Promoting Motivation in an Extensive Reading Class : Using Active Learning Strategies

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Abstract

Extensive reading has been widely recognized as an effective method of teaching in ESL and EFL. Many positive effects from extensive reading research have been reported, including promoting motivation and student autonomy. Similarly, active learning has attracted much attention in higher education in Japan since education reforms were recommended by the Central Education Council of Japan in 2012. This present paper explores the theoretical background and effects of both extensive reading and active learning, and reports on the implementation of active learning in an extensive reading class. The effects of active learning and extensive reading in this study were investigated by administering an open-ended survey to students who took part in active learning activities in an extensive reading class. The analysis of the survey showed that features of active learning and extensive reading mutually promoted the students' motivation to keep reading.

Introduction

How can we motivate students to actively participate in an EFL reading class? In any learning, student engagement is the key, and yet research continues to report cases in which teachers teach by mainly lecturing while students listen passively or in some cases with their heads on their desks. Some educators such as Weimer (2009) have expressed reservations about the effectiveness of a traditional lecture-style teaching methodology, pointing out the students' low retention and their difficulties in sustaining attention. Low motivation can be an additional problem. One teaching approach used to get students involved in their learning is called active learning (Knapper, 2007). Active learning techniques can be applied to many different learning

situations, but Paulson & Faust say that they should be thought of as "enhancements" rather than a complete replacement for lectures.[1]　Instead, active learning can be combined with lecture, promoting in-class and out-of-class learning (Kojima, 2015).

Student motivation in the L2 or FL reading context is often discussed in relation to extensive reading.　Extensive reading has gained popularity in the past 15 years (Floyd 2016).　However, the concept of extensive reading is certainly not new.　The extensive reading approach has been used since the early 20th century and is well regarded in the field of second language teaching. Palmer (1921) explains that in extensive reading students "take a large number of texts and read them rapidly and carelessly, trusting that quantity will make up for the lack of quality in our attention and the lack of intensity."[2]　It is also called "free voluntary reading" (FVR), "reading for pleasure", or "pleasure reading".[3]　In this research, the authors have chosen to use the term "extensive reading".

In this paper, the authors report on the application of the active learning approach in an extensive reading class.　The rationale for this study is that more research is needed on active learning in a Japanese English education setting to offer some practical tips for those who are thinking of implementing active learning in a college classroom.[4]　Specifically, the authors will examine whether or not active learning can help boost student engagement and motivation in an extensive reading class.

Review of Literature

Theoretical Background of Active Learning

Although the idea and use of active learning has had a long history dating back to ancient philosophers and educators, it was popularized as a promising methodology in the 1990s (Farrell, 2009).　Active learning has been defined slightly differently by researchers and institutions (Kato, 2015).　The most well-known definition is that of Bonwell & Ellison, who define active learning as "anything that involves students in doing things and thinking about the things they are doing."[5]　Prince (2004) notes that in active learning students are engaged in the learning process.　According to the Center for Teaching and Learning at Minnesota University, active learning refers to students' active engagement in the learning material through various activities such as reading, listening, writing, and reflecting.[6]　Active learning also "refers to the level of engagement by the student in the instructional process."[7]　D'Silva (2010) states that well-designed active learning activities lead to deep learning.

There are many active learning strategies that can be used successfully in lecture-based courses. Bonwell and Eison give examples such as pausing to check comprehension by discussing notes or sharing information; testing right after the lecture; demonstrating teaching points; and using student-generated questions for discussion. For class discussions, teachers should ask questions that require both lower-order thinking skills such as closed questions and higher-order thinking skills such as applying principles to similar cases, analyzing the information by comparing or contrasting, synthesizing by predicting, and evaluating.[8]

Other active learning activities are introduced at the homepage of the University of Minnesota, Office of Human Resources.[9] These include:

- ice breakers - At the beginning of the session, students share goals and expectations regarding the course
- Think/Pair/Share, Write/Pair/Share, Student Summaries - Students reflect, answer questions, share ideas in pairs or in groups, and write summaries
- Question and Answer Pairs - Students read or watch a presentation first, and then ask questions and answer in pairs
- Peer Survey - Group members write questions on certain topics or categories, ask their peers to answer them, and complete grids with the answers.
- Note Check - Students share their notes and clarify the key points
- Rotating Chair Discussions -Discussion group members take turns restating previous points and making transitions

