

# The effect of choice on engagement in extensive reading

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## Abstract:

Graded Reader を利用した英語の多読は、学習者に彼等のレベルを上回る高い自主性と内容を与え、且つ、学習者が深く幅広く英語に触れることを可能にしている。これまで、一般的には多読を行う際に学習者に与えられる自由が、読む事への積極性や関心を高めるとされてきた。確かに、この説は集中した状態で行われる読解の過程においては真実と言えるだろう。しかし、他の多様な条件における読解についても同じことが言えるだろうか。たとえば個人の学習者が自由に読解素材を選択した場合、より自由度の低い複数の学習者が共同で選んだ読解素材を使うよりも、読む事への積極性や関心が高いということが必ずしも言えるのだろうか。

本研究は Graded Reader の読解における読解への積極性や関心について、自己報告調査を収集したものである。自己報告調査は被験者が「読解素材を選択する」「読解」「グループディスカッション」という各学習段階を終えた時点で行われた。また本研究では、個々が自由に読解素材を選択した場合と、複数の被験者がグループで1冊の本を選択した場合と、2つのケースで同じ調査を行うことで両者を比較している。その結果、本研究は、読解素材を学習者に自由に選択させることが、ただ単純に学習者の読解への積極性や関心を高めるという結果には繋がらないという事を結論づけている。

## キーワード：

engagement, choice, self-selection, group-selection, extended reading, graded reading, sustained silent reading, motivation

## Introduction

### Literature review

The art and science of second language acquisition has come a long way from the traditional methods of the past. While older, traditional methods were useful in their own time for those specific purposes, modern EFL/ESL needs have more effective approaches available. Despite this availability, many students are limited to learning ESL/EFL reading using older

methodology. As Bamford and Day (1997) put it, beginning and intermediate students' reading experience is generally restricted to using a dictionary to decode a text word by word, sentence by sentence, which is not actually reading at all. They go on recognizing the importance that communicative language teaching has had with its emphasis on authentic use of language in instruction, but point out that since "authentic" has been widely misunderstood to equate with

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“native speaker” audience, the standard approach to reading instruction has students using text that is far beyond their current level (Bamford & Day, 1997).

There are two general types of reading in language learning contexts: intensive and extensive. Intensive reading is when a text has careful inspection, possibly to be translated, paraphrased, memorized, or many other possible studies: extensive reading on the other hand is, the reading of many works in quick succession focusing on simple understanding of the content (Palmer, 1919 as cited in Mclean & Roualt, 2017). Taking a specific sample of text and slowly, carefully examining it over and over is a staple of the grammar-translation method, and it has merit in analyzing complicated sentence structure, as well as a focus on reading skills such as skimming, scanning, recognizing main ideas, etc. It usually contains native level text and is a common approach to EFL reading classes, especially in Japan (Tsukamoto & Tsujioaka, 2013, as cited in Mclean & Roualt, 2017). While a useful and important tool to language learning, intensive reading is only one side of the proverbial reading coin. In short, intensive reading is reading to learn (something), and extensive reading is simply learning to read.

Extensive reading is quickly reading through easy material, generally freely chosen by the reader following the reader’s own interests, but in large amounts of reading, not small isolated amounts. Day (2003) stated that through extensive reading EFL students can increase reading and oral fluency, increase vocabulary, increase writing skills, and gain positive attitudes to reading and studying the foreign language. The Extensive Reading Foundation’s Guide to Extensive Reading (2011) used the acronym READ: “Read quickly and Enjoyably with Adequate

comprehension so they Don’t need a dictionary.” Extensive reading, or ER as it is commonly abbreviated, has been found more effective in developing reading and language skills than other approaches like intensive reading alone (Milliner & Cote, 2015). Rather than limiting ESL/EFL students’ English reading experiences to long, difficult English decoding of instructor selected text, the students can choose their own topic, written at their own level, and stopping and switching freely so that they read for understanding, yes; but more importantly read for fun. This creates “The virtuous circle of a good reader” where a student with a self-selected, grade appropriate graded reader (a)understands better, so (b)reads faster, and (c)enjoys reading, therefore (d)reads more, so repeats the cycle at (a) again and so forth (Extensive Reading Foundation, 2011).

