EVALUATION OF EFL READING CLASSES
AT A JAPANESE UNIVERSITY

A Dissertation

Submitted to the
Faculty of Argosy University
in partial fulfillment of
the requirements of the degree of
Doctor of Education

by

Nobuo Tsuda

Argosy University
Sarasota, Florida
January 2006

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Committee Chair: Dr. Larry Gay Reagan

Committee Member: Dr. Kenneth Rometo

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Department: Education

The purpose of this study was to find out how teachers teach and how students

learn in Japanese university freshman EFL reading classrooms, and how we can help

them improve their performance. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to

find out what students actually feel about freshman EFL reading classes at Konan

University and what teaching strategies are being used in this course. In this study the

researcher chose twelve classes where 245 students responded to the survey. For

classroom observation, the researcher observed twelve classes. Then, a total of twenty-

seven students from twelve classes participated in group interviews.

Survey results showed very positive results, as many students felt that the class was

useful, materials were fairly good, the amount of exercises and the pace of the class were

appropriate, and students were satisfied with the class. However, classroom observation enabled us to see different views of the reading class. Some teachers did not seem to implement objectives we set for the reading class, since the main component of the classroom activities was the translation of English passages into Japanese. In some other classes, most classroom activities were teacher-centered, and most of the time students sat quietly and did not do anything until they were called upon by the teacher.

Students' interviews helped us further understand how students felt about their own classes and what needs to be done to improve EFL reading classes. For example, the survey results and interview results confirmed that reading is essential to improving this course, since reading opportunities both in class and outside of class are lacking.

The triangulation of student surveys, classroom observation and students interviews helped us expand our knowledge of what is going on in classrooms and how teachers and students are performing in class. In conclusion, using both quantitative and qualitative methods is a far more efficient tool for improving EFL reading classes than merely giving out surveys and getting quantitative data, since both researchers and teachers get a "true picture" of the classroom experience. This gives us clear ideas of what to do to improve EFL reading classes in the future.

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I would like to acknowledge the Konan University Institute for Language and Culture, which allowed me to administer surveys, observe classes and interview students. Thanks to the teachers and students who cooperated for my research.

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CHAPTER ONE: THE PROBLEM AND ITS COMPONENTS

English as a Foreign Language (EFL) reading has long been one of the most popular classes in Japanese universities. Most universities offer this course as a graduation requirement; however, it is very questionable whether this course has been taught in a useful and effective manner. When I started working at my university in Japan about ten years ago, I noticed that many freshman EFL English reading classes were taught by Japanese part-time teachers who had good knowledge of English but not well-trained as EFL teachers. Most of them tended to teach this EFL reading class using a teacher-centered *yakudoku* or Grammar-Translation Method, and their main objective was to measure how accurately students could translate English into Japanese rather than to develop their reading skills.

Problem Background

Konan University Institute for Language and Culture was a brand new organization when I was hired in 1996. The Institute offers various language courses for Konan students. Before I was hired, there had not been any clear supervision of the English programs at this university. Although the school had set up English requirements for students, they depended on part-time instructors to determine how those requirements were met. In other words, part-time teachers had freedom to choose texts and make decisions about how to teach students. For this reason, many Japanese part-time teachers who had an English literature background ended up using *yakudoku* or Grammar-Translation Method to teach reading classes at our university.

Brown (1994) proposes the following reasons for the continued popularity of the

Grammar-Translation method:

> It requires few specialized skills on the part of teachers. Tests
>
> of grammar rules and of translations are easy to construct and
>
> can be objectively scored. Many standardized tests of foreign
>
> languages still do not attempt to tap into communicative abilities,
>
> so students have little motivation to go beyond grammar analogies,
>
> translations, and rote exercises. And it is sometimes successful
>
> in leading a student toward a reading knowledge of a second
>
> language. (p.53)

Richards and Rodgers (2001) point out that many learners do not like Grammar-

Translation courses since in them "foreign language learning meant a tedious experience

of memorizing endless lists of unusable grammar rules and vocabulary and attempting to

produce perfect translations of stilted or literary prose" (p. 6).

Many other researchers do not advocate *yakudoku* or the Grammar-Translation

Method. For example, Ohta (1996) says that Japanese students' low English proficiency

level is due to *yakudoku* or the Grammar-Translation Method. According to his studies,

Japanese students' average TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language) scores have

not improved for the last thirty years. In the reading section of the TOEFL and TOEIC

(Test of English for International Communication), many Japanese test takers are unable

to complete the test because of their slow reading. Bowen, Madsen and Hilferty (1985)

also point out major disadvantages to the Grammar-Translation Method: "tedium, inefficiency of instruction, and limited results in terms of communication—notably, limited oral proficiency" (p. 20). Nishimura (2000) says that teachers who put too much emphasis on grammatical accuracy may hinder the development of students' foreign language proficiency.

In order to improve Japanese college students' reading competence, one method alone, such as *yakudoku* or the Grammar-Translation Method, is not adequate or effective. In 1997, we developed the following goal for freshman EFL reading classes: The ultimate goal of the reading class for freshmen is to provide students with the basic reading skills/strategies and academic ability to be able to read a variety of texts related to their individual majors.

A few years later, we compiled a list of recommended textbooks that matched our reading goal in the freshman reading class and required all teachers to choose their texts from that list. Although we made significant changes in our EFL reading curriculum, without evaluation, we were not sure what was working and what needed to be changed in order to develop students' reading competence. Therefore, the objective of this research is to find out: 1. What are student perceptions of the EFL reading program at a Japanese university? 2. What teaching strategies are being used in an EFL reading class at a Japanese university? Finding out those two questions by evaluating EFL freshman reading class will eventually help us improve this program. Concerning the importance of evaluation, Rea-Dickins and Germaine (1992) state:

We feel that evaluation has a very important role to play in the

improvement of teaching and learning. It is something that should

not be seen as an additional 'chore' for teachers. Evaluation is

to be considered the means by which both teaching and learning

may function more efficiently and quality be assured. (xii)

In my research a student survey will be conducted to gauge the general feelings of

students in the reading class in regard to such factors as the level of the class, the

usefulness of the class, the materials, the amount of exercises and their satisfaction with

the class. Then follow-up class observation will help us find out more about what is

happening in class and see how we can improve our teachers' and students' performance.

Finally, I will conduct a group interview in order to obtain more detailed information

about students' classroom experiences in the EFL reading class. By doing both

quantitative and qualitative evaluation, we will be able to get enough information to

improve EFL reading classes in the future.

<div align="center">Literature Review</div>

The teacher-centered *yakudoku* or Grammar-Translation method is a very popular

approach to teaching EFL college reading classes in Japan. The major goal of this

teaching is accurate translation of English into Japanese. It seems that using this approach

alone, students are not able to develop EFL reading comprehension. However, instead of

looking at one teaching method, such as *yakudoku* or Grammar-Translation, it is much

more important to look at what is actually involved in reading and what factors influence

EFL reading comprehension. By looking at studies relevant to this issue, we might be able to find ways to teach EFL reading classes more effectively.

Models of the Process of Reading

There are basically three models for the reading process: the bottom-up model, the top-down model and the interactive model. In the bottom-up model, the process of reading begins with the conversion of letters to sounds and then proceeds to conversion of sentences to meaning, and thinking for comprehension (Davies, 1995; Anderson 2003a). Dubin and Bycina (1991) indicate that the aim of instruction is to build up learners' decoding abilities from the smallest units, such as single letters, to words and phrases.

The top-down model, on the other hand, focuses on thinking and meaning at the beginning and proceeds to predictions about much smaller units such as sentences, then to words and letters (Davies, 1995). In this model, the role of readers is very active because they predict as they read and go through large chunks of a passage at one time (Dubin & Bycina, 1991). Readers' predictions usually come from their past experience, background knowledge, and knowledge of their target language (Dubin & Bycina, 1991; Brown, 1994).

Second-language reading experts advocated this model, and as a result, many materials include guessing the meaning from the context, previewing a passage in order to grasp the overall theme, reading for main ideas and reading in details to find supporting evidence (Dubin & Bycina, 1991).

During the 1980s, the interactive-model, a combination of bottom-up and top-down, was developed (Stanovich, 1980). Dubin and Bycina (1991) state, "interactive theory acknowledges the role of previous knowledge and prediction but, at the same time, reaffirms the importance of rapid and accurate processing of the actual words of the text" (p. 197).

Thus, the interactive model requires both bottom-up and top-down processes according to the purpose of the reader. For example, one may read rapidly for main ideas as well as scan for specific information or proof material after writing a composition (Dubin & Bycina, 1991).

Schema Theory

In Schema Theory, Schank and Abelson (1977) indicate that organized prior knowledge is essential to an understanding of the content. Nassaji (2002), Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) also state that interaction between background knowledge and the text is essential to students' comprehension. For example, consider the following passage, presented by Eskey (2002): "It was the day of the big party. Mary wondered if Johnny would like a kite. She ran to her bedroom, picked up her piggy bank, and shook it. There was no sound" (p. 6). Eskey came up with several questions regarding this passage such as "What did Mary wonder?" "Why did Mary shake her piggy bank and what was Mary's big problem?" The first question can be answered directly from the passage by using the reader's vocabulary and structural knowledge. The second question, however, involves the reader's schema, which is the knowledge of a child's birthday party in the United

States. Drucker (2003) points out that without cultural knowledge, comprehension becomes difficult.

Attitude, Motivation and Strategy

Gan, Humphreys and Hamp-Lyons (2004) examined differences in attitudes, motivation and learning strategies between successful and unsuccessful Chinese EFL college students. In order to conduct the study, nine successful and nine unsuccessful EFL college students were chosen by their national standardized English test scores as well as their English grade in college and their teachers' perception. The triangulation method of interviews, students' diaries and follow-up e-mails was employed. The results revealed differences in attitudes, motivations and learning strategies between the two groups. For example, concerning attitudes, successful students wanted to develop and maintain language sense, whereas unsuccessful students had negative attitudes toward learning English and they seemed to have problems with vocabulary and grammar and did not know how to deal with them. In using strategies, successful students utilized self-management strategy: having clear learning objectives and taking advantage of developing specific skills such as extensive reading, listening to English radio programs and communicating in English outside of class. Unsuccessful learners, on the other hand, were mainly using vocabulary learning strategies such as memorizing vocabulary by looking at the Chinese meaning and spelling of words. Finally, in terms of motivational experiences, half of the successful students had as an objective studying at graduate

school in English speaking countries. Unsuccessful students were only interested in passing the national English exam in order to graduate from college.