In active learning, students are focusing their attention on higher-order thinking processes, learning beyond facts and information, consolidating prior knowledge and new information, making critical analysis of the information, explaining it in their own words to others, and making the information relevant to their lives. Moreover, active learning is said to motivate students to learn outside of the classroom and can be applied "in all aspects of life" and beyond a course period.[10]

Active learning has also attracted attention among educators and researchers in Japan. The Central Education Council of Japan announced a need for education reforms in high schools and universities by implementing a student-centered instructional approach in 2012. The CEC recommended that teachers should provide an active learning environment where students are encouraged to grow intellectually and to find solutions to problems through active interactions with the teacher and other students in class.[11]

Theoretical Background of Extensive Reading

Although the extensive reading approach first appeared in the field of teaching second languages about a century ago, the approach has been gaining more and more attention recently as one of the most effective ways to teach English in Japan. This is because, through an extensive reading program, students will obtain benefits which aren't available from other teaching approaches. Yamashita (2004) points out one of the goals of extensive reading is "to develop good reading habits and encourage a liking of reading."[12] Ur (2012) writes extensive reading "goes further in developing the ability of the student to read independently in English."[13] Grabe (2009) also says leading students to read for longer periods of time is ensured only by extensive reading. Therefore, with extensive reading we can expect students to become voluntary readers and continue reading even after the course has finished. Bamford and Day (1998) developed 10 characteristics of extensive reading.[14]

1．Students read as much as possible.
2．A variety of materials on a wide range of topics is available.
3．Students select what they want to read.
4．The purposes of reading are usually related to pleasure, information, and general understanding.
5．Reading is its own reward.
6．Reading materials are well within the linguistic competence of the students.
7．Reading is individual and silent.
8．Reading speed is usually faster rather than slower.
9．Teachers orient students to the goals of the program.
10．The teacher is a role model of a reader for students.

In addition to reading, Bamford and Day (2004) encourage the use of activities in the extensive reading classroom. They say that "activities help teachers introduce extensive reading to students, organize and introduce suitable reading material, motivate and support, and monitor and evaluate reading."[15] Through these extensive reading activities, students learn the concept of extensive reading and how to choose appropriate material. Moreover, these activities enhance students' motivation for reading, which seems to be a key for successful extensive reading.

Effects of Active Learning and Extensive Reading

Effects of Extensive Reading

In spite of several years of studying English, not many students have confidence in their English ability; therefore, they are reluctant to learn English. For those students, an extensive reading approach is optimal. Takase and Otsuki (2012) point out extensive reading is "considered to be the most effective teaching method for reluctant students, specifically in classes of mixed proficiency levels."[16]

Learning a foreign language is a life-long activity: learning won't be successful without motivation. Brown (2007) says motivation is "a star player in the cast of characters assigned to second language learning scenarios around the world."[17] Therefore, motivation is a crucial factor in extensive reading too. Takase (2009) points out "reading material works as a critical factor to motivate learners to read extensively."[18] Also, Nishino (2005) reported that one way to increase students' intrinsic motivation, which she saw as a critical factor for L2 reading, was by providing a wide variety of interesting books and letting them choose.

Extensive reading also helps students to become confident. Takase and Otsuki (2012) found that students "gained self-confidence through reading easily comprehensible books, which eventually led them to feel self-efficacy."[19] In other research, Takase and Otsuki (2007) reported students who lacked a positive L1 reading attitude experienced great satisfaction in reading by being able to finish reading English books. Students are more likely to enjoy reading and gain satisfaction through an extensive reading approach rather than through the intensive reading approach which is currently widely applied in English reading classes in Japan. Also, Yamashita (2004) made a similar finding, which was that students' positive L1 reading attitudes transfer to positive L2 reading attitudes even when the students are not very successful learners. Yamashita concluded that "such students have the potential to improve in L2 in the future" because their positive attitudes encourage them to keep reading.[20]

These findings strongly suggest that the extensive reading approach is one of the best ways to encourage studying English. When Mason and Krashen (1997) compared repeater students in an extensive reading class to regular students in a traditional grammar- and translation-based English class, they found that the extensive reading students made superior gains compared to the regular students on cloze tests; moreover, they made greater gains in writing and reading speed than the regular students did. Such research helps us realize that extensive reading

programs in Japan should be adopted and developed to facilitate learning English.