The large volume of reading performed through extensive reading provides rapid repetition of level appropriate vocabulary. New words are acquired through repeated exposure, while ten times is recommended by Nation (1999, chapter 4), it is not clear how many times is needed for sure. Along with repetition of new words, also critical is the frequency that the word is repeated in the student’s reading experience. If the student no longer remembers the word by the time it is read again, it cannot be considered as repetition for learning (Nation & Wang, 1999). In graded readers, the high frequency words are reused at specifically planned rates according to reading level, so every 5,000 ? 6,000 words, a given new word would be repeated: this means that the student should read at least 5,000 words a week to reinforce the words while they are still in memory. As a number of separate studies on Japanese EFL students have found similar reading rates: 77 wpm

(Mclean & Roualt, 2017), 79 wpm (Robb & Susser, 1989, as cited in Mclean & Roualt, 2017), and 82 wpm (Taguchi et al., 2004, as cited in Mclean & Roualt, 2017), as a very rough estimate average for the general Japanese university EFL student would be about 79.5 wpm. Thus to read the minimum 5,000 words would take about 63 minutes a week. Another important benefit of extended reading is the automation of a number of cognitive processes that allow increased reading speed or fluency (Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Despite these and many other benefits, adoption of extensive reading in Japan has been slow, and it is with additional experience and research that such adoption can be encouraged.

One benefit of ER, already mentioned previously in this study, is increased enjoyment and motivation to read and study English. This is similar and related to, but distinct from engagement. In the literature, there are many definitions for engagement, but it is widely considered to cover a number of affective conditions, types of behaviors, and ways of thinking (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris, 2004). It is useful for disambiguation purposes, to differentiate motivation from engagement. Motivation is the collection of internal energy, drive, willpower, etc. that make up the psychological processes to create desire to achieve a goal (Wang & Degol, 2014). Engagement is the external result of motivation: possibly behavior that can be observed, or perhaps emotional and cognitive conditions that may not be observed (Christenson et al., 2008). Engagement also consists of various levels upon which a students can be engaged: a specific learning activity, subject or teacher specific, and involvement with the greater school community in general (Wang & Degol, 2014).

It is complex with various dimensions such

as behavioral engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris, 2004), and some researchers add agentic engagement referring to when students proactively influence instruction as opposed to the more passive reactions of the previous three dimensions (Wang & Degol, 2014). The measurement of the main three dimensions have been confounded in the literature, so it is important that measurement for each dimension does not overlap with another. Behavioral engagement includes items like following rules, completing homework, lesson involvement, attendance, disturbing other students, attention, and persistence: however, each of these are separate because a student can follow rules faithfully without completing homework, for example (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris, 2004). Emotional engagement addresses issues of happy, sad, interested, bored, angry, frustrated, etc.: care is needed here as well because students can be happy at school due to social involvement, but frustrated with classroom conditions (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris, 2004). Lastly, cognitive engagement generally refers to a psychological investment in learning like the quality of a discussion, exchanging of ideas, the effort to go beyond the surface of a task to seek mastery, etc.: the challenge with this dimension is the classic difficulty with observing and measuring cognition (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, and Paris, 2004).

For the typical classroom, it might be helpful to consider engagement in terms of “flow” rather than the multi-level-multi-dimensional engagement “meta” construct. Sometimes described as being in the “zone” or the “groove” (Jackson & Marsh, 1996), flow has been found in nearly any human activity that is intrinsically rewarding and results with the participants climbing to

greater lengths of achievement (Csikszentmihalyi, 1990). The “Forgetting Principle, “...the best input is so interesting and relevant that the acquirer may even ‘forget’ that the message is coded in a foreign language.” (Krashen, 1982, as cited in Egbert, 2003). Flow is basically a cognitive phenomenon that occurs with the balance of challenge and skill within an intrinsically rewarding activity that drives the participant to repeat the activity and increasing in skill and desire to attempt more difficulty (Hektner & Csikszentmihalyi, 1996). It makes an upward spiral nearly identical to the “virtuous circle of the good reader” described in the Extended Reader Guidebook (2011) previously mentioned.

The value of extended reading, the need for more research and the effectiveness of engagement/flow on language activities prompted the following three research questions:

1. Do self-reported levels of engagement in three stages of an extensive reading activity change depending on whether the reader was selected by the individual or by the group?
2. Do indicators of engagement in online reading change depending on whether the reader was selected by the individual or by the group?
3. What are the participants’ reflections on their overall experience with the extensive reading activity?

### 3 Methods

#### 3.1 Participants

Student reading attitudes? Challenge v skill requirements= task appropriateness?

The study was performed at a private junior college in a rural area of the Kanto region in Japan. The participants, (n= 23) were a sample of 13 first year and 7 second year English major students ranging from eighteen to twenty-one years old with an average age of 18.6 years. Of

the 23 participants, only 2 were male. All participants were native Japanese speakers, and their English ability level was mid-A2 with a mean TOEIC score of 378. All participants went through the Japanese education system with the mandatory six years of English education, though with varying levels of extracurricular English conversation classes from cram schools. None of the participants had experienced extended reading in any form. All the participants were enrolled in one of two compulsory classes, Tutorial 1 for the first year students and Tutorial 3 for the second year students. Each class met once a week for 90 minutes with additional homework completed outside of class. They had many of the same mandatory external classes for each grade, but could choose additional elective English courses. At the beginning of the study, there were 25 participants, but due to attendance issues, two participants had incomplete data samples and so were excluded from the study which left a total sample size of 23.

