Key Factors for an Effective Extensive Reading Program

Atsusko Takase*, Minami Kanda**, Hitoshi Nishizawa***, and Kyoko Otsuki****

Kinki University
atsukot@jttk.zaq.ne.jp
***Heisei International University*
kanda@hiu.ac.jp
****Toyota National College of Technology*
nisizawa@toyota-ct.ac.jp
*****Kinki University*
otsuki_kyoko@hotmail.com

Abstract

Extensive Reading (ER) has been gaining popularity as one of the most effective English teaching methods across Japan. However, in order to ensure a successful ER program, there are several indispensable tips to follow. In this symposium, four presenters will explore (1) the use of word count for tracking students' progress, (2) the effects of in-class sustained silent reading (SSR), and (3) the beneficial impacts of the a long-term ER program. Firstly, Kanda will report how recording word count provides a useful tool for monitoring students' accomplishments in ER. Secondly, Takase and Otsuki will emphasize the importance of SSR under the guidance of instructors. Finally, Nishizawa will discuss the key factor that leads to a successful ER program, a long-term participation. The symposium will conclude with a review of pedagogical implications and suggestions for instructors.

I. Introduction

In the last decade, Extensive Reading (ER) has been increasing in popularity in Japan as one of the most effective methods to improve learners' English skills. However, in order to make an ER program a success, there are several indispensable tips to follow. Among them three crucial tips will be reported by four researchers: (1) the use of word count for tracking students' progress, (2) the effects of in-class sustained silent reading (SSR), and (3) the beneficial impacts of the a long-term ER program.

Firstly, Kanda will report how recording word count provides a useful tool for monitoring students' accomplishments in ER. Three instruments, that is, the number of titles read, the number of words read, and the average word count per title read, were compared based on the data of four university students' two-year ER practice. Fluency development was reflected in the lengths of the books read. The word count also highlighted the period in which some students started to read in larger amounts, leading to marked improvements in reading levels.

Secondly, Takase and Otsuki will emphasize the importance of SSR under the guidance of instructors. To foster an effective SSR environment, they instructed remedial students to read books in a designated room at a university library. The students read easily comprehensible books for 80 minutes a week for approximately three months. The students improved their English proficiency based on the Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading (EPER) cloze test.

Finally, Nishizawa will discuss the key factor that leads to a successful ER program, a long-term participation. TOEIC scores of 20 engineering students, who have been participating in an ER program for five consecutive years, were monitored with regard to their reading amount. The long-term ER program had an apparent benefit in that the students demonstrated significant increases in TOEIC scores after two or three years of concentrating on reading easy-to-read books.

II. Word Count as ER Monitoring Instrument

(Minami Kanda)

A. Word Count for Monitoring ER Quantity

How do teachers monitor students' performance in ER? And how do they assess their students' achievement? The key to an effective ER class is to ensure students read large amounts (Waring, 2000, 2009). The issues of monitoring and assessment may pose genuine educational dilemma in an ER classroom, where, ideally, "reading is its own reward (Day & Bamford, 1998, 2002)." At the same time, it is necessary for teachers to keep track of what and how much students read, as such data serves as the basis of teachers' guidance. Students in most educational contexts cannot be expected to read smoothly in their second or foreign language, simply by being provided with reading materials that are easier and shorter than more challenging selections. Students may have difficulty choosing books that suit both

their reading proficiency levels as well as their reading interests (Kanda, 2009) and ER teachers need to guide each student's reading inside and outside of the classroom environment.

When teachers are interested in assessing students' reading quality, that is, how well students are reading and to what degree they are understanding, they might rely on reading comprehension checks, or reading tests. On the other hand, the quantity of reading in ER, that is, how much students read, is the main focus of this study. Reading amounts reflects both performance and achievement in ER class. In the past, the parameters to assess the quantity of ER have included the number of titles read (Nation, 2009), the number of pages read (Robb & Susser, 1989), and the time spent on reading (Hedgcock & Ferris, 2009). The number of total words is gaining popularity in Japan, because the information on word counts of graded readers and children's books has become quite accessible (Furukawa et al., 2009).

In this section, drawing on a two-year longitudinal data of non-English-major university students, I will explore how word count can provide a useful tool for monitoring student progress and achievement in ER. It can also serve as a self-monitoring instrument for students, which is conducive to reading more.

B. Research Purpose

The purpose of this study was to compare three instruments for tracking EFL learners' reading amounts in their two-year ER practice, based on quantitative and qualitative data. The instruments explored were: the number of titles read, the number of words read, and average word counts of the books read, in each semester.