Effects of Active Learning

Research shows that active learning produces many positive effects.　Farrell reported that in the study conducted by Lancor and Schiebel (2008), critical thinking and reflective skills were utilized when college students were paired with second graders as tutors for a science class.[21] In such a situation, the college students needed to retrieve information, select the appropriate information, and explain the concept in language that a second grader could understand. Research also showed the evidence of improved social skills when students worked with others (Momani, Asiri & Alatawi, 2016).　According to the Cornell University Center for Teaching Excellence, when there is a sense of community, student interaction with other students and the teacher increases.　Students also learn important social skills when they work in a group, and they are more willing to collaborate.　Prince (2004) also remarked that collaborative and cooperative work in the classroom have been known to improve students' performance and positive attitudes.

Like extensive reading, active learning is also said to promote students' self-efficacy, which is believed to lead to increased motivation.　Fook, Dalim, Narasuman, Sidhu, Fong, and Kean (2015) found a strong relationship between active learning and self-efficacy.　According to Bandura (1994), self-efficacy can be defined as "people's beliefs about their capabilities to produce designated levels of performance that exercise influence over events that affect their lives."[22] Those with high self-efficacy are found to have the ability to perform more challenging work and also have intrinsic motivation (Zulhamri et al., 2014).　Therefore self-efficacy is an important factor in determining how successfully students can achieve their goals and gain skills (Fook et al. 2015).　Fook et al. also note that active learning activities that incorporate collaboration in group work, pair work, problem-based activities, and tutorials have proven to have a positive effect on self-efficacy.　The relationship between self-efficacy and academic motivation was studied by Husain (2014).　Similar to the study by Fook et al, it was found that students with high self-efficacy displayed more successful academic achievements.　Husain explained that when students have high self-efficacy, they are motivated to put more energy into the task they are doing, which leads to better academic results.

Methods

The present study aims to explore the effects of active learning strategies applied to extensive reading, in particular to investigate whether or not active learning helps to promote students' motivation in reading. To examine the students' motivation in an active learning class, the following questions were examined:

1) How do the participants feel about extensive reading?
2) Does an active learning approach enhance the participants' positive attitudes toward reading?

Participants

The participants in the study included nine students from Seigakuin University. They were all non-English majors, and ranged in age from freshmen to seniors. They were enrolled in an extensive reading class called Pleasure Reading. It was a one-credit, fifteen-week elective class which met once a week for 90 minutes. One of the present authors was the instructor for this class. No prerequisite was set for the course except for being interested in reading. It was discovered that some of the students chose Pleasure Reading because it sounded "interesting" and also "less threatening" than other English classes. The level of the participants' English proficiency was varied, with some students having only basic English skills. Most of these students had taken classes from the authors in previous semesters.

Materials

The participants had access to graded readers in the library, ranging from starters to Level 6. Students were given freedom to choose any readers as long as they were comprehensible with only a few unknown words on each page. The participants were advised to choose 1) interesting readers, and 2) those that could be read without consulting a dictionary. In the first introductory session, the participants learned the concept of extensive reading, and they were encouraged to read as much as possible in and outside of the classroom. The participants were assigned to keep a reading log every time they read. The minimum number of readers required for a course credit was set at 10, although students were encouraged to set higher goals for

themselves. In addition to the readers in the library, Attamaii-Books, English Kamishibai, and audio books were used in class activities.[23]

Treatment

The participants engaged in several activities in each class period. In each lesson, the following activities were conducted, except for numbers 6 and 7, which were done at the end of the semester.

1. The whole class activities

Some activities were drawn from Day& Bamford's *Extensive Reading in the Second Language Classroom*, such as matching blurbs with appropriate titles, and a student survey on book preferences. In addition, the instructor read aloud her favorite stories, and played an audio book.