Regarding the content of reading materials, Kern (1992) says that if the content of the material matches readers' attitudes, beliefs and values, that, thereby, their comprehension will be enhanced. On the other hand, if the attitudes beliefs, values, and motives expressed in the content do not match the readers', readers may develop a negative attitude toward reading and their attention and comprehension may deteriorate.

Concerning attitudes in the ESL classroom environment, Day and Bamford (1998) state that good experiences with the teacher, classmates, materials, activities, tasks, procedures, and so on will encourage positive attitudes in reading, whereas, unfavorable experiences may result in negative attitudes.

Extensive Reading

In recent years, many scholars recommend implementing extensive reading in classrooms (Aebersold & Field, 1997; Cornwell, 2002; Day & Bamford, 1998; Eskey 2002; Grabe & Stoller, 2001; Mayson & Krashen, 1997; McGlinn & Parish, 2002). Mason (1997) for example, conducted experiments in extensive reading (1,000 pages in simplified English) among Japanese college students who made significant gains in their reading proficiency. McGlinn and Parrish (2002) investigated whether accelerated reading (reading a large quantity of books) might be beneficial for ESL learners. The study involved ten fourth-grade and fifth-grade ESL students in western North Carolina. They participated in the Accelerated Reader program, which consisted of 45- to 90-

minute reading sessions at their school daily for three months. The teacher checked with

each student to see whether they were reading appropriate books and helped with their

comprehension. Monthly test reports determined their improvement and the number of

books they read. The results showed that half of the students increased their reading level,

and most students read more and improved their attitudes toward reading. The authors

stated that accelerated reading (extensive reading) was a positive experience for ESL

students and especially effective for students with basic vocabulary and intermediate

fluency. Day and Bamford (1998) also say, "an extensive reading approach seems to be

effective in a wide variety of circumstances and with different types of students" (p. 35).

In summary, reading involves different models such as bottom-up, top-down and

interactive models. Also Schema theory indicates that readers' prior knowledge is

essential for understanding reading context. In addition, attitudes, motivation and

strategies influence second or foreign language learners. Many scholars say that one of

the best ways to improve students' attitudes and motivation to enhance their reading is to

implement extensive reading in classrooms. This approach helps learners to choose

appropriate reading materials and read independently. Eskey (2002) states:

> Thus, engaging in extensive reading behavior is a level required
>
> for most kinds of formal education; and students are most likely
>
> to engage in such behavior if they can choose texts to read that are
>
> interesting to them and relevant to their individual needs. Reading
>
> from this point of view may be defined as developing an individual

reading habit by choosing texts of interest and value to yourself

and reading those texts extensively. (p. 8)

Even though we understand models, schema theory, attitudes, motivation, strategy and extensive reading, the most significant part of evaluating EFL college reading class is to find out how teachers teach and how students learn in classrooms and how we can help them improve their performance. For this reason, it is important to evaluate their classes and consider what we can do to improve EFL college reading classes in the future.

<div align="center">Purpose of the Study</div>

More and more Japanese universities administer a student survey at the end of the course for teacher evaluation. Then the results of the survey, together with quantitative statistical analysis, are usually distributed to teachers. However, the school never follows up on how teachers utilize the evaluation and how each teacher improves his or her teaching in class. As a result, the school major goal for evaluation becomes gathering information rather than helping teachers improve their performance (Tsuda, 2004). Sanders (2000) states that gathering information is inadequate for evaluation. He explicitly states that it is a waste of time and effort if "an evaluation sits on a shelf or receives no follow-up" (p. 52).

The purpose of this study is to find out how teachers teach and how students learn in freshman EFL reading classrooms and how we can help them improve their performance. Rather than giving out a questionnaire and getting quantitative data alone, triangulation of a survey, classroom observation and student interviews will enable us to

see a "true picture" of what is actually happening in classroom and come to a clear understanding of what we must do to improve classes.

Research Objective

In my survey research, I will find out how students basically feel about the level of the class, the usefulness of the class, the materials, the amount of exercises, the pace of the class and their satisfaction with the class. Then, we will observe their classes to see how teachers and students perform. Finally, I will conduct a group interview in order to obtain more detailed information concerning students' perception and experiences in the EFL reading class.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. What are student perceptions of the EFL reading program at a Japanese university?

2. What teaching strategies are being used in an EFL reading program at a Japanese university?

Limitations/Delimitations

Limitations

There is no guarantee that students who fill out surveys will write open responses. For this reason, we may not be able to clarify the meaning behind their closed responses. Observing classroom also has some limitations. Since I need to observe about twelve classes, I can only observe about thirty minutes per class. With this limited amount of

time, we might miss some aspects of teaching such as how each teacher starts a lesson,

how the teacher allots time within a lesson, how the teacher interacts with students and

how students interact with other students. Moreover, being an observer in class may

create anxiety for both the teacher and students. As a result, my observation data may not

truly reflect on the actual teacher's and students' performance in classroom. Finally, in

the student interviews, the researcher's presence may affect students' responses.

Delimitations

Since this study was conducted in a private university in Japan and the level of

English among students there may differ from that at other universities, the results of this

study may not apply to other universities in Japan.

Definitions

The following terms are defined to give the reader a better understanding of their

use in this study.

Extensive reading. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to a practice

whereby "learners read large quantities of material that are within their linguistic

competence" (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 259).

Extrinsic motivation. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to a situation

"when the only reason for performing an act is to gain something outside the activity

itself, such as passing an exam, or obtaining financial rewards" (Williams & Burden,1997,

p. 123).

Formative evaluation. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to "a type of

evaluation that is done while a program is under development in order to improve its effectiveness" (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003, p. 625).

Flow theory. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to flow experiences (balance of skills and challenge, concentration on tasks, clear task goals, positive feedback on a given task, a feeing of control and minimal self-consciousness) that can lead to optimal learning (Egbert, 2003).

Intrinsic motivation. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to a situation "when the experience of doing something generates interest and enjoyment, and the reason for performing the activity lies within the activity itself" (Williams, M., & Burden, R.L., 1997, p. 123).

Language threshold. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to the necessity that students have enough L2 knowledge "to make effective use of skills and strategies that are part of their L1 reading comprehension abilities (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 50).

L1. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to English as the first language.

L2. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to English as the second language.

Metacognition. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to "thinking about thinking" (Anderson, 1999, p. 72).

Metacognitive awareness. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to readers' ability "to verify the strategies they are using" (Anderson, 1999, p. 72).

Qualitative evaluation. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to dealing with verbal data and subjective analysis (Gall, Gall & Borg, 1999).

Quantitative evaluation. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to dealing with numerical data and statistical analysis (Gall, Gall & Borg, 1999).

Schema theory. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to readers' background knowledge (Nassaji, 2002).

Summative evaluation. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to "a type of evaluation that is conducted to determine the worth of a fully developed program" (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003, p. 638).

Syntactic parsing. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to a reader's ability to store words together so that he or she will be able to extract grammatical information (Garbe & Stoller, 2002).

Task. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to language practice "involving students working with each other, to achieve a specific objective" (Crooks & Chaudron, 2001, p. 33).

The bottom-up model. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to the model according to which the process of reading begins with the conversion of letters to sounds and then proceeds to conversion of sentences to meaning, and thinking for comprehension (Davies, 1995; Anderson 2003a).

The grammar translation method. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to a method in which mastering the grammar rules is the focus of second- or foreign-language instruction (Gorsuch, 1997).

The interactive model. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to a combination of the bottom-up and top-down models (Stanovich, 1980).

The top-down model. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to a model which focuses on thinking and meaning at the beginning and proceeds to predictions about much smaller units such as sentences, then to words and letters (Davis, 1995).

Transfer. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to "the idea that L2 readers will use their L1 knowledge and experiences to help them carry out L2 tasks" (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 52).

Triangulation. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to "the use of multiple data-collection methods, data sources, analysts, or theories as corroborative evidence for the validity qualitative research findings" (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003, p. 640).

Yakudoku. For the purpose of this study, this term refers to the non-oral translation method of teaching English popular in Japanese schools (Hino, 1988).

<div align="center">Importance of the Study</div>

Many Japanese universities offer EFL reading classes as a graduation requirement, but many schools have never investigated how these classes are effectively taught and how schools need to improve these classes. Most schools merely administer student surveys to find out what students generally feel about reading classes. Gall, Gall and Borg (1999) say quantitative research is used when you deal with numerical data and statistical analysis. However, this quantitative survey method has the following limitations:

What did people really mean when they marked that answer on

the questionnaire? What elaboration can respondents provide to

clarify responses? How do the various dimensions of analysis fit

together as a whole form the perspective of respondents?

(Patton 2002, p. 193)

Compared with quantitative evaluation, qualitative research is used when you are involved with verbal data and subjective analysis. In addition, qualitative research is used when you would like to find out more about what is happening, what people feel and what their experiences are (Gall, Gall, & Borg 1999). By using both quantitative and qualitative data, teachers will be able to form a better picture of what is happening in EFL reading classes and what they need to do to improve these classes.

CHAPTER TWO: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Introduction

In spite of the fact that EFL reading is one of the most popular classes in Japanese universities, it does not necessarily mean classes are conducted in an efficient manner or that students are improving their reading comprehension. In our university for example, although many teachers have a knowledge of grammar and literature, they do not seem to be well-trained as EFL teachers. They usually teach reading by the traditional *yakudoku* or Grammar-Translation method and they focus on word-for-word translation rather than teaching reading skills or strategies to enhance students' reading comprehension. In this chapter, I will focus on research affecting reading comprehension, including *yakudoku* or the Grammar Translation Method, reading processes, models of reading, schema theory, reading strategies, extensive reading, and motivation, as well as effective teaching.