C. Participants and Data Collection

The participants of this study were three male students and one female student enrolled in ER classes in the undergraduate law department at a university in Saitama, Japan. I, the researcher, was the instructor. They were selected on the basis of their English levels (low to high beginner level), length of ER practice (two complete years), and completion of accurate reading logs. The data partially comes from the researcher's previous studies (Kanda, 2011a, 2011b). I refer to the four participants as A, B, C, and D. Students A, B, and C were male, and Student D, female. All of them were between 19 and 21 years old. For their two-year ER experience, the students registered for the ER class as the compulsory English subject in their second year at the university. Students B, C, and D continued by enrolling in the two semester-long elective ER classes the following year, whereas student A read on his own by borrowing books from the university library.

The data used in this study were students' reading notebook, or "Tadoku Kiroku Techo," with the following information:
- dates
- books titles
- reading levels, or "yomiyasusa levels" (Furukawa et al., 2009)

- word counts of the books the students read
- students' short reaction in a few Japanese sentences

In addition, the instructor's observation notes and conferences with the students during the class time were also used to support quantitative data.

D. ER Class: SSR and SSS

The class time was mostly devoted to sustained silent reading (SSR) (Pilgreen, 2000) and ER was practiced inside class. The ER classes met for 90 minutes once a week, about 13-15 times in each half-year semester. The students were provided with a mobile classroom library, which contained picture books for English-speaking children learning to read (e.g., Oxford Reading Tree, I Can Read Books) and graded readers for English learners (e.g., Foundations Reading Library, Penguin Readers, Cambridge English Readers, Macmillan Readers, Oxford Bookworm Library). The university library also stocks various reading materials in English, most of which are graded readers of different levels as well as short and easy English leveled readers for English-speaking children. The students were encouraged to read English books that they could follow without consulting an English-Japanese dictionary, and to grasp the storyline instead of putting forth too much effort to mentally translate each English sentence into Japanese (Sakai & Kanda, 2005). The aim of using very short reading materials with ample illustrations was to allow students to experience reading fluency in their foreign language without checking each and individual word. The use of very simple stories at the start of ER, namely, starting with simple stories (SSS) is shown to be effective and instrumental in students' reading achievement gains in previous studies (Takase, 2008, 2009a, 2010a; Nishizawa et al., 2010).

E. Number of Titles Read

The numbers of titles the four participants read in each of the four semesters are shown in Figure 1. The number of titles dramatically decreases for Student A, and for the other students, their peaks are either in the first or second semester.
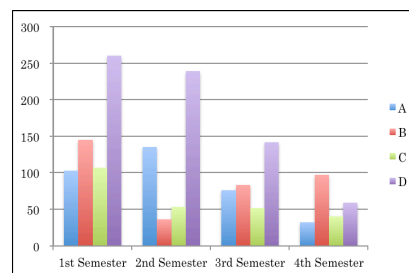

Figure 1. The Number of Titles Read in Each Semester

The higher number of titles read in the first and second semesters is to be expected in that the students first began ER with very short reading materials. Therefore, simply by looking at the number of books read, it is not possible to assess how well the students are actually reading. The decrease in the number of titles per semester can be caused by two opposite reasons, either the students actually read

less, or they read longer texts, as their reading skills improved.

F. Number of Words Read

The numbers of words the four participants read in each of the four semesters are shown in Figure 2, which poses a totally different picture from Figure 1.
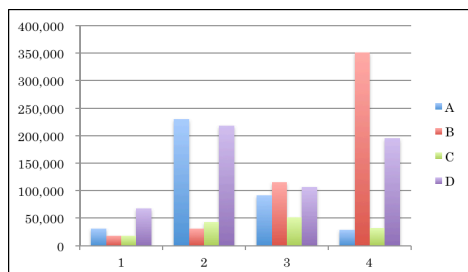

Figure 2. The Number of Words Read in Each Semester

For Student B, the constant increase in the reading amounts as seen in the number of words read was not reflected in the number of titles read. The same thing can be said with Student D as well.

G. Average Word Count per Title in Four Semesters

The average word count per title reflects the lengths of the books, and in general, the longer reading materials are more difficult than the shorter ones.
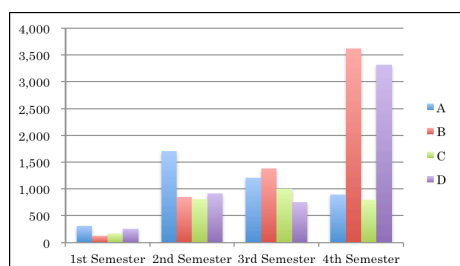

Figure 3. The Average Word Count per Title in Each Semester

Figure 3 shows a notable increase in the average word count per title for Students B and C, in the fourth semester, that is the second half of the second year. On average, the two students read books with word counts of 3,618 words and 3,315 words, which is especially striking because they were encouraged to read shorter texts as well in order to gain reading fluency. The longest texts the two students read were approximately 10,000 words.