#### 3.2 Data collection

Data was collected using self-reported questionnaires: pre-study (basic demographic information, reading experience, and attitudes regarding reading) , post-study (reading experience, attitude regarding reading, reflections on the activity), and three weekly questionnaires (selection of graded reader, reading, discussion) to assess (engagement as measured by interest, enjoyment, effort, and concentration). Questionnaires used a 6-point Likert scale with (1) strongly disagree to (6) strongly agree with no neutral option.

Objective data was also obtained for each sample period, recorded from the Xreading.com website live while the participants were actually reading the selected grader readers (words read,

seconds spent reading, reading speed, and score of the post-reading comprehension quiz for each book). The students had been informed, and had given consent to the collection of such data, and so were aware of it being collected as they participated.

All participants were placed into a group of four based on their reading ability as measured by TOEIC score and confirmed using the Xreader “Find Your Level” (XLearning Systems, ND) level assessment tool, so that students were in a group with similar reading ability. Each of these groups was assigned a specific reading level, from which they would select graded readers to match the level. Prior to any sample period, the researcher set the system such that students could only select readers of a set length, variety of genre, and unique to their group (so it is different from the other three members of the group) to maintain the controls of the study.

The study uses a single sample, repeated measures design, so in one treatment, a 10 minute period was given to allow individual students to select any graded reader of their choice (self-selected). Immediately following the selection, all participants completed a bilingual (English/Japanese) questionnaire distributed and collected via Google Form which ensured that every required field of the questionnaire was completed following the instructions. Students answered questions to measure engagement on dimensions of engagement specifically during the 10 minute selection activity: interest, enjoyment, effort, and concentration using a 6-point Likert scale. The students were given some class time to begin reading their chosen reader, but would finish it and the accompanying comprehension quiz outside of class. Immediately after finishing the reader, participants were to complete a questionnaire specifically about the level

of interest, enjoyment, effort, and concentration they felt while reading. Finally, in the next weekly class, the pre-made groups would meet for 15 minutes and discuss the readers that each student read using some instructor provided prompts. Immediately following the discussion, all students would immediately complete a questionnaire to measure their engagement during the discussion activity.

The next treatment was the same pattern; selection, reading, discussion, with, the same questionnaires for each. However, instead of self-selected readers, each pre-made group of four had 10 minutes to discuss and chose the next reader together. The four members of each group then read the same book, and completed all the same questionnaires. The data collection periods thus alternated treatments: self-selected readers for one sample period, then group-selected, self-selected, then group-selected, etc. Initially the study had eight collections; four for each treatment, self-selected and group-selected. However, due to students missing classes, there were only enough complete data sets for two collection periods for self-selected, and two collection periods for group selected.

Each treatment period collected data from weekly self-reported questionnaires (see appendix) for each stage of the activity: selection, reading, and discussion; to answer research question 1: Do self-reported levels of engagement in three stages of an extensive reading activity change depending on whether the reader was selected by the individual or by the group? The next source of data was computer generated data recorded during the online reading stage: number of words read, time spent reading, reading speed, and reading comprehension quiz score. These can help to explore research question 2: Do indicators of engagement in online

reading change depending on whether the reader was selected by the individual or by the group? Additionally, at the end of the study, all participants completed a post-study questionnaire to consider for research question 3: What are the participants' reflections on their overall experience with the extensive reading activity?

Before analyzing, it was necessary to test task appropriateness to confirm that.

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## Weekly Engagement Questionnaire: Selection

Q1. What is your name? 氏名 ?

Q2. What is your student number? 学生番号 ?

Q3. Name of the selected graded reader? 本のタイトル ?

Q4. How was this graded reader selected? 選択方法について ?

Individual Selection 自分で選択      Group Selection グループで選択

Teacher Assigned 教員の指定      Other:

Directions: Please rate the following statements based on your own opinions using the scale below.

これらの質問にたいして、自身の感想に基づいて、以下の選択肢から最も適しているものを選びなさい。

1 - 全く当てはまらない      2 - 少し当てはまらない      3 - やや当てはまらない

4 - やや当てはまる      5 - 少し当てはまる      6 - とても当てはまる

Strongly Disagree      1      2      3      4      5      6      Strongly Agree

Q5. I felt bored while looking for a good reader. 本を探すことはつまらなかった。 ?