Yakudoku and Grammar-Translation Method

Hino (1988) explains that in Japanese *yaku* refers to translation and *doku* refers to reading. In other words, *yakudoku* means a technique or mental process of reading a foreign language in which the reader translates the target language into Japanese word for word and matches Japanese word order in order to comprehend their reading. According to Hino (1988), the purpose of *yakudoku* is help students to acquire *yakudoku* skills so that students will be able to use the technique without getting help from teachers. The role of the teacher is to explain the translation technique, gives model answers and

correct students' translations. Hino (1987a) found in his study that about 70% of EFL reading classes at the college level are taught by this method. Therefore, many students tend to think that reading English means translation. Hino (1988) identifies the following problems with the *yakudoku* method:

> The *yakudoku* habit clearly is a severe handicap for the Japanese
>
> student. It limits the speed at which s/he is able to comprehend.
>
> The meaning of a text is obtained via Japanese translation, and is
>
> only an approximation to the original. (p. 47)

Then why is the *yakudoku* method still so popular? According to Hino (1988) , Ozeki, Takanashi and Takahashi's (1983) observation, the *yakudoku* method does not seem to need professional training and does not require much preparation to teach. Whoever has experienced learning by this method will be able to teach it without much difficulty. Since most Japanese EFL teachers have not seen alternative approaches to teaching English, they tend to use the same method that they have been taught.

Although most scholars use *yakudoku* and the Grammar-Translation Method synonymously, Gorsuch (1997) distinguishes these two methods. He states that the Grammar-Translation Method focuses on "grammar rules through explicit instruction and by using single written sentences to exemplify grammar structures thought to be essential for students to learn" (p. 3). In other words learning grammar rules is the main purpose of this method. Larsen-Freeman (2000) further states that the main purpose of the Grammar-Translation Method is to enable students to read literature in a foreign language. In order

to do so, students need to learn the grammar rules and vocabulary of a foreign language. *Yakudoku* on the other hand, focuses on translating a foreign language into Japanese, while learning grammar rules becomes secondary.

Another major difference between *yakudoku* and the Grammar-Translation Method is that the major purpose of *yakudoku* is to understand the foreign language text in Japanese (Law, 1995). Law (1995) states that *yakudoku* "focuses more on understanding the valued contents of the translated text than on mastering the codes of the language itself, and in that it is concerned predominantly with the one-way transmission of ideas from the foreign language" (p. 215). In grammar-translation, there is a two-way exchange, in that the foreign language is translated into Japanese and Japanese is translated in the foreign language, with the focus on grammar (Gorsuch, 1995).

Gorsuch (I995) points out one similar aspect of *yakudoku* and the Grammar-Translation Method, which is that both methods focus on the written text and neglect oral/aural skills. In *yakudoku* or the Grammar-Translation method, most teachers use students' native language for classroom instruction (Gorsuch, 1995; Celce-Murcia, 2001). As in the *yakudoku* class, the role of the teacher in Grammar-Translation is very traditional. Larsen-Freeman (2000) says, "The teacher is the authority in the classroom. The students do as she says so they can learn what she knows" (p. 17). Furthermore, there is almost no interaction between student and student, and most of the interaction and initiation takes place from the teacher to students (Larsen-Freeman, 2000).

Hino (1988) states, "in terms of the teaching of English for communication needed today, it is undoubtedly a serious handicap for Japanese students of English" (p. 52). Nishi (2003) says that students who are trained to learn English by translation method often fail to grasp the overall meaning in the reading passage. They usually need to read all over again in order to understand the main idea of the story. Instead of teaching translation technique, Nishi recommends teaching reading skills such as skimming, scanning, and recognizing the main idea and supporting details. Hino suggests several alternative methods to overcome students' *yakudoku* habit and enhance their language competence. For example, Kasajima (1987) encourages students to work on "sense-group reading" rather than word-by-word translation. Sagawa and Furuya (1984) use easy English materials for extensive timed-reading in classrooms. Hino (1987b) suggests that using listening materials at normal speed for listening comprehension is an effective way of eliminating students' translation habit.

Hino (1988) concludes by saying that *yakudoku* is not only peculiar to Japan, but that this tradition has a long history and that it is very difficult to break this habit for Japanese learners. Therefore it is necessary for Japanese EFL teachers to become familiar with the nature of *yakudoku*.

Reading Processes

Alderson (2000) defines reading process as "the interaction between a reader and the text" (p. 3). During the process, many things are happening to the reader. For example, the reader is interpreting the content, thinking about the meaning and how they relate to

each other. The reader may also be thinking about whether the text is boring, interesting, useful or crazy. He may be reflecting on difficulties or ease he is experiencing while he is reading and how to overcome the difficulties or continue reading for pleasure.

Grabe and Stroller (2002) distinguish between lower- and higher-level processes. The former include the reader's automatic linguistics processes and are skills oriented whereas the latter include comprehension processes that are related to the reader's background knowledge and inference skills. In the lower-level processes, fluent reading requires rapid and automatic word recognition. Fluent L1 (first language) readers can comprehend almost all of the words they read in the text and recognize four to five words per second. In addition to reading fast, they do not stop thinking about the meaning of words they encounter. Grabe and Stoller (2002) say, "Both rapid processing and automaticity in word recognition (for a large number of words) typically require thousands of hours of practice in reading" (p. 21). Many L1 researchers pay a lot of attention to word recognition abilities. This does not mean they consider word recognition equal to reading comprehension, but readers cannot sustain reading unless they recognize each word they encounter.

Besides word recognition, a fluent reader can store a large number of words and pull out grammatical information. Grabe and Stoller (2002) call this process syntactic parsing and say, "The ability to recognise phrasal groupings, word ordering information, and subordinate relations among clauses quickly is what allows good readers to clarify how words are supposed to be understood" (p. 22). Syntactic parsing helps the reader

recognize words that have different meanings out of context. Furthermore, it helps the reader to identify pronouns and definite articles with earlier referents. More importantly, syntactic parsing is a necessary ability which is an automatic process performed without effort or conscious awareness.

How does this syntactic parsing apply to L2 (second language) learners? In L2 settings it is less obvious that L2 learners use this automatic syntactic process since they usually learn grammar before they become fluent L2 readers. What is often overlooked is that they need to study grammar in order to develop their reading. However, just the same as L1 fluent readers, L2 learners must spend countless hours in exposure to the text in order to comprehend well, if they are to develop automatic syntactic process and utilize grammatical information to enhance their reading comprehension (Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

Some researchers consider that lower-level processes are not significant for higher-level ESL learners and others emphasize lower-level processes for lower-level learners. Nassaji (2003) considers that both processes are significant components of reading comprehension. The author tried to determine the role of higher-level syntactic and semantic processes and lower-level word recognition and graphophonic processes in ESL reading comprehension. The study examined whether any difference in the use of these processes could be determined between skilled and less-skilled advanced second language readers. The participants in this study were speakers of Farsi as their first language, who were enrolled in a Canadian graduate school; they took a test consisting of

various reading processes. The results of the test showed that higher-level syntactic and semantic processes as well as lower-level word recognition and graphophonic processing skills contributed to the distinction between skilled and less-skilled readers. The results of this study suggest that lower-level word recognition and graphophonic processes play an important role even for advanced second-language learners. The author recommends that second-language practitioners should not neglect teaching these lower-level processes to advanced learners.

The third lower-level process involves "combining word meanings and structural information into basic clause-level meaning units" (Grabe & Stoller, 2002, p. 23). Fluent readers who identify words together with grammatical cues help them integrate information and relate them to what they have read previously.

In higher-level processes, Grabe and Stoller (2002) state "the most fundamental higher-level comprehension process is the coordination of ideas from a text that represent the main points and supporting ideas to form a meaning representation of the text" (p. 25). In relation to higher level processes, Perfetti, van Dyke and Hart (2001) propose two types of mental models that readers construct for text comprehension. They are the text base model and the situation model. The text base model refers to what the text says. This is a "mental representation of the propositions of the text, as extracted from the reading of successive sentences, supplemented only by inferences necessary to make the text coherent" (pp. 133-134).

The situation model, on the other hand, refers to what the text is about. This model emphasizes the reader's interpretation of the text based on the reader's background, motivation, interests, goals and attitudes toward the text and the author. Therefore, the situational model involves understanding what the author says and how the reader interprets the text according to his or her purposes. These two goals enable the reader to summarize the text as well as critique the content of the text (Grabe & Stoller, 2002).

Grabe and Stoller (2002) say that for L2 readers, those lower and higher-level processes do not occur automatically especially when they come across texts and tasks are too difficult for their ability. Difficulties occur when they do not have much background knowledge, enough linguistic resources and enough experience of reading to develop their fluency. When L2 readers encounter these difficulties, they tend to rely on translation or try to use inappropriate background knowledge. If this experience persistently occurs among L2 readers, they may lose their motivation to become good readers.

Grabe and Stoller (2002) suggest that L2 readers should read materials appropriate to their levels for many hours. According to the authors, "It is only through extended exposure to meaningful print that texts can be processed efficiently and that students will develop as fluent readers" (p. 30).

<center>Models of Reading</center>

Urquhart and Weir (1998) state that the most well-known processes for reading comprehension are bottom-up, top-down and interactive models. Alderson (2000) defines

bottom-up approach as "the reader begins with printed word, recognises graphic stimuli, decodes them to sound, recognises words and decodes meanings" (p. 16). According to Alderson (2000), this approach was related to behaviorism in the 1940s and 1950s in that children need to understand letters before they read words.

Meanwhile, much research has stressed the significance of the reader's background knowledge when reading the text. In the top-down reading approach, the reader maximizes his or her existing knowledge to guess the meaning of the text (Alderson, 2000). Thus, a text can be understood even though all the individual words may not be understood. The role of the teacher in the top-down approach is to focus on meaning generating activities instead of helping students master vocabulary in the text (Anderson 2003a).

The third model which is considered the most comprehensive is called the interactive model. This approach is simply a combination of a bottom-up and a top-down perspective. Therefore, the reader needs efficient word recognition as well as inference and prediction to understand the text (Grabe and Stoller, 2002).

In practical application, Anderson (2003a) says that an interactive approach involves both intensive and extensive reading. We need to teach learners specific reading skills with short passages and, at the same time, we need to provide longer passages without testing their skills. Extensive reading allows students to practice reading skills they have learned in classrooms. In addition, teachers should be aware that one text is not

good enough to meet the needs for both intensive and extensive reading instruction.