On the other hand, it becomes obvious that Student C did not manifest any improvements or changes in two years, constantly reading very short materials, and small amounts. For Student A, his reading advances were seen in the second semester, followed by reading plateau in the second year, when he was doing ER on his own, without participating ER class.

H. Word Count as Students' Self-Monitoring Instrument

In this study, students kept records of their ER themselves, noting the word count of each title they read, and totaling the number of words they have read. They were very conscious of the word count and occasionally requested books based on the number of total words. Also, it was easy for the students to see their own reading proficiency gains by looking at their reading logs. They knew when they became able to read longer and more difficult books. The word count served as students' self-monitoring instrument as well.

I. Conclusion

Students in ER class do not read constantly all the time. They might have difficulty in reading and therefore read very little. And the students who seemed to have trouble reading in their foreign language at the outset start to show notable gains in reading proficiency, and become able to read longer and more difficult texts, that they were unable to read before. Also, the students who seemed to improve by ER may reach a plateau or even falling back.

I compared two-year ER experiences of four Japanese EFL participants, who showed different levels of reading proficiency gains at different periods of time, as seen by the number of words the students read and the average number of words per title in each semester. The word count also showed the timing when students started to read more fluently and in greater amounts, as well as when some of them had fallen back to their former reading levels. Also, by carefully checking the word count, the student who did not show any improvement became obvious to the instructor.

In conclusion, the word count could be a very effective tool in assessing reading amounts in ER.

III. The Effectiveness of SSR on Remedial Students
(Atsuko Takase, & Kyoko Otsuki)

A. Sustained Silent Reading (SSR)

This section discusses the effectiveness of SSR under instructors' guidance with remedial students. According to Krashen (1993), reading proficiency can be improved by free voluntary reading (FVR) in the second or foreign language as well as in learners' first language (L1). SSR is one kind of FVR, which refers to any in-school program where students are provided a short time for reading without any after-reading requirement. The effectiveness of SSR for learners' reading proficiency development has been reported by many teachers and practitioners as developing students' reading proficiency in their L1 (e.g., Henry, 1995; Pilgreen, 2000) as well as second and foreign languages (Nishizawa et al., 2006; Takase, 2008; 2009b; 2010a; 2010b). SSR aids in bridging the gap between the beginning and advanced level by consolidating the learner's foundation in the language and allowing him/her to acquire higher levels of proficiency.

In the context of EFL at institutions of higher learning, repeater courses generally focus on teaching simple grammar, along with practicing simple conversations and watching videos. Meanwhile, more publishers are putting textbooks on the market for remedial courses which mainly deal with basic grammar under the name of "*Basic English*" or "*Essential English Grammar*". Thus, the focus of English remedial classes seems to be the formal teaching of

grammar.

The limitation of all these types of courses is that it often ignores that learners who attend remedial courses have already had painful experiences with English at the earlier stage of their study. They have found the subject uninteresting or boring, and some of them even hate it. On the other hand, there are always several repeaters who fail their course for other reasons than the lack of English proficiency. They are often highly motivated to study English and possess good knowledge of grammar. Therefore, the impact of having another opportunity to study basic grammar in repeater courses at college/universities seems dubious for both types of students.

Additionally, the question remains whether repeaters who completed remedial coursework show any development in their proficiency of English. In the current repeater courses, obtaining course credit is considered as a success of the "remedy." However, completing the course does not always indicate that the English ability of students has improved.

Thus, instead of using basic grammar textbooks or books for intensive reading with those who have already suffered and have bitter memories of grammar study or the grammar-translation method, or students with high English proficiency, the researchers implemented ER using SSR. ER gives opportunities to experience the joy of reading to both types of repeaters who lack self-confidence in English and those who have already acquired more than basic grammar and possess high English proficiency. SSR, in particular, provides those who are busy with other activities with ample time to read in class with the support and advice from the teacher on the spot.

B. Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to investigate the effectiveness of SSR in improving the English of repeaters who had failed the previous English course for various reasons. Approximately half of the repeaters with low self-esteem had been suffering from low-performance and poor academic grades in English since junior high or high school. Other students failed because of the lack of attendance due to their busy lifestyle with other social activities or part-time jobs. Thus, the following questions are posed.