Strongly Disagree      1      2      3      4      5      6      Strongly Agree

Q6. I enjoyed the process of selecting this reader. 本を選ぶ過程が楽しかった。 ?

Strongly Disagree      1      2      3      4      5      6      Strongly Agree

Q7. I was focused on finding a good reader during the selection time. 本を選ぶことに集中できた。 ?

Strongly Disagree      1      2      3      4      5      6      Strongly Agree

Q8. I tried hard to find a good reader. いい本を選ぶよう努力した。 ?

Strongly Disagree      1      2      3      4      5      6      Strongly Agree

Q9. My preferences were an important part of the selection process. 自分の好み通りに選ぶことができた。 ?

Strongly Disagree      1      2      3      4      5      6      Strongly Agree

Q10. I am looking forward to reading this story. この本を読むのを楽しみにしている。

Strongly Disagree      1      2      3      4      5      6      Strongly Agree

Q11. Selecting the graded reader was a challenging task. 本を選ぶのが難しかった。

Strongly Disagree      1      2      3      4      5      6      Strongly Agree

Q12. I felt engaged in the task of selecting a reader. 本を選ぶことに没頭した。 ?

Strongly Disagree      1      2      3      4      5      6      Strongly Agree

End of the survey - Thank you for participating! ご協力ありがとうございました。

**Weekly Engagement Questionnaire: Reading**

Q1. What is your name? 氏名 ?

Q2. What is your student number? 学生番号 ?

Q3. Name of the selected graded reader? 本のタイトル ?

Q4. How was this graded reader selected? 選択方法について ?

Individual Selection 自分で選択    Group Selection グループで選択

Teacher Assigned 教員の指定    Other:

Q5. Did you finish the graded reader? 最後まで読み終わったか ?

Yes / No

Directions: Please rate the following statements based on your own opinions using the scale below.

これらの質問にたいして、自身の感想に基づいて、以下の選択肢から最も適しているものを選びなさい。

1 - 全く当てはまらない    2 - 少し当てはまらない    3 - やや当てはまらない

4 - やや当てはまる    5 - 少し当てはまる    6 - とても当てはまる

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

Q6. I felt bored while reading the story. この本を読むのは退屈だった。 ?

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

Q7. I enjoyed reading the story. 読んでいて、楽しかった。 ?

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

Q8. While I was reading, I stayed focused on the task. 読んでいる間ずっと話に集中した。 ?

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

Q9. I put a lot of effort into this assignment. 今回の課題にかなり努力した。 ?

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

Q10. I feel good that I could read a whole book in English. 英語 1 冊の本を読み終わったことにたいして満足感がある。 ?

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

Q11. I could read at a steady pace. 一定の速度で読むことができた。 ?

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

Q12. I felt engaged in the reading activity. 読むことに没頭した。 ?

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

End of the survey - Thank you for participating!    ご協力ありがとうございました。

## Weekly Engagement Questionnaire: Discussion

Q1. What is your name? 氏名 ?

Q2. What is your student number? 学生番号 ?

Q3. Name of the selected graded reader? 本のタイトル ?

Q4. How was this graded reader selected? 選択方法について ?

Individual Selection 自分で選択    Group Selection グループで選択

Teacher Assigned 教員の指定    Other:

Q5. Did you finish the graded reader? 最後まで読み終わったか ?

Yes / No

Directions: Please rate the following statements based on your own opinions using the scale below.

これらの質問にたいして、自身の感想に基づいて、以下の選択肢から最も適しているものを選びなさい。

1 - 全く当てはまらない    2 - 少し当てはまらない    3 - やや当てはまらない

4 - やや当てはまる    5 - 少し当てはまる    6 - とても当てはまる

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

Q6. My group's discussion was interesting. 私のグループのディスカッションは面白かった。 ?

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

Q7. Overall, I enjoyed discussing the story. 全体として本の内容のディスカッションは楽しかった。 ?

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

Q8. My mind was wandering during our discussion. ディスカッション中はあまり集中できなかった。 ?

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

Q9. I tried hard to contribute to the discussion. ディスカッションに貢献しようと頑張った。 ?

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

Q10. I was an active participant in the discussion. 私はディスカッションに積極的に参加することができた。 ?

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

Q11. I had sufficient English ability to discuss the book with my group. 他のメンバーと本の内容に関して英語で十分にディスカッションできた。 ?

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

Q12. I felt engaged in the discussion activity. ディスカッションに没頭した。 ?

Strongly Disagree    1    2    3    4    5    6    Strongly Agree

End of the survey - Thank you for participating! ご協力ありがとうございました。

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