Anderson (2003a) further states:

> When I observe my students, I can see that an interactive model
>
> is the best description of what happens when we read. Second
>
> Language readers do many bottom-up things when they read
>
> (decode unfamiliar vocabulary, struggle with poor print quality,
>
> wonder about a part of speech of a particular word) and they do
>
> many top-down things when they read (anticipate what is coming
>
> next in the text, draw on their previous experience). My teaching
>
> has improved as I have come to understand that reading is an
>
> interactive process of both bottom-up and top-down processes. (p. 73)

Schema Theory

Urquhart and Weir (1998) state that there is enough evidence to support the schema theory that background knowledge plays an important role in reading comprehension. According to Urquhart and Weir, this background knowledge comes from two different sources. First it is part of theory of 'schemata' that the text is never complete for comprehension so that the reader needs to supply additional information from his or her existing knowledge. From this viewpoint it is assumed that the everyone, L1 or L2 reader, should possess background knowledge. "The second source is interactive models of the reading process" (p. 63). This means that L2 readers may use this background knowledge to "compensate for linguistic shortcomings" (p. 63).

There are two different types of schemata: formal and content. The formal schemata "means knowledge of language and linguistic conventions, including knowledge of how texts are organised, and what the main features of particular genres are" (Alderson, 2000, p. 34). The content schemata "means, essentially, knowledge of the world, including the subject matter of the text" (Alderson, 2000, p. 34).

Regarding the content schemata, some studies indicate that in order to understand the passage the reader has to have knowledge of the content. In addition, such knowledge needs to be enhanced by the reader or the text, if it is used in in-depth comprehension. Studies have shown how readers can activate their schemata and improve their reading by such training (Alderson 2000).

Concerning the relationship between background knowledge and reading comprehension, Zhaohua (2004) attempted to find out whether EFL students who received background knowledge or participated in previewing activities could comprehend better than students who did not. The author randomly selected 78 EFL students at a college in China and divided them into three different groups for treatment. Two groups were experimental groups, one of which received previewing activities and the other of which received background knowledge. The control group did not receive any treatment. The author selected reading material, a collection of stories of immigration to the U.S., the subject of which was unfamiliar to most Chinese EFL students. The result of this research shows that the preview used in this study was not ideal for facilitating students' reading performance, but the background knowledge preparation, such as

providing key words, and geographic and cultural information proved to be effective in increasing their comprehension of the text. Zhaohua (2004) says that "the more students know about a topic, the more they get out of a text and therefore, the more motivated they are to learn" (p. 58). With regards to the vocabulary, the author suggests effectively preteaching vocabulary which is crucial to understating the story. Moreover, the teacher can introduce difficult words which carry cultural meanings that are unfamiliar to most students. Zhaohua (2004) also states that compared with previewing the text, "background knowledge is better for maximizing students' comprehension of documentary narrative" (p. 60).

A critic of schema theory claims that schema theory applies only to relatively difficult materials. For example, it is helpful for college students who read difficult materials, but not for children in elementary school, because asking them to read such advanced materials may not occur in ordinary circumstances (Alderson 2000). Carver (1992) criticized U.S. school boards that have used tests based on schema theory by saying that evidence that activating prior knowledge helps comprehension during normal reading is very questionable. He further states:

> If instructional ideas derived from schema theory are in fact mostly
> irrelevant in normal reading situations (i.e. not involving relatively
> hard materials that require studying), then we need to be concerned
> about the possibility of wasting a great deal of valuable time on
> instructional techniques that are fashionable but have no more

effect than a large dose of chicken soup. (173)

Nassaji (2002) covers extensive studies of schema theory and suggests an alternative approach for reading comprehension. He says that current studies of schema theory alone do not necessarily have direct implications for reading comprehension. Many researchers assume that schema influences reading comprehension exclusively. However, such a notion limits understanding of what is actually going on in our reading research. The author gives an alternative approach that gives a comprehensive picture of second language reading comprehension. For example, Nassaji (2002) states "different knowledge sources, linguistic or conceptual, may involve different processes, which may have qualitatively differential effects on different levels of representation in text comprehension" (pp. 467-468). Compared with schema theory, applying the author's alternative approach helps one understand how readers comprehend and recall second language texts.

Nevertheless, Anderson (1999) says that a large amount of research has been conducted by researchers to show that reading comprehension and skills are fostered by activating prior knowledge. Murtagh (1989) suggests that using appropriate schema with proper pre-reading activities is very useful for learners. The idea of prior knowledge affecting reading comprehension implies that the reader does not only understand the meaning in the printed text, but also has some background knowledge that influences comprehension (Anderson 1999). Carrell and Eisterhold (1983) state that "a reader's

failure to activate an appropriate schema…during reading results in various degrees of noncomprehension" (p. 560).

<div align="center">Learner Strategies and L2 Reading</div>

Different learning styles and strategies may affect L2 learners. In his study, Cohen (2003) focuses on foreign language learners' styles, strategy and tasks, and tries to show how the first two variables relate to tasks. First of all, the article defines what language learning styles, strategies and tasks are, and then the article briefly looks at the research literature regarding the relationship between language learning styles and strategy used in a given task. Finally, the author suggests various ways in which teachers can become aware of students' styles and strategies. For example, in order to answer open-ended written questions for a reading text, learners with an intuitive preference may use clues from the text or use their own schemata and opinions to make inferences from the text. The more concrete-sequential learners might focus entirely on clues in the text and get frustrated when they cannot find any. The author suggests various ways in which teachers can help students learn a foreign language effectively.

Grabe and Stoller (2002) compare L1 and L2 readers and point out that because L2 readers basically lack vocabulary and grammar knowledge, they cannot be effective and strategic readers. Grabe and Stoller (2002) define a strategic reader as one who is "able to read flexibly in line with changing purposes and the ongoing monitoring of comprehension" (p. 18). For example, L2 readers do not know how to pronounce thousands of words and they cannot match the sound with the target word. As for the

grammar, Goldman and Rakestraw (2000) say, "Knowledge of structure is clearly important in efficient and strategic processing of text" (p. 323). Alexander and Jetton (2000) also state, "Knowledge of text genres and structures allows readers to access information more readily and accurately, as they construct their personal interpretations of the text" (p. 292). Grabe and Stoller (2002) emphasize that automatic understanding of words and structures is an essential part of the process for fluent readers, and most L2 readers are not exposed enough to L2 reading texts to build fluent processes.

Grabe and Stoller (2002) point out several strategies that play an important role in L2 reading. They are metalinguistic knowledge, metacognitive knowledge, language threshold, and transfer. Metalinguistic knowledge refers to how knowledge of sounds and letters, sentences and parts are related, and how texts and genres are organized. Grabe and Stoller (2002) simply define it as "our knowledge of how language works" (p. 46). Metacognitive knowledge includes knowledge that allows us to monitor our progress, think about our goal setting, recognize our problems and know how to fix them. Metacognitive knowledge involves our conscious awareness of using our reading strategies. In both cases we not only have knowledge but also we know how to apply this knowledge.

The language threshold hypothesis states that L2 readers must possess a certain amount of L2 knowledge in order to apply L1 reading skills to L2 texts. For example, L2 readers cross the threshold whenever they come across an L2 text in which they know most of the vocabulary and they can process the text without any difficulty. Grabe and

Stoller (2002) say that L2 readers have different language experiences and knowledge of topics; we cannot generalize their level of proficiency and their threshold. The threshold differs across readers, texts and topics.

One last issue Grabe and Stoller (2002) discuss is transfer. Transfer occurs when L2 readers use their L1 knowledge as an aid to understanding their L2 context. At the beginning level, L2 readers' strongest support is their first language. They try to use their L1 resources, their reading abilities and their knowledge of the world when they read an L2 text. However, if the text is too difficult, their transfer becomes interference. In order to avoid this negative transfer, Grabe and Stoller suggest using texts that are easy and enjoyable to read. Positive transfer, on the other hand, helps L2 readers develop their reading abilities and this transfer will be enhanced by appropriate instruction. Grabe and Stoller (2002) give examples of positive transfer as follows:

> effective strategies for reading academic texts, appropriate
>
> purposes for reading, experiences with successful task completion,
>
> flexibility in monitoring comprehension and skills for analyzing
>
> and learning new words.(p. 53)

With regard to reading, Anderson (2003a) distinguishes strategies and skills. Strategies are interpreted as learners' conscious actions that lead to achievement of objectives and goals. A skill is a strategy that becomes an automatic unconscious action. Readers will first learn and practice various strategies and later their conscious practice

will become unconscious from strategy to skill. Grabe and Stoller (2002) list some common strategies used by skilled readers as follows:

> Specifying a purpose for reading, Planning what to do/what steps to take, Previewing the text, Predicting the contents of the text or section of text, Checking predictions, Posing questions about the text, Finding answers to posed questions, Connecting text to background knowledge, Summarising information, Making inferences, Connecting one part of the text to another, Paying attention to text structure, Rereading, Guessing meaning of a new word from context, Using discourse markers to see relationships, Checking comprehension, Identifying difficulties, Taking steps to repair faulty comprehension, Critiquing the author, Critiquing the text, Judging how well objectives were met, Reflecting on what has been learned from the text. (p. 83)

Anderson (1991) says that strategic reading is not a matter of knowing what strategy to use; rather, readers know the appropriate strategy to use in the appropriate text while simultaneously using other strategies.

In actual practice, however, Ono (1996) argues that teaching reading strategies and activating background knowledge alone do not help students improve their reading comprehension. She believes that teachers should find out more about readers' beliefs about reading and try to change their beliefs in order to help them become better readers.

Ono believes that understanding the text depends mainly on the reader's socio-cultural background. In other words, how the things are happening in the text is interpreted from the reader's viewpoint. Ono (1996) says, "The understandings and interpretation formed by the reader during reading are always socially and culturally governed" (p. 172).

Ono (1996) attempted to investigate what ESL readers are thinking and what they are trying to learn during reading and their beliefs about reading. She chose five Japanese students who were studying ESL at an American college and chose Think-Aloud protocols in which respondents orally expressed their thoughts about their reading strategies. The researcher used American short stories without any vocabulary or grammatical control because these required the reader to use a wide range of reading strategies to understand the content. The results show that subjects A and E believe that understanding all the words, phrases and grammar can help them understand the text. Once they come across unfamiliar words, they skip those words, but they never attempt to find the meaning of those words. They do not seem to attempt to use the context to guess the meaning of unfamiliar words. They try to connect all the familiar words to understand the overall meaning. In short they are very word-oriented readers. Both of them also believe that they "need to understand the literal meaning of the text and later on interpret the text based on their personal experiences" (p. 182).