2. Pair sharing

The participants read for 5 minutes, and discussed the reading in pairs in their L1. The use of learners' L1 in discussions was found to be beneficial to learners according to Turnbull and Evans, who observed that participants were able to discuss the texts in greater detail, using the top-down processing skills which included mentioning of "character and authorial intentions." [24] Since the focus of this course was placed on motivating students to read in and outside of the classroom, interaction in L2 was not stressed. The idea behind limiting this activity to only five minutes and allowing students to discuss the material in L1 was that the participants could focus on their reading, and it would be easy for them to reflect on and recall the content so they could share it with their partner.

3. Sustained silent reading

The participants read silently for 30 minutes.

4. Reflecting − writing in a reading log

The participants reflected on the story they read and wrote a summary or comment in their journal. They were given a language choice for this activity, and all but one of the students wrote in Japanese.

5. Group discussion

Three or four copies of each reader from the Atama-ii Book series were made available to the participants. Each book came with a multi-adventure choice. The participants made several choices as they read, by turning to the appropriate page, which resulted in different endings. In groups of three, participants retold each story in L1 and discussed the different endings.

6. Book Reports

At least three book reports were assigned to be done at home.

7. Poster making

The participants made a poster to introduce their favorite story. Posters from the previous class were shown to the participants for reference. This assignment was completed at home.

8. Poster presentation

The participants gave a presentation to the class using their poster they made in Activity 7.

Data collection

To investigate the two research questions (How do the participants feel about extensive reading? Does an active learning approach enhance the participants' positive attitudes toward reading?), an open-ended survey was administered during the 15th week of the course. The participants were asked to comment freely about the reading activities conducted in the Pleasure Reading class. Then the authors looked for some key words in their feedback that described their views and attitudes towards extensive reading and also the active learning approach. These words were grouped into common categories, and the participants' comments for each category were examined.

Results

The words that appeared most frequently are shown in the table below.

Words	group discussion	enjoyable interesting good glad inspiring	difficult struggle reluctant	became easier better than before without difficulties	continue
The number of appearances	6	8	6	5	3

"Difficult" and "became easier" were mentioned in their comments.

- I was struggling to read before. I must confess that I didn't like English. It was rather painful to read a book with so many sentences. However, I realized that I could read better than before. I deliberately chose easy stories and illustrated reference books. I was surprised to know that I became more motivated by simply choosing these books. Perhaps, I learned a better way to read. Instead of reading for details, it is alright to not pay

attention to every detail, but get more general idea, and grasp the story from what I understood.

- I realized that I <u>could read</u> easy readers <u>without much difficulty</u>.
- I was <u>reluctant</u> to read English readers before, but when I found that I could understand a lot, I was really happy.
- I didn't think that reading in English was possible for me. I <u>was not good at</u> English. However, I <u>was able to read at my own pace</u>. I should not give up before even trying.

There were many comments about group discussions or sharing their thoughts about the books they read. Most of them were positive comments, although a few said they were a little nervous.

Below are the participants' comments about group discussions.

- I <u>enjoyed</u> <u>group discussions</u>.
- <u>Group discussions</u> were a lot of <u>fun</u>.
- Talking to others in <u>group discussions</u> was good. It was <u>interesting</u> to know how differently others felt about the same book.
- <u>Discussing</u> what we read was an <u>inspiring</u> experience to me.
- <u>Discussions</u> and the presentation made me nervous because others did so well. I didn't think I could ever be as good as them even if I read a lot. However, I am <u>glad</u> that I could join in <u>group discussions</u>.
- We participated in a lot of <u>group discussions</u> in this class. I was nervous talking to others I didn't know very well. However, it was really <u>good</u> to <u>share</u> our thoughts about some nice books we read.

"Want to continue reading" was mentioned by three students.

- I want to continue reading on the Internet or check out readers from the library.
- I hope to keep reading.
- I want to read English readers in my free time in the future.

Discussion

For research question #1, the participants' comments about extensive reading were examined. There was evidence of strong interest in reading among participants as shown in their feedback. One said "I didn't want to stop in five minutes. I wanted to continue reading," and another said, "I wanted to re-read the Atamaii-Book and figure out how to save the main

character." Others commented that reading was enjoyable and they developed a habit of reading. These seem to indicate that the participants had very positive views toward extensive reading. However, other comments included "struggling to read," "not good at English," "reluctant to read," which showed that the participants had low self-efficacy in the beginning, but slowly built up their confidence as they realized that they could understand a lot of what they read.