(1) Do repeaters make progress in their English proficiency after three months of SSR?
(2) Is SSR effective in a remedial class which consists of students with various proficiency levels?

C. Participants

The participants in this study were 81 (69 male, 12 female) 1st- 4th year, non-English majors, EFL university repeaters from two consecutive years who had failed to pass the former English course. Their TOEIC scores, which 53 participants out of 81 (65.4%) took during the past few years, varied from 190 to 625 ($M = 355$, $SD = 106.7$). According to the survey which was administered at the beginning of the class, the major reasons for their failure were lack of English ability to pass the test (44.4%) and a lack of attendance

(44.4%). Among the 52 participants who responded that they were poor at English, 53.8% of them admitted that they had difficulty in understanding grammar, followed by reading with the grammar-translation method and listening at 30.8% and 32.7%, respectively.

D. Procedure

All the students participated in ER for one academic semester, approximately 3 months. The classes met once a week (14 times in total) in a designated room in the library, during which students were occupied with 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. They were required to read at least 100 easily comprehensible books during the course, and to keep a reading log of every book they read including the date, title, series, level, and word count of each book, the time used for finishing the book, and a short impression or remarks about the book. During the time for SSR, participants were given individual guidance when necessary.

The Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading (EPER) cloze test (version A) was administered at the beginning and the end of the course as the pre- and the post-tests, in order to examine the improvement of participants' overall English proficiency.

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, and Penguin Readers (PGR) by Pearson Longman.

E. Data Analysis

Participants' reading data was collected by using their reading log. First, standard scores of the EPER Placement test were classified from A to H (EPER level), A being the highest and H being the lowest. Based on the pre-EPER level, participants were divided into three groups for analysis, upper level ($N = 19$), middle level ($N = 36$), and lower level ($N = 26$) (Table 1).

Second, the descriptive statistics of the EPER cloze test scores for the pre- and the post-tests were calculated using the standard scores (Table 2).

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 (Table 3).

Lastly, the effects of ER on overall reading proficiency were examined using the one-way repeated-measures factorial ANOVA (Table 4).

F. Results and Discussion

Table 1 shows the pre- and the post- EPER levels in each group. The upper group consists of EPER levels E and over, F in the middle group, and H and G were in the lower group. There were no participants who scored high enough to be placed as A or B. All three groups greatly improved their EPER levels in the post-test.

Table 1. Pre- and Post- EPER Level in 3 Groups

	Upper pre	Upper post	Middle pre	Middle post	Lower pre	Lower post
H	0	0	0	0	14	5
G	0	0	0	1	12	8
F	0	0	36	11	0	8
E	14	5	0	22	0	5
D	4	12	0	2	0	0
C	1	2	0	0	0	0

Table 2 illustrates the results of the pre- and the post-EPER tests, which were administered at the beginning and at the end of the course. The mean standard scores of the EPER tests were, from upper group to lower group: 23.2 (SD = 5.49), 14.6 (SD = 1.66), and 7.4 (SD = 2.25) for the pretest, and 28.5 (SD = 5.34), 19.2 (SD = 4.10), and 12.2 (SD = 5.28) for the post-test, respectively, with a great variance of scores between upper and lower groups.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics for the EPER Tests

Group	N	Mean	SD	Min	Max
Upper pre	19	23.2	5.49	18	40
Upper post	19	28.5	5.34	21	43
Middle pre	36	14.6	1.66	12	17
Middle Post	36	19.2	4.10	11	29
Lower pre	26	7.4	2.25	3	11
Lower post	26	12.2	5.28	2	23

Table 3 shows the participants' reading performance in terms of the number of books and words. The upper group read the largest number of words on average (75,650) and the smallest number of books (74.1), resulting in the biggest word count per book (2,126). On the other hand, lower group read the largest number of books (111.2), with the smallest number of words (4,939), which makes the small word count per book (352). These results suggest that participants in upper group read longer books, whereas those in the middle and the lower groups read many shorter books, which were appropriate to their English proficiency level.