Subjects B and D do not seem to mind exploring contextual clues and personal experiences to understand the text even though they encounter unfamiliar words and sentence structures. Both readers have an interest in character relationships, the theme

and the background of the story. They believe that "they can understand the literal meaning of the text by elaborating and connecting the words and phrases that they can comprehend in spite of some incomprehensible words" (Ono, 1996, p. 182).

Subject C, on the other hand, attempts to connect his reading experiences with his own personal experiences more often than other subjects in order to understand the story. When he fails to connect his reading with his own personal experiences, he feels the story is too difficult for his reading ability. Subject C believes that "he can comprehend the story when his imagination is engaged. Then he tries to correspond the image he had during reading with the content of the story" (Ono 1996, p. 182).

Ono (1996) believes that it is very significant to change readers' beliefs about their reading in order to change their reading behaviors. One way to change their reading beliefs is to have students collaborate in their comprehension and interpretation in reading. Leaning on others' interpretation based on their socio-cultural backgrounds will enhance understanding more than individual reading. For this reason, reading teachers should encourage students to take a chance to elaborate their inquiries, to understand the meaning based on their experiences and their existing knowledge, and to appreciate others' inquiries. Ono (1996) concluded by saying that to be good readers, "students should understand that reading is a tool for thinking and learning in the classroom as well as writing and they should be open-minded to their own inquires and others" (p. 184).

Wurr (2003) tried to investigate whether readers use different strategies in first-language and second-language reading. After examining related literature in case studies,

the author found some differences in the ways that ESL learners utilized their first language for reading English materials. For example, one Korean student tried to comprehend English reading by analyzing English sentences grammatically. On the other hand, when she read Korean, she did so unconsciously, not thinking about what strategy she would use. Another Korean student believed that in order to become a good second-language reader, he had to be a good first-language reader. Therefore, being a fluent reader in a first language helps one to become a fluent second-language reader. These different examples show that ESL students' perceptions regarding L1 and L2 reading influence the choice of strategies they depend on when reading L1 and L2 materials.

<p style="text-align:center">Extensive Reading</p>

Carrell and Carson (1997) state that extensive reading involves reading entire books or large amounts of reading for general understanding. Davis (1995) states more precisely how we can implement extensive reading in classrooms. He says that an extensive reading program is a supplementary program of reading outside of the class, in which students are encouraged to read as many books as they can for pleasure according to their own level and interests. Thus, students are able to fulfill two purposes: reading a large amount of books or materials to nurture their life-long reading habit and reading fluently (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002). Day and Bamford (1998) state several other possible goals. For example:

1. Have a positive attitude toward reading in the second language.

2. Have confidence in their reading. 3. Have motivation to read in

the second language. 4. Read without constantly stopping to look

up unknown or difficult words in the dictionary. 5. Have increased

their word recognition ability. 6. Know for what purpose they are

reading when they read. 7. Read at an appropriate rate for their

purpose in reading. 8. Know how to choose appropriate reading

materials for their interests and language ability. (p. 158)

Day and Bamford (1998) state that the longer the duration of the extensive reading

program, the more likely students will achieve the above mentioned goals. In other words,

the more time you spend on the program, the more possibility there is for students to

become effective and fluent readers.

One of the most difficult reasons why some teachers cannot implement extensive

reading is that teachers do not have enough time because the school curriculum is strictly

laid out and teachers feel pressure from the school to cover the predetermined syllabus.

Others point out that extensive reading cannot be directly assessed, so they prefer to

cover materials in which they can test students more directly (Renandya & Jacobs, 2002).

Grabe and Stoller (2002) respond to these dilemmas by saying that reading outside

of the class should be encouraged and interesting books should be available for students.

In classroom, there needs to be free reading time, silent reading periods, reading lab time,

library reading and periods for reading extended reading materials together with other

students. Grabe and Stoller (2002) state, "To build extensive reading in class, we need to

have good text resources, enough time and school and curricular support" (p. 90).

Harmer (2001) states that the role of the teacher is crucial since most students will not do extensive reading by themselves, but they are more likely to do it with their teachers' encouragement. Teachers need to persuade students that extensive reading is beneficial and worthwhile. Furthermore, teachers need to explain how much students are expected to read in a given period of time and what choices they have for their reading. Teachers also suggest that students can choose genres that they may have an interest in and make wise choices according to their levels. Aebersold and Field (1997) state that in an extensive reading course students read the text in order to understand main ideas, not to comprehend every word. In addition, extensive reading is not intended to teach specific reading skills or strategies since reading materials do not include any reading exercises.

<div align="center">Motivation</div>

There are two kinds of motivation: extrinsic and intrinsic motivation. Harmer (2001) states that extrinsic motivation comes from outside factors such as passing an exam, working for a reward or for taking a future trip. Intrinsic motivation, on the other hand, comes from within each person. For instance the person is performing activities for enjoyment or interest.

Regarding initiating and sustaining motivation, Harmer (2001) states that at the beginning of class the teacher may face all kinds of student motivations. Some students have specific goals and extrinsic motivation while others have an internal intrinsic motivation. Still, others do not have any strong motivation. However, students'

motivation does not stay the same throughout their life. Although teachers do not have responsibility for students' motivation, they can increase and direct their motivation.

Related to motivation, Harmer (2001) points out long-term and short-time goals. Long-term goals may be mastering English, passing a final exam or getting a better job. Short-term goals could be writing a successful essay, developing the ability to participate in a discussion, or passing a test at the end of the week. Teachers need to be aware of the importance of long-term goals, but they are often times very far away from achievement. Meanwhile short-term goals are much easier to focus on and attain. If teachers can help students achieve short-term goals, this will have an important effect on students' motivation (Harmer, 2001).

A learning environment also plays an important role in affecting students' motivation. When students come to an attractive classroom in the beginning of the term, it may help them to increase their motivation. Even in unattractive classrooms, teachers can decorate with different kinds of visual materials or change the atmosphere by using music (Harmer, 2001).

Harmer (2001) suggests, "If students are to continue to be intrinsically motivated they clearly need to be interested both in the subject they are studying and in the activities and topics they are presented with" (pp. 53-54). He says that teachers need to give a wide range of subjects and exercises to keep students involved.

Grabe and Stoller (2001) state that motivation makes a significant difference in students' development in reading, and teachers need to think how they can motivate

students using class materials as well as extensive reading. They suggest several different ways to motivate students. First of all, teachers need to discuss with students the importance of reading and reasons for using different activities in classrooms. Second, teachers need to talk about why they are interested in reading. Many students would be surprised to find out why their teachers like reading. Third, all activities should be geared toward achieving lesson goals introduced in the class. Fourth, all reading activities should have pre-reading exercises that help students arouse their interest in reading. Fifth, teachers should give students enough background knowledge so that they can handle difficult ideas and obtain enough information on the topic of the reading. Sixth, teachers need to choose a text and adapt exercises so that they are appropriate to students' reading abilities. Seventh, teachers should establish "a community of learners" in class and make sure that students can learn to collaborate effectively when they are working on difficult reading tasks. Finally, teachers ought to discover how to help students experience "flow" in their reading. Egbert (2003) says Flow Theory suggests flow experiences (balance of skills and challenge, concentration on tasks, clear task goals, positive feedback on a given task, a feeling of minimum self-consciousness) can lead to optimal learning. People experience flow when they are fully engaged in tasks "in which their growing skills match well with task challenges. Thus, flow experiences lead students to seek out reading as an optimal experience, resulting in intrinsic motivation to read regularly" (Grabe & Stoller, 2001, p. 200).

Regarding motivation in reading assignments and materials, Irwin (1991) states:

Motivation should always be a prime consideration when giving

students reading assignments. When students have ownership of

the assignment through choice, they are more likely to be motivated.

Never present reading as a chore or punishment. Make all reading

assignments relevant and meaningful to students by suggesting

interesting purposes for reading. When possible, use materials that

are related to the students' interests and show them how the material

learned can be used by them in the future. Make sure that each student

has a chance to succeed, and help students to develop a positive attitude

toward reading in general. (pp.145-146)

Reading Instruction

Many scholars suggest different approaches and techniques to teaching reading

comprehension. Samuels (2002) states that fluent readers are able to decode and

comprehend a text simultaneously whereas beginning readers cannot do both tasks at the

same time. Therefore in order to develop decoding skills he suggests spending plenty of

time reading. One benefit of extended exposure to reading is that students will come

across familiar words in story after story. Because of repeated exposure to the same

words, the whole word can become a single unit. According to the author, "One of the

indicators of fluent decoding is the ability to recognize words as a single visual unit and

not letter by letter" (p. 174).

Samuels (2002) also suggests repeated reading for building reading fluency. He says that this method helps readers to gain reading speed, increase word recognition and improve oral reading expression and comprehension. In classrooms, teachers have some tasks to perform in simplified repeated reading. Before introducing this method, teachers can ask students how they become good at sports. Many students are aware that through practice they can become skilled at sports. In the same manner, students can become good readers through this repeated reading practice. For a few sessions students required close supervision and guidance from teachers, but after a few sessions they should be able to manage with minimal help from teachers. Samuels (2002) indicates that for the past twenty years since this method was introduced, more than 100 studies have shown that repeated reading practice has helped students improve their reading fluency.

Duke and Pearson (2002) emphasize that reading instruction needs to be balanced. This means that good reading instruction consists of teaching detailed comprehension strategies and providing plenty of time and opportunity for actual reading, writing and discussion of the text. More precisely, Duke and Pearson (2002) give the following suggestions for good reading instruction. First, students need to spend a lot of time at actual reading practice in order to apply their knowledge, skills and strategies. Second, to be effective readers, students need to go beyond reading texts only for class and begin reading with a clear purpose in mind. Third, students need to read and experience a wide range of genres if they want to become fluent readers. Fourth, activating prior knowledge,

such as previewing activities and conversations related to the content of the text, plays an important role in understanding the reading text.

