	150	128	100	100				
B	60	45	45	64	52	65	60	75	64	75	
C	45	90	53	47	69	112	52	56	113		
D	60	56	81	60	56	60	90	90	60	69	
E	82	50	69	100	90						
F	69	75	60	90	100	81	112				
G	45	180	69	60	82	82	100				
H	60	73	64	81	56	69	90	75	90	128	82
I	53	45	50	60	56	75	69	69			
J	75	100	81	81	90						
Mean	63.0	84.0	63.6	79.3	77.9	80.5	84.1	73.0	81.8	90.7	

Table 2

*Reading Speed (words/min)*

Beginners (300 words level)

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th	7th	8th	9th	10th	11th
A	80	50	123	100	82	121	71	74	146	52	71
B	80	80	70	50	80	83	85	68			
C	167	111	68	71	50						
D	52	85	82	65	95	95	54	107			
E	136	100	95	94	131	76	75				
F	64	81	116	111	106	100					
G	136	84	100	146	60	47	43	60			
H	65	111	81	94	95						
I	70	71									
J	65	72	94	70	75	90	116	93			
Mean	91.5	84.5	92.1	89.0	86.0	87.4	74.0	80.4			

Table 3

*Reading Speed (words/min)*

Elementary (600 words level)

	1st	2nd	3rd
A	82		
B	71	65	
C			
D	65	92	71
E	133	93	
F	125		
G	43		
H	88	85	72
I			
J	93	80	67
Mean	87.5	83.5	70.0

As these tables show, the student's reading speeds increased with the number of books they read; this is shown more clearly in the following table:

Table 4

*The Mean Reading Speeds of the 200 and 300 Words Level*

	200 Words Level	300 Words Level
A	107	88
B	61	75
C	71	93
D	74	79
E	78	101
F	98	105
G	74	84
H	79	89
I	60	71
J	85	84
Mean	78.7	86.6

The mean reading speed of the 200 words level books — 78.7 words per min — rose to 86.8 words per min, which is the mean reading speed of the 300 words level books. This gap is not too wide; however, considering the fact that the 300 words level books are more difficult than the 200 words level books in terms of both vocabulary and syntax, it is safe to conclude that the reading speed of the students improved during the term.

*The total words.*

In addition to the reading speed, an important factor in extensive reading is the quantity read. Students were advised to read as many books as possible. The total number of words read by the students is given below:

Table 5  
*Total Number of Words Read by Each Student*

	Total Words
A	30500
B	39800
C	16100
D	38900
E	40500
F	31800
G	41400
H	45300
I	21800
J	36500
Mean	34260

*Measure of the improvement of reading ability.*

A 60-item cloze test (every 10th word deleted), written at the 200 words level, 300 words level, and 600 words level (20 items for each level) was given as a pretest (at the beginning of the term) and as a posttest (at the end of the term). Students took the pretest at the beginning of October and the posttest at the end of January. This interval was long enough to measure the improvement in their English reading ability. The result is given below:

Table 6  
*The Results of the Cloze Test*

	Pretest	Posttest	Increase
A	20	30	10
B	20	24	4
C	25	25	0
D	36	34	-2
E	24	26	2
F	30	31	1
G	26	34	8
H	18	30	12
I	22	25	3
J	27	27	0
Mean	24.8	28.6	3.8

The mean of the posttest is higher than that of the pretest by 3.8 points. In addition, it should be noted that the scores of 7 of the 10 students increase. Based on this result, it can be said that the reading ability of the students improved. Indeed, some people state that it is hardly surprising that university students improve their English ability (although I do not agree) because they study English in various classes and even out of class; however, in this class, the students did not study English outside the classroom, except for some who read the remainder of the book at home, and 8 of the 10 students (A, B, C, E, F, G, H, and J) took only this English class. Considering this, it cannot be denied that extensive reading was effective for these students.

*The relation between the reading quantity and test score.*

The students' reading quantity is closely related to the improvement of the score. The mean of the total words read by the 5 students who gained more than 3 points is 35760 words, while the mean of the total words read by the other students is 32760 words. On an average, the 5 students who improved their reading ability read 3000 words more than the other students. The mean of the total words of the 3 outstanding students who gained 8 points and more (A, G, and H) is approximately 39060 words, which is much higher. Although the number of subjects in this study was not very large, this result probably indicates that the more the students read, the greater the improvement in their reading ability.

*Students' views on extensive reading versus intensive reading.*

At the end of the term, I asked all the students whether they preferred an extensive reading type class (like this one) or an intensive reading type class (grammar-translation method, adopted by many teachers) as an English class. The students' responses are given below:

Table 7

	Extensive (E)/Intensive (I)
A	E
B	I
C	E
D	E
E	E
F	I
G	E
H	I
I	E
J	E
Total	7 E = 7; I = 3

The majority of the students preferred the extensive reading method to the intensive reading method. Some students who supported extensive reading said that they found the intensive reading class boring because all they did was write down the Japanese translation of what the teacher said in their notebooks, while in the extensive reading class, they could actively participate in the class by selecting and reading books and writing the synopsis by themselves. On the other hand, students who complain about extensive reading classes said that they wanted to read with certainty, which was caused by the work of translation. It is possible that these students are still under the influence of traditional English education; however, their attitude toward English — that of reading accurately — cannot be denied. Their contrasting views on extensive reading depend on whether they focus extensively on “accuracy” or “fluency” while reading English.

*Conclusion.*

This research exemplifies that extensive reading classes are effective to some extent. At the very least, it is clear that this method can improve the reading ability of Japanese university students. In addition, many students preferred these classes despite the fact that they were unusual in

that both the teacher and students did not speak for most of the time. Therefore, more teachers should adopt this method in the education of university students.

#### note

- (1) Indeed, 80 words per minute is still slow for “rapid” reading; the criterion could have been higher if we had had more time. However, as a result of setting a low criterion, students were able to proceed to the higher level books and possibly understand the entire process of the extensive reading practice better.

#### References

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