Table 3. Participants' Reading Performance

G	Item	*N*	*M*	*SD*	*Min*	*Max*
Upper	Books	19	74	44	13	163
	Words	19	75,650	3,256	18,096	123,300
	W/B	19	2,126	2,670	187	9,485
Middle	Books	36	106	22	46	176
	Words	36	43,573	24,963	13,017	124,901
	W/B	36	424	253	136	1,315
Lower	Books	26	111	34	60	238
	Words	26	40,939	3,368	10,280	166,010
	W/B	26	352	216	127	1075

Table 4 illustrates the results of the repeated-measures ANOVA. The between-subjects factor was groups (upper, middle, lower) and the within-subjects factors were the EPER pre- and post-test scores. The results of the analysis indicated a significant main effect for each group (F = 110.63, df = 2, p = .000), a significant main effect for the EPER test (F =123.9, df = 1, p = .000), and an insignificant interaction effect between the EPER test x group (F = .16, df = 2, p< .855). Figure 4 shows the results of the pre- and the post-EPER test scores of three groups.

Table 4. Repeated-Measures ANOVA on Pre- and Post-EPER Tests

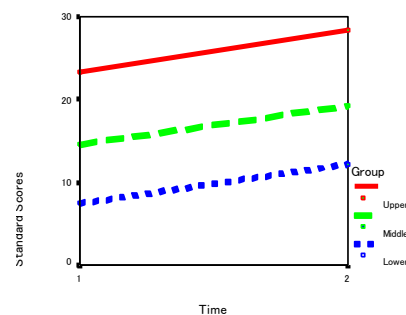| Source	SS	df	MS	F	p
Between Subjects					
Group	5648.70	2	2824.35	110.63	.000**
Error	1991.24	78	25.53		
Total	7639.94		2849.88		
Within Subjects					
EPER Test	908.81	1	908.81	123.9	.000**
EPER x Group	2.31	2	1.15	0.16	0.855
Error	572.15	78	7.34		
Total	911.12				
TOTAL	8551.06				

Figure 4. Changes in the Pre- and Post-EPER Test Scores

The results revealed that each group showed a significant improvement in English proficiency after only 3 months of SSR in the library, even though their proficiency levels were quite varied. Participants chose books which were appropriate to their English ability with the help of the instructor. ER was effective for all levels of repeaters for improving their English proficiency when they were occupied with SSR for 80 minutes a week.

G. Conclusion

From the results of this study, it can be concluded that repeaters from the remedial group with low English ability to higher level students who had failed by reasons other than English proficiency benefited from ER using SSR for 80 minutes. Although the length of the treatment was only three months, the effects of SSR were illustrated as gains on EPER test scores. Each group showed significant gains in the post-EPER test scores, attributed to the ample time for SSR provided under the guidance of an instructor.

Without constant observation and guidance of students' reading as well as in-class reading time, we cannot expect an ER program to be successful (Day & Bamford, 2002).

IV. The Beneficial Impacts of a Long-term ER Program
(Hitoshi Nishizawa)

This section describes a case study of a long-term ER program. The program used to be a two-year program until 2005, but increased its duration annually, and became a 5-year program in 2008. The history of the ER program reveals the beneficial impacts of a longer duration especially in a typical EFL environment like Japan. In longer ER programs, students felt at ease when reading easy-to-read books, enjoyed the reading of English texts, increased fluency in reading and listening, and were satisfied with their skills. The positive feedback from elder students enhanced the positive reading behavior of younger students.

A. Methods

The ER program was conducted at the Electrical and Electronic Engineering Department (E&E Dept.) of Toyota National College of Technology (TNCT) where the majority of the students were average EFL learners. A college of technology accepts graduates from junior high schools, and educates them in a 5-year foundation course and a two-year advanced course. Two hundred students enter the 5-year course annually and about 15-20% of the students go on to the advanced course. They are divided into one of the five departments and stay there for 5 or 7 years. The E&E Dept. is one of the departments. The class size is 40-50 students from the first to 5th year, and 6-8 students in the 6th and 7th year.

Before the introduction of the ER program, the students of TNCT had lower proficiency in English than high school or university students of the same age. It was because they had fewer English lessons and had not needed to prepare for the entrance examinations to universities in their first three years (Kameyama, 2009). For example, the average TOEIC score of the 6th-year students of colleges of technology was 371 in 2007, which was 26 points lower than the average of third-year university students majoring in engineering, science, and agriculture, in the same year (ETS, 2008). The ER program described in this section shows some of the attempts to compensate this situation.

The ER program started in April 2004 in the classes of 6 years from second to 7th year of the E&E Dept. Twenty four students of the advanced course completed the 5-year program in their 6th-year in 2008, 2009, and 2010 academic years. Former 6th-year students also finished the ER program of shorter duration from 2004 to 2007 academic years (Table 5). The students attended compulsory English lessons of traditional teaching style, and additionally attended weekly ER lessons for 30 weeks through every year. Each of the lessons was a 45-minute Sustained Silent Reading (SSR). The ER lessons in the foundation course were conducted in the college library, which had a large collection of easy-to-read English books including GR for ESL/EFL learners and picture books or leveled readers designed for English-speaking children in the U. S. The students were strongly advised to borrow the books from the library for their out-of-class readings.