Regarding implications for teaching, Eskey (2002) states what often happens in ESL/EFL reading classrooms is that teachers ask students to answer either written or oral comprehension questions concerning a reading passage. These activities merely test students' comprehension but do not actually teach students to improve their reading comprehension. Because learners read better by reading, a main teacher's role is to introduce texts which are interesting, appropriate to their level, and related to their needs. In short, the author states "the teacher's job is to motivate students to read texts, either texts that the teacher has provided for them or texts that the students have chosen for themselves" (p. 9). The teacher's second job is to teach reading strategies effectively, including both bottom-up and top-down reading processes. Eskey (2002) says, "The two jobs are obviously complementary: Students who enjoy reading are more likely to read successfully, and students who read successfully are more likely to enjoy it" (p. 9).

Schmitt and Carter (2000) suggest narrow reading as a good way to increase students' vocabulary. In narrow reading students read different texts on the same topic. With this method students will encounter similar vocabulary items across several texts. By doing so, students will be able to become familiar with words and eventually make these words part of their acquired vocabulary. Schmitt and Carter (2000) recommend the following activities to develop students' vocabulary: 1. Read newspaper articles that deal with a continuing topic. Make sure that each article is appropriate to students' interest. 2.

Ask students to choose subjects they would like to read about in magazines and have them read several articles on those subjects. 3. Use the internet since a wide variety of reading on any topic can be found there. 4. Ask students to read books—particularly any novel in which the same vocabulary appears again and again. 5. Ask students to read material by one author.

Concerning understanding vocabulary, Harmer (2001) addresses the concern that although teachers encourage students to read for the general meaning of a passage, many students would like to find out what each word means. If given a chance students tend to use a dictionary to look up every single word they do not know and, as a result, a teacher may find translations all over the page. There is a certain discrepancy between a teacher's desire for the students to develop reading for general understanding and students' desire to understand the meaning of every word. How do we handle this case? Harmer suggests one way to compromise is for the teacher to encourage students to read for general understanding for the first and second reading. Then the teacher gives students opportunities to ask questions about vocabulary that they do not know or allows them to look up words in a dictionary. In order to avoid spending too much time on vocabulary work in class, Harmer suggests setting up a time limit. For example, he suggests five minutes, for vocabulary questions or looking up words in a dictionary. Teachers also can limit the number of vocabulary items students may ask about. Another technique for inquiring about vocabulary is for individual students to list three to five important words they want to know. Then, each student shares with another student and they work

together to come up with a joint list of five words that they would like to know. Finally, they either look them up in a dictionary or ask the teacher the meaning.

Williams (1984) states that there are three phases of teaching reading: pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. The purpose of pre-reading activity is to "1. introduce and arouse interest in the topic 2. motivate learners by giving a reason for reading 3. provide some language preparation for the text" (p. 37). Williams (1984) says that all of these purposes do not apply to all the materials that students will read. Sometimes the language has already been introduced or students do not encounter any language difficulties. Nevertheless, language preparation does not mean that the teacher has to explain all the difficult words and structures the students do not know. Rather, the teacher helps students prepare to read the text without frustration.

Some objectives of the second phase, while-reading, are: "1. to help understanding of the writer's purpose 2. to help understanding of the text structure 3. to clarify text context" (Williams, 1984, p. 38). Course texts often provide a large amount of while-reading exercises. What the teacher has to keep in mind is whether these exercises match the learners' objectives.

Williams (1984) suggests that a while-reading activity begins with global understanding of the text first and then works on paragraphs, sentences and words. The main reason is that general understanding will provide a context for understanding smaller units such as paragraphs, and sentences will help the reader understand a word.

The last phase, post-reading work, has the following objectives: "1. to consolidate or reflect upon what has been read 2. to relate the text to the learners' own knowledge, interests, or views" (Williams, 1984, p. 39). The post-reading phase may provide readers opportunities to react to while-reading work and to discuss whether they liked the text or whether they found the text useful. Types of post-reading work may depend on the objectives of the course. Thus, post-reading activity will help learners improve the writing, speaking or listening skills that the program tries to develop.

As a conclusion, Williams (1984) explains how to implement this three phase approach and the advantage of this approach as follows:

> Obviously, this three phase approach is not to be carried out
> Mechanically on every occasion. Sometimes the teacher may
> wish to cut out the pre-reading stage and get learners to work on
> the text directly. Sometimes post-reading work may not be suitable.
> However, the advantage of the three phase approach is twofold.
> First it respects and makes use of the student's own knowledge of
> language and of the world and uses this as a basis for involvement,
> motivation, and progress. Secondly the three phase approach leads
> to integration of the skills in a coherent manner, so that the reading
> session is not simply isolated. (p. 40)

More recently, Anderson (2003a) has pointed out some important principles for teaching reading, including activation of prior knowledge, cultivation of vocabulary,

teaching for comprehension, increasing reading rate, verifying strategies and evaluating progress. He points out that reading can be improved if students' background knowledge is "activated by setting goals, asking questions, making predictions, teaching text structure, and so on" (p. 74). If students are reading a text on an unfamiliar topic, the teacher may need to provide some background knowledge.

Concerning cultivating vocabulary, Anderson (2003a) states that basic vocabulary should be taught and students should be able to guess less familiar vocabulary in context. For example, Anderson's recent published book called *Active Skills for Reading Book 3,* which is designed especially for ESL/EFL adult learners, focuses on various vocabulary comprehension and vocabulary building strategies such as recognizing the meaning of words in context, using synonyms, using prefixes, and using the context to infer the meaning of vocabulary (Anderson 2003c).

In teaching for comprehension, Anderson (2003a) emphasizes that students should be able to monitor comprehension. This monitoring process includes confirming that predictions students made are correct and making some adjustments if they cannot obtain the appropriate meaning of the text. In addition, students should be able to talk with their teacher or fellow students about strategies they use to understand the text.

Regarding increasing reading rate, Anderson (2003a) defines ESL/EFL fluent readers' reading rate as 200 words-per-minute with 70% comprehension rate. In order to increase their reading rate, learners should decrease their reliance on the dictionary.

Instead they can approach reading using various skills such as scanning, skimming, predicting and finding main ideas.

In verifying strategies, Anderson (2003a) says that students need to learn various strategies to use in appropriate situations. Anderson defines strategies as conscious actions that lead to learners' achievement of goals; once those actions become automatic, he calls them skills. For instance, students may learn a strategy of how to guess unknown vocabulary in context. When they are able to use this strategy unconsciously, they have acquired this strategy as a skill. Anderson (2003a) says, "The goal for explicit strategy instruction is to move readers from conscious control of reading strategies to unconscious use of reading skills" (p. 77).

In evaluating progress, Anderson (2003a) says using reading journals in class is a good way to evaluate students' reading progress. Students can write about different areas of focus they have learned in their reading. For example, you may engage in repeated reading activities in class and ask students to write down in their journals what they have learned about their reading rate by doing repeated reading. Anderson (2003a) states, "The reading journal helps the students see the progress they are making in class" (p. 81).

<div align="center">Conclusion</div>

Many EFL Japanese college teachers tend to use *yakudoku* or the Grammar-Translation Method to teach reading in classrooms. However, this method alone does not seem to help students improve their reading. Several factors including reading processes, models of reading, schema theory, reading strategies, motivation and effective teaching

need to be considered in order to enhance their reading development. As several scholars have indicated, *yakudoku* actually hinders learners' reading comprehension, as it encourages them to rely on word-by-word translation and to neglect the overall meaning of the text.

Regarding reading processes, Grab and Stoller (2002) distinguish lower and higher-level processes, and argue that fluent reading requires both higher and lower-level processes such as rapid and automatic word recognition, background knowledge and inference skills. Moreover, L2 readers need to read a large amount of texts appropriate to their level.

There are three different models of reading: bottom-up, top-down and interactive. In practice, readers require both bottom-up model such as word recognition and top-down model such as inference and prediction to understand the text. Anderson (2003a) suggests teaching learners specific skills with short passages and at the same time providing longer passages. Therefore, extensive reading allows students to practice reading skills they have learned in classrooms.

Regarding the schema theory, many studies have shown that background knowledge plays an important role in reading comprehension. However, some critics indicate that background knowledge alone does not help learners' comprehension. However, Anderson (1999) claims that reading comprehension and skills are fostered by activating prior knowledge.

According to Grabe and Stoller (2002) several strategies play an important role in L2 reading. They are metalinguistic knowledge, metacognitive knowledge, language threshold and transfer. For example, in order to have a positive transfer Grabe and Stoller suggest using easy and enjoyable texts. In addition, a positive transfer helps students develop their reading abilities. Ohno (1996), on the other hand, argues that teaching reading strategies is not sufficient to improve students' reading comprehension. She believes that teachers should investigate readers' beliefs about reading and try to change their beliefs to help them become better readers.

Many researchers advocate extensive reading (reading entire books or large amount of reading for general understanding). This reading helps students form a life-long reading habit and become fluent readers. For this reason the teacher plays an important role, since students do not do extensive reading alone but with their teachers' encouragement.

Motivation makes a big difference in reading classrooms. Teachers should always keep in mind that activities should be interesting and materials should be appropriate for students' abilities, and they should find out how to help students experience "flow" in their reading. Irwin (1991) suggests that reading materials be relevant to students' needs and interests, and that teachers help students attain a feeling of success and a positive attitude toward reading.

In reading instruction, several scholars suggest different methods for teaching reading. One suggests wide exposure to reading; another suggests repeated reading; still

others suggest pre-reading, while-reading and post-reading. Duke and Pearson (2002) emphasize that reading instruction needs to be balanced so that it includes both the teaching of detailed comprehension strategies and plenty of time for actual reading, writing and discussion of the text. In a more recent approach, Anderson (2003a) suggests that the teaching of reading comprehension consists of activating prior knowledge, cultivating vocabulary, teaching for comprehension, increasing reading rate, verifying strategies and evaluating progress.

CHAPER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Quantitative and Qualitative Evaluation

Genesee (2001) states that "an important purpose of evaluation is accountability: to demonstrate that students are learning to the standards expected of them and/or that a curriculum or programme of instruction is working the way it should" (p. 146). Worthen, Sanders and Fitzpatrick (1997) state that there are two types of evaluation: formative and summative evaluation. In the formative evaluation, we are interested in what is working, what needs to be improved, and how it can be improved. In the summative evaluation, we tend to make judgments about the program's worth or merit. According to the authors, "Its focus is on continuation, termination or adoption of a program" (Torres, Preskill & Piontek, 1996, p. 46).