The participants' positive attitudes toward extensive reading is partly due to the freedom they had in choosing their own reading material and abandoning it if it was not interesting. Day and Bamford (1998) point out that one of the important characteristics of extensive reading is that there is a wide variety of reading materials available that are interesting and within the learners' linguistic competence. Giving support in choosing reading material in the initial stage is therefore important. Also, hearing the instructor share her favorite stories with the participants was viewed positively. This is what Day and Bamford called "the teacher as a role mode" for the students.

For research question #2, the participants' feedback on pair and group discussions was examined. According to the results of the questionnaire data, most participants were clearly interested in the group discussion activities. It is suspected that through a group discussion in each lesson, the participants got to know each other better and started to build better social skills. Since collaborative work in active learning is known to promote students' performance and attitude, the participants seemed to have benefited from this activity. At first, some said they were "nervous," but later on they got used to it, and they started to enjoy it. This is especially true of those participants who didn't usually associate with others in class. One commented that the supportive atmosphere in group discussions was very helpful. Also sharing stories in pairs and in a group gave the participants the incentive and motivation to read more. Some of those with very basic English proficiency normally took a passive role in class, listening to others answer or express opinions. However, in this activity, everyone, including those with weak English, played an equally active role in retelling and sharing comments. This was rather inspiring to them. Some participants said that they were impressed by others' oral summaries and their feedback, which showed that they were engaged listeners as well. These results indicate that active learning strategies such as reflecting, summarizing, story sharing and group discussion motivated the participants to continue reading throughout the semester. These active learning activities have also been suggested as extensive reading activities by Day and Bamford, and therefore, active learning and extensive reading share many important features.

Conclusion

In this study reading motivation was examined in the context of extensive reading and active learning.　Activities drawn from active learning strategies paired with extensive reading were conducted in an extensive reading class for a 15-week semester.　The participants' feedback on the extensive reading class in the form of an open-ended questionnaire showed that these activities were helpful in promoting and sustaining the participants' motivation to read.　A supportive environment was also developed through pair and group discussions, which helped students to be active participants.

As was pointed out by Takase and Nishio, students' accessibility to a large number of interesting readers on various topics which are within students' linguistic competence is the key factor for promoting intrinsic motivation to read extensively.　Lack of resources including the budget to purchase readers and the space to keep them have been reported by educators at other universities as the major setback for establishing an extensive reading program. Seigakuin University library keeps thousands of multi-leveled readers in a special corner, which has helped students to have easy access to readers of their choice.　This institutional support has made extensive reading in English possible at Seigakuin University, and has resulted in an improved educational experience for English students.

Although this study suggests that extensive reading influences positive attitudes in students, due to its small sample size, the conclusions from this study are limited.　In the future, a larger sample size, with qualitative data which may include student interviews, and quantitative data such as the amount of reading accomplished and motivation measured on a Likert scale, would provide a better understanding of learner motivation for active learning and extensive reading.

Notes

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(3)　See Stephen D. Krashen, *The Power of Reading: Insights from the Research* (Heinemann, 2004), 1; Penny Ur, *A Course in English Language Teaching* (Cambridge University Press, 2012).

(4)　金井秀介，カッティング美紀，秦喜美恵，筒井久美子，平井達也（2015）「グローバル教育におけるアクティブラーニングの実践と課題（立命館アジア太平洋大学の事例をもとに），リメディアル教育研究第 10 巻第 2 号

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多読の授業におけるアクティブラーニングの実践
——学習者の動機づけに焦点をあてて——

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抄　　録

　第二言語・外国語教育の場で，多読は効果的な教授法として広く認識されている。多読の分析研究では，学生の自主性や動機づけの促進など多くの効果が報告されている。同様に，アクティブラーニング（以下"AL"）も中央教育審議会による 2012 年の教育改革の提案以来，多くの注目を集めている。本稿は，論理的背景，多読と AL の効果，さらには多読の授業に導入された AL の実践事例を報告し考察するものである。本研究における AL と多読の効果は，多読の授業で AL の活動に参加した学生によるアンケート結果を調査したものである。自由記述の分析から AL と多読の特性が学生の読む動機づけに貢献していることが分かった。

キーワード：多読，アクティブラーニング，内発的動機づけ，自己効力感