Teachers had a rich experience of ER by themselves, and they were able to recommend books of appropriate readability level and genre to each student. The students read at their own pace without referring to dictionaries, and recorded their reading histories in logbooks. The logbooks were collected one day before each lesson, and then returned at the beginning of the lesson with advice from the teachers added to them. The students and teachers could always refer to the students' reading histories because the logbooks were kept and maintained in all years through the program.

B. Reading Amount of the Students

When the duration of the ER program was two or three years in 2004, 2005, and 2006, the median reading amount of the 6th-year students stayed less than 500,000 words (Table 5). It became more than 600,000 words for the students in 2008, 2009, and 2010 when the duration was extended to 5 years. It also increased in 2009 and 2010, even though the duration of the program stayed the same as in 2008, and exceeded one million words in 2010. A longer history of conducting ER programs may have its own benefit, because the younger students who recognize the effectiveness of ER from successful elder ER readers in their surroundings, seem to read more earnestly. The benefit may be greater in a small group of students, where the informal communication among students is more frequent.

Table 5. Duration of the ER Program and the Reading Amount of 6th-Year Students

Academic year	Duration	*N* of 6th-year students	Reading amount* (Med.) Min. – Max.
2004	2 years	7 (0)	(264) 85 – 1,250
2005		5 (0)	(453) 271 – 589
2006	3 years	8 (+1)	(453) 97 – 6,030
2007	4 years	7 (+3)	(664) 367 – 1,210
2008	5 years	6 (0)	(604) 391 – 3,120
2009		8 (0)	(749) 596 – 10,690
2010		6 (+4)	(1,269) 394 – 1,550

() shows number of students who had stayed in English-speaking countries. Their data were excluded from the study.
* thousand words.

Twenty 6th-year students completed the 5-year program in 2008, 2009, and 2010, excluding four students who had studied in English-speaking countries. Their median reading amount was 870,000 words (Figure 5), and they could be divided into three groups by the cumulated reading amount. Group A consisted of 6 students who had read from 390,000 to 610,000 words. They were estimated to have read mostly in ER classes, rather than out of class, because one could read 540,000 words with a reading speed of 100 words per minute using 80% of the lesson-time for the 5 years. Group B consisted of 6 students who had read from 670,000 to 1,040,000 words. They probably read some of that amount out of class, which the designer of the program expected students to do. Group C consisted of 8 students who had read more than 1,140,000 words. They must have read much more out of class than in class.
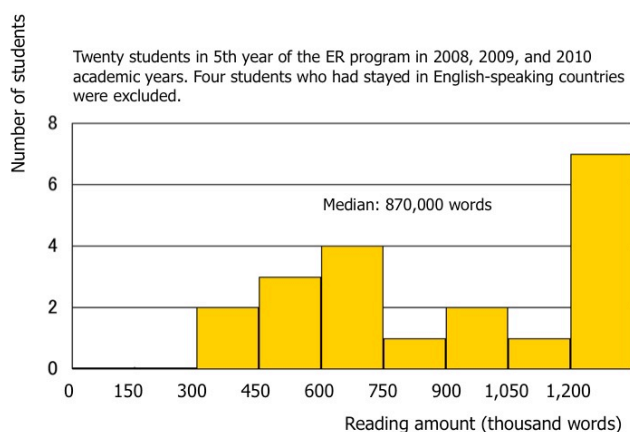
Figure 5. Reading Amount Distribution of the Students

We should pay the most attention to the students in group A which read the least, because we hoped to design an ER program that improved the proficiency of all the students significantly. SSR must be the basis of the ER program, because students of group A were not motivated to read English texts out of class. In the case of this program, we needed a four-year duration for all the students in the program to read more than 300,000 words, where students had started to feel some ease in reading easy English texts, had increased their reading speed, and reported that they mainly used English instead of Japanese to comprehend the stories, according to Nishizawa, Yoshioka, and Ito (2006).

Their logbooks showed another benefit of a longer ER program. They started by reading from easier and shorter books and all moved on to read longer and more difficult books in later years although the absolute length and readability of books differed from student to student. Most students in the fourth or 5th year of the program were able to read a new English text of 6,000 words or longer continuously, with a reading speed of 100 words per minute or faster, and grasp the outline of the story in their term-end examinations. They were satisfied with their reading skills although they could not explain how they became able to read fluently by themselves. Anyway, such a performance of reading skills had never been observed in reading classes at TNCT taught by the grammar-translation approach.