Perhaps the most popular evaluation is conducted using a student survey for evaluation. With regard to the advantages of using a survey instrument, Brown (2001) states that surveys are very efficient for obtaining data on a large scale. Although interviews may be used effectively with a small number of participants in a language program, a survey is more effective when one would like to obtain the views of all participants. Isaac and Michael (1995) state the purpose of the survey as follows:

> Surveys are the most widely-used technique in education and
>
> the behavioral sciences for the collection of data. They are a
>
> means of gathering information that describes the nature and
>
> extent of a specified set of data ranging from physical counts

and frequencies to attitudes and opinions. This information, in

turn, can be used to answer questions that have been raised, to

solve problems that have been posed or observed, to assess needs

and set goals, to determine whether or not specific objectives

have been met, to establish baselines against which future

comparisons can be made, to analyze trends across time, and

generally, to describe what exists in what amount, and in what

context (p. 136).

Using a survey is an efficient way to collect data and serves the purpose of

quantitative evaluation. With regard to the evaluation, it is useful to know the difference

between quantitative and qualitative research and evaluation. Gall, Gall, and Borg (1999)

say quantitative research is used when you deal with numerical data and statistical

analysis. Qualitative research is used when you are concerned with verbal data and

subjective analysis. Patton (2002) states, "Qualitative methods typically produce a wealth

of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases" (p. 14). He

also says these methods allow us to get a deeper understanding of cases and situations.

One of the common qualitative methods of evaluation is classroom observation.

Wajnryb (1992) says that the main purpose of classroom observation is to help teachers

develop their performance and grow. Day (1990) states the following goals of classroom

observation:

developing a terminology for understanding and discussing the

teaching process; developing an awareness of the principles and

decision-making that underline effective teaching; distinguishing

between effective and ineffective classroom practices (p.43).

Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) warn that researchers should be aware of an observer

effect, defined as "any action by the observer that has a negative effect on the validity or

reliability of the data they collect" (p. 264). For example, the observer who visits a class

for the first time may arouse curiosity among students. As a result, they may not perform

naturally and the data the observer collects will not represent students' ordinary behavior

in class.

Another major concern for observation is the observer's personal bias. Every

human seems to have some form of bias according to his or her personal experiences and

beliefs. However, Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) recommend that the observer eliminate

personal bias whenever he or she finds it.

Another problem of observation is observation omission, which occurs when the

observer fails to keep a record of behavior that fits in one of the categories of the data.

This may occur due to personal bias. The observer may have a negative bias and tend to

ignore desirable behavior. Another cause of observer omission is that behavior is

occurring so rapidly and simultaneously that the observer cannot record all the data at

once (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003).

Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) indicate that observation in qualitative research is

different from observation in quantitative research. For example, in qualitative research,

observers will not remain neutral about things they are observing. The authors note, "They may include their own feelings and experiences in interpreting their observations" (p. 266). The second difference is that quantitative observation is based on a predetermined hypothesis, questions or objectives; whereas, observers engaged in qualitative observation may change their focus during the process depending on new phenomena that are observed. The third difference is that in quantitative observation, researchers tend to focus on specific behaviors. In qualitative observation, on the other hand, "observers look at behavior and its environmental setting from a holistic perspective" (p. 267).

Wang and Day (2002) point out that observation plays an important role in helping teachers develop and grow as professionals and suggest that the following basic needs for teachers should be met for effective observation:

> 1) RESPECT—to be treated as professionals; 2) SAFETY—to
>
> be provided with opportunities to learn and grow in a non-
>
> threatening environment; 3) TRUST—to be encouraged to
>
> assume the responsibility of working towards accomplishing
>
> their own instructional and pedagogical goals; and 4)
>
> COLLABORATION—to be provided with support and to
>
> experience camaraderie (p. 14).

The third method of qualitative evaluation is interviewing. Patton (2002) identifies some limitations of observation research and the usefulness of interviewing as follows:

We interview people to find out from them those things we

cannot directly observe. The issue is not whether observational

data are more desirable, valid, or meaningful than self-report

data. The fact is that we cannot observe everything. We cannot

observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions. We cannot observe

behaviors that took place at some previous point in time. We

cannot observe situations that preclude the presence of an

observer…. We have to ask people questions about those things.

The purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into

the other person's perspective. Qualitative interviewing begins

with the assumption that the perspective of others is meaningful,

knowable, and able to be made explicit. We interview to find out

what is in and on someone else's mind, to gather their stories.

(pp. 340-341)

Patton (2002) describes three different approaches to the design of the interview. They are the informal conversation interview, the general interview guide and the standardized open-ended interview. The informal conversation interview is a spontaneous, open-ended approach to interviewing. The respondents may or may not be aware that they are being interviewed. This interview allows flexibility, so that the interviewer cannot predict in which directions the interview will go. The interviewer usually does not take notes during the interview. Instead, the data will be recorded afterwards.

An interview guide lists topics and basic questions that the interviewer would like to ask before the interview. However, depending on how the interview flows, the interviewer can ask additional questions to explore and illuminate any focused subject area.

In the standardized open-ended interview, the researcher carefully decides questions beforehand and asks those questions to respondents. Since the data collected are open-ended, the researcher will be able to apprehend respondents' thoughts and feelings regarding the questions. Thus, the topic and questions are highly focused and interviewees' time is efficiently spent.

Rubin and Rubin (1995) say that the major goal for interviews is to "get the depth, detail, and nuance" (p. 83). Posavac and Carey (2003) list a few things that the researchers should keep in mind when they interview subjects. First of all, before conducting interviews, interviewees need to understand the purpose of the interview and interviewers should come to the interview on time or a little early. In addition, in order to build good rapport and trust with respondents, the interviewer should ask some preliminary questions and accept responses in a friendly manner.

One of the most important keys to the success of the interview is to avoid asking questions that can be answered "Yes" or "No." For example, instead of asking, "Are you the director?" You can ask, "What is your role in the program?" Posavac and Carey (2003) state that qualitative interviews try to encourage respondents to talk and elaborate. Instead of asking yes/no questions, you can ask, "What is it like when…?" or "Please tell

me how…" (p. 243)? Even though some respondents may misunderstand the questions or be unwilling to answer questions, the format of these questions is more likely to encourage respondents to provide significant information.

For recording data, Patton (2002) recommends a tape recorder. By using a tape recorder the interviewer can pay more attention to the interviewee. If you write down every word the interviewee says, you may not be able to respond adequately to the interviewee, and "having one's eyes fixed on a notepad is hardly conductive to careful observation" (p. 381). When a tape recorder is used during the interview, taking notes consists of writing down key words, phrases and major points indicated by respondents.

Using multiple methods such as survey, classroom observation and student interview is called triangulation. Sanders (1994) defines triangulation as "the use of multiple sources and methods to gather similar information" (p. 210). Gall, Gall and Borg (2003) state, "The triangulation helps to eliminate biases that might result from relying on any one data-collection method, source, analyst, or theory" (p. 464). Another purpose of triangulation is that "this process involves corroborating evidence from different sources to shed light on a theme or perspective" (Creswell, 1998, p. 202). Regarding triangulation, Merriam (2001) states, "triangulation strengthens reliability as well as internal validity" (p. 207). Patton (2002) states that triangulation is ideal, but it takes a great deal of time and money for actual implementation. He suggests using this method practically and reasonably.

In quantitative and qualitative evaluation, a survey method seems to be an efficient way to collect data on a large scale and get the views of all participants. Also a survey method allows us to see generally how the program is working and how we can improve the program. Classroom observation helps us to focus on specific behaviors and "look at behavior and its environmental setting from a holistic perspective" (Gall, Gall & Borg, 2003, p. 276). Finally, interviews allow us to "get the depth, detail and nuance" (Rubin & Rubin, 1995, p. 83). Patton states (2002), "the purpose of interviewing, then, is to allow us to enter into the other person's perspective…. The perspective of others is meaningful, knowable, and able to be made explicit" (p. 341).

Numerous studies have been introduced regarding reading comprehension and instruction. However, triangulation of quantitative and qualitative evaluation such as surveys, classroom observation and student interviews seems to be the best method for discovering what is happening in our EFL college classes and how we can improve those classes in the future.

Research Design

Both quantitative and qualitative evaluation methods were used to find out what actually students feel about freshman EFL reading classes at Konan University and what teaching strategies were being used in this course. With regard to evaluation, Brown (2002) uses the term credibility. Credibility is similar to internal validity in quantitative research and focuses on the believability of results. In order to increase believability, Brown uses triangulation. Triangulation deals with understanding human behavior from

different perspectives, usually including quantitative and qualitative approaches.

According to Brown, one method called methodological triangulation is used to collect

multiple data. In this study I used this methodological triangulation. It consisted of

student surveys, classroom observation and student interviews. The student survey

included both closed and open responses. For each question, there was space for students

to write comments. This helped us obtain more detailed information about the reasons for

their choices and helped us determine what to do to improve the class. In constructing a

survey, Brown (2001) points out advantages of closed and open responses and he

recommends using both types since they serve different purposes. After getting

quantitative and qualitative data, follow-up classroom observation enabled us to see both

students' and teachers' performance. In our observation, we used Danielson's framework

for teaching, which included directions and procedures, quality of questions, discussion

techniques, student participation, activities and assignments, structure and pacing

(Danielson, 1996). We used those criteria as a guide to look for the same things each time.

Finally, some EFL students in reading class were interviewed. Interviews are useful for

getting in-depth information about how students perceive their own classes. Moreover,

interviews enabled us to gauge experiences and feelings that we could not elicit through a

student survey or classroom observation.

<div align="center">Research Questions</div>

The following research questions will guide this study:

1. What are student perceptions of the EFL reading program at a Japanese

university?

   2. What teaching strategies are being used in an EFL reading program at a Japanese university?

<div align="center">Methodology</div>

Target Population and Sample Selection

   Survey. Since there are almost 2,000 students in the freshman EFL reading class at Konan University in Kobe, Japan, and the survey format includes a number of open responses, it is not practical to administer the survey and collect the data from the entire population. Instead, a sampling method was used, in which data were gathered from a smaller population to represent the entire population. In this study, the researcher chose twelve classes where 245 students responded to the survey.

   Classroom observation. For classroom observation, we chose twelve Japanese EFL part-time teachers at Konan University and observed their classes.