C. English Proficiency of the Students

Improved English proficiency of the students was measured by TOEIC tests. Figure 6 shows the cumulated reading amount in horizontal axis and the annual best TOEIC score of each student in vertical axis. Most of the students took TOEIC tests at least once every year through the second to fifth year of the ER program.

There were fast performers and slow performers in all three groups. In group A, four students (A4 – A7) scored the lowest in the 5th year, and their reading amounts were apparently not sufficient. There was a student in group C, who struggled to increase his TOEIC score, and had to read more than three million words to get 500 points. This shows

that another benefit of a longer program is slow learners have enough time to achieve highly if they persevere.
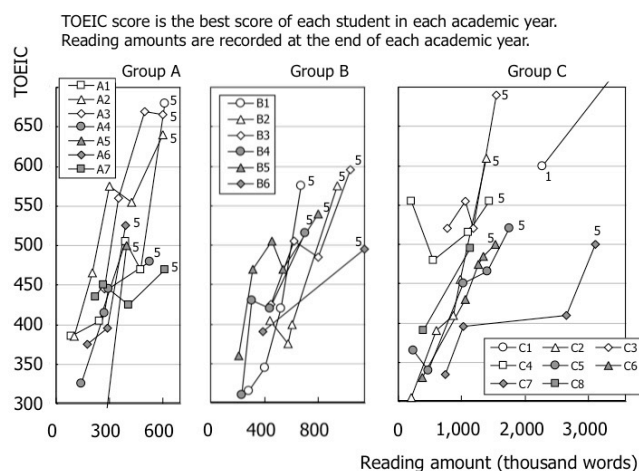

Figure 6. Annual Records of Reading Amount and TOEIC Scores

As a result, average TOEIC score of all the students increased year-by-year during the program (Figure 7). The change was subtle in first two years, where the number of students who scored lower than TOEIC 400 decreased gradually in the third and fourth years, and the average score jumped in the 5th year of the program.

The average score of the students in the 5th year of the program (572) was higher than the national average of third-year university students majoring in English (547: ETS, 2010), who were supposed to have longer English lessons and study harder. It was a remarkable achievement because only 5 credited additional lessons improved the proficiency of reluctant EFL learners to a higher level than the average university students majoring in English.
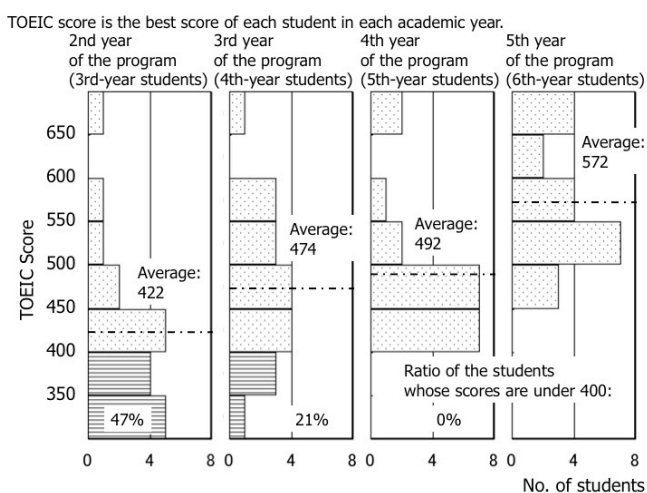

Figure 7. TOEIC Score Distributions of the ER Program.

The comparison of the four distributions in Figure 7 showed that the 5-year program did not only improve the

proficiency of average and higher performers, but also the lowest performers. This was good news especially for the students whose majors were not English. They usually do not have enough time to receive concentrated English lessons but could use some of their free time to read extensively on or off campus.

D. Discussion

The origin of the benefits of a long-term ER program is that the students stop translating English texts while reading and start comprehending them directly at a certain point after reading many easy-to-read books for a few years. Nishizawa, Yoshioka, and Ito (2006) found that the change of reading style occurred around 300,000 words of cumulated reading amount. In this study, it took four years for all the students in the ER program to reach the amount. After the change, they are relaxed when reading English texts for more than one hour and oftentimes enjoy the stories. Some of them even make it a new hobby and start to read heavily.

The critical duration necessary for the above mentioned change may differ from school to school, but it must be four years or longer for colleges of technology if the students attend SSR lessons for 45-minutes weekly. Every ER program should reconsider if its duration is long enough to cause the critical change of the students' reading behaivor.

E. Conclusion

The benefits of a long-term ER program were examined in this section. The five-year program had advantages in the students' reading amount, achieving higher TOEIC scores, and the students' satisfaction compared to the two or three-year program. We think that the benefits of longer programs were caused by the change of the students' reading styles from translation to direct comprehension.

Acknowledgement

References

Day, R. R., & Bamford, J. (1998). *Extensive reading in the second language classroom.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Day, R., & Bamford, J. (2002). Top ten principles for teaching extensive reading. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 14(2)*, 136-141.

ETS (2007, 2008, 2010). *TOEIC test data & analysis 2006, 2007, 2009*. Tokyo: ETS.

Furukawa, A., Kanda, M., Mayuzumi, M., Sato, M., Nishizawa, H., Hatanaka, T., & Miyashita, I. (Eds.) (2009). *Eigo tadoku kanzen book guide* [Complete book guide for extensive reading in English] (3rd ed.). Tokyo: CosmoPier.

Hedgcock, J., & Ferris, D. R. (2009). *Teaching readers of English: Students, texts, and contexts*. New York: Routledge.

Henry, J. (1995). *If not now: Developmental readers in the college classroom*. Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, Heinemann.

Kameyama, T. (2009). Kosen Eigo Kyoiku no genjou to tenbo [Current situation and perspective of English language education at colleges of technology]. *Monbu Kagaku Kyoiku Tsushin*, *218*, 22-23.

Kanda, M. (2009). The pleasures and pains of extensive reading. In A. M. Stoke (Ed.), *JALT2008 Conference Proceedings* (pp. 1201-1211). Tokyo: JALT.

Kanda, M. (2011a). Contrasting reading trajectories of long-term extensive reading. *Journal of Heisei International University, 15,* 1-15.

Kanda, M. (2011b). The significance of word count in extensive reading. *Language, Culture, and Society (Gakushuin University), 9,* 127-142.

Krashen, S. D. (2004). *The power of reading: Insights from the research* (2nd ed.). Portsmouth, NH: Heinemann.

Nation, I. S. P. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL reading and writing.* New York: Routledge.

Nishizawa, H., Yoshioka, T., & Itoh, K. (2006). Eigo tadoku ni yoru kougaku-kei gakusei no eigo unyou-nouryoku kaizen [Improvement of engineering students' communication skills in English through extensive reading]. *Transactions of the Institute of Electrical Engineers of Japan*, *126A-7,* 556-562.

Nishizawa, H., Yoshioka, T., & Fukada, M. (2010). The impact of a 4-year extensive reading program. In A. M. Stoke (Ed.), *JALT2009 Conference Proceedings* (pp. 632-640). Tokyo: JALT.

Pilgreen, J. L. (2000). *The SSR Handbook: How to organize and manage a sustained silent reading program.* Portsmouth, NH: Boynton/Cook, Heinemann.

Robb, T. N., & Susser, B. (1989). Extensive reading vs skills building in an EFL context. *Reading in a Foreign Language, 5,* 239–251.

Sakai, H., & Kanda, M. (2005). *Kyoshitsu de yomu eigo 100 mango* [Reading one million of words in the English classroom]. Tokyo: Taishukan.

Takase, A. (2008). The two most critical tips for a successful extensive reading program. *Kinki University English Journal, 1,* 119-136.

Takase, A. (2009a). The effects of different types of extensive reading materials on reading amount, attitude and motivation. In A. Cirocki (Ed.), *Extensive reading in English language teaching* (pp. 451-465). Munich, Germany: Lincom.

Takase, A. (2009b). The effects of SSR on learners' reading attitudes, motivation, and achievement: A quantitative study. In A. Cirocki (Ed.), *Extensive reading in English language teaching* (pp. 547-560). Munich, Germany: Lincom.

Takase, A. (2010a). *Eigo tadoku tacho shido manual* [Teaching manual for extensive reading and extensive listening]. Tokyo: Taishukan.

Takase, A. (2010b). The effectiveness of Sustained Silent Reading in helping learners become independent readers, *Proceedings of 37th MRXTESOL International Convention/10th Central American and Caribbean Convention.*

Waring, R. (2000). Guide to the 'why' and 'how' of using graded readers. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Waring, R. (2009). The inescapable case for extensive reading. In A. Cirocki (Ed.), *Extensive reading in English language teaching* (pp. 93-111). Munich, Germany: Lincom.