   Student interview. I asked twelve part-time EFL teachers at Konan University to ask students to participate in a group interview session (maximum of four students in one class). A total of twenty-seven students from twelve classes participated in group interviews.

<div align="center">*Data Collection Method*</div>

   Survey. The teachers of twelve freshman EFL reading classes administered the survey to all the students who were enrolled in these classes. The format of the survey was created previously for our school's evaluation purposes and administered in various

EFL classes at Konan University. Similar to the previous surveys, we included both closed and open responses for each question. For example, one question asks students whether the class is useful. They are required to choose whether the class is "very useful," "somewhat useful," "not very useful" or "not useful at all." Then there is a space below the choices where students are able to express their responses in detail, and we are able to find out more about the reasons for their choices (see the English translation version, appendix A).

Classroom Observation. I observed each teacher's class by myself for thirty minutes. I used Danielson's framework for teaching as a guide and took additional notes concerning teachers' as well as students' behavior and their performance.

Student Interview. I interviewed a group of students from the same class at one time. For each group I asked the following nine standard questions:

1. Is the level of the class appropriate?

2. How does your teacher use the text?

3. What do you like/dislike about the textbook?

4. Is the class useful for improving your reading?

5. What exercises would you like to have more or less of in class?

6. What is an ideal reading class?

7. Do you have any opportunities to read English outside the class?

8. How do you feel about evaluation of your reading class?

9. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

In order to keep an accurate record of the interviews, I asked students for permission to use a tape recorder during the interviews. Each interview lasted about 30 minutes. After the interview each student received a book certificate worth five hundred yen (about four and a half dollars) as a reward.

Assumptions

1. Students responded honestly to both the survey and to the interview questions.

2. From classroom observation, I can see teachers' teaching strategies and students' actual performance, in general.

3. The triangulation of evaluation gives an accurate picture of EFL reading classes and it is an effective method to help us improve those classes in the future.

Limitations/Validity Concerns

Patton (2002) states, "Qualitative methods typically produce a wealth of detailed information about a much smaller number of people and cases" (p. 14). He also says these methods allow us to get a deeper understanding of the cases and situations. Even though a triangulation method of student survey, classroom observation and interviews may increase credibility in qualitative evaluation and allow us to get a deeper understating of EFL reading classes, the population of the target EFL students at Konan University may not accurately represent the entire population of Japanese EFL college students. Therefore, we cannot generalize the results of the evaluation and apply them directly to other institutions in Japan.

Another major concern is that this survey research has limitations since some students never responded to open questions. Probably, they simply circled the most appropriate choices for questions but neglected to take time to write their comments. For this reason, we could never clarify the meaning behind their closed responses.

Data Analysis Procedure

Survey. I gathered information by hand and later statistical analysis was conducted using Excel. Meanwhile, students' open-ended responses were typed and organized according to similar themes, patterns and categories.

Classroom Observation. After observing all the classes, I compiled the records and organized information according to the framework's categories and themes.

Student Interview. The interviewer transcribed each interview tape and organized the responses according to each question. Some redundant words and statements were skipped and some unclear expressions were modified to make more sense in Japanese.

CHAPER FOUR: FINDINGS

Introduction

EFL reading has long been one of the most popular classes in Japanese universities. Most universities offer this course as a graduation requirement; however, it is very questionable whether this course has been taught in a useful and effective manner. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to find out how teachers teach and how students learn in freshman EFL reading classrooms, and how we can help them improve their performance. In my research, a student survey was conducted to gauge the general feelings of students in the reading class in regard to such factors as the level of the class, the usefulness of the class, the materials, the amount of exercises and their satisfaction with the class. Then follow-up class observation was conducted to find out more about what was happening in class and see how we can improve our teachers' and students' performance. Finally, a group interview was conducted to obtain more detailed information about students' classroom experiences in the EFL reading class. The following research questions guided this study:

1. What are student perceptions of the EFL reading program at a Japanese university?

2. What teaching strategies are being used in an EFL reading program at a Japanese university?

The following are the results of student surveys, classroom observation and student interviews:

Student Survey

Level of the Class

Table 1

Students' perceptions of the level of the class

too easy	a little too easy	just right	a little too difficult	too difficult
2.9%	13.1%	59.2%	21.6%	3.3%

About 60% of the students felt that the class was just right and some students felt that the class was either easy or difficult. Students who felt just right said that the level was neither too difficult nor too easy. Some students made the following comments: "This is an ideal class to improve my English." "It's the appropriate level for following the class." "The text is the right level for me." Students who felt the class was easy said that the level of the text, vocabulary and grammar was easy. One student said, "The class was easy, and it was boring." Another student mentioned that the class was lower than the level of high school English classes. Those students who found the class difficult made the following comments: "The pace of the class was fast." "There was a lot of difficult vocabulary in the text." "The textbook was a little too difficult." "I'm not good at English." Even though we implemented a computer-adaptive placement test at the beginning of the year, the same class must have contained students of various levels, with some finding the classroom activities to be overly demanding, while others felt that they were not challenging enough.

Usefulness of the Class

Table 2

Students' perceptions of the usefulness of the class

very useful	pretty useful	not very useful	not useful at all
3.7%	54.3%	39.1%	2.9%

Many students felt that the class was useful. The most common reason given was that they were able to read faster than before. Others said that they learned various reading skills and they thought those skills were very useful for them. Some students mentioned that they had increased their opportunities to read English.

Some students who felt the class was not useful pointed out that the level of the class was either too easy or too difficult. Some others said that they did not have many opportunities to read outside of the class, and still others indicated that most activities in class involved merely working on exercises in the text.

It seemed that classes in which the teachers emphasized practical reading skills, speed reading in class and outside reading (extensive reading) were considered useful for students, while those taught by teachers who focused on grammar-translation or *yakudoku*, or exercises without clear objectives, did not seem useful to students.

The Amount of Reading Skill Activities

Table 3

The amount of reading skill activities in class

very much	a lot	not very much	nothing at all
4.3%	58.7%	31.9%	5.1%

This section asked students how much they practiced reading skills (skimming, scanning, getting main ideas, etc.) during the class. Students who answered "a lot" responded that practicing a variety of reading skills was helpful for improving their reading. One student said, "I was able to learn skimming and scanning naturally through practice. They were good practical exercises." Students who answered "not very much" made the following comments: "I wanted to practice more reading skills." "Most of the class period was spent on reading comprehension." "I don't remember." "We're mainly working on exercises in class. We need more useful and practical reading practice."

Overall, students' responses seem to reflect what is going on in each class. For example, in one class four students responded "a lot," six students responded "not very much," and ten students responded "nothing at all." Although four students thought a lot of reading skill activities had taken place, their comments meant speed reading, not reading skills. In other words, the teacher in this class did not seem to do enough reading skill activities in class. In another class, twenty students felt that reading skills activities were done very much or a lot in class, and no one felt reading skill activities were not

done very much in class. Probably in this class the teacher seemed to focus on teaching

reading skills rather than grammar translation or *yakudoku*.

Evaluation of the Text and Amount of Exercises Covered in Each Class

Table 4

Students' evaluation of the textbook

very good	fairly good	not very good	poor
6.3%	73.2%	17.2%	3.3%

Students' perceptions of the amount of exercises covered in each class

too much	a little too much	just right	not quite enough	not enough
0.4%	6.2%	71.2%	20.6%	1.6%

Since teachers individually chose one of six recommended textbooks for their class, there were a variety of responses regarding the texts. Nevertheless, most students felt the text was good. Most students who responded that the text was good said that the content of the text was interesting and easy to read, and that exercises were useful for developing reading skills. One student said, "Most topics are interesting since they are related to everyday life, and the level of vocabulary and grammar is appropriate."

Those who responded "not very good" made the following comments: "The text is very heavy." "Too difficult." "The content was very easy." "I need explanation in Japanese." "Vocabulary is difficult." "I don't understand the purpose of some exercises."

Most students felt that the amount of exercises covered in each class was appropriate. One student said, "Our teacher seemed to understand the level of the students." Another student said, "It was good to learn various reading skills intensively during the class."

Students who responded "not quite enough" said that the exercises were quite superficial (only touching main points and not getting into detail) and the amount of reading was very little. Some students felt that they needed a little more explanation of passages.

Degree of Students' Comprehension and Pace of the Class

Table 5

Degree of students' comprehension of the material

very good	fairly good	not very good	poor
7.4%	60.7%	29.9%	2.0%

Students' perception of the pace of the class

too slow	a little slow	just right	a little too fast	too fast
1.2%	7.8%	74.7%	13.5%	2.9%

By the end of the class, most students seemed to understand a great deal of the material covered in class. Judging by students' comments, there were several reasons for their comprehension: 1. The material was appropriate to their level. 2. Most of the

content was easy to understand. 3. The teacher explained well after exercises. 4. The students had done enough exercises. 5. The purpose of exercises was clear.

Students who did not seem to understand the material well made the following comments: "The material was very difficult." "I don't know much about vocabulary." "It's because my English is poor." "The teacher taught the class regardless of students' understanding." "The teacher's explanation was insufficient." "Not enough exercises."

Although most students felt that the pace was just right, some students felt the pace of the class was either a little slow or a little too fast. Some representative comments from the students who felt a little slow were: "The teacher always asked students to translate every sentence in Japanese. It's better to pick just important points to translate." "The teacher tends to go into too much detail. I'd rather practice reading faster." "The teacher spends a long time doing exercises. Therefore, he doesn't spend much time on reading."

The students who felt that the pace of the class was fast made the following comments: "I wanted to have more time to finish the reading." "It takes a long time for me to understand the material." "It is difficult to keep up with other students." "While I'm writing the meanings of English words, the teacher goes on to the next exercise."

Types of Exercises Students Would Like to Have More/Less

Table 6

Types of exercises students would like to have more of in class

---

1. reading 2. speed reading 3. reading comprehension 4. vocabulary 5. grammar

Types of exercises students would like to have less of in class

---

1. The way it is fine. 2. vocabulary test 3. quizzes 4. using time inefficiently

---

Table 6 shows that a majority of students would like to have more reading exercises in class, particularly working on extensive reading and practicing reading skills. In addition, many students would like to increase their vocabulary. Some students would like to read faster and more accurately. Some others want to have more grammar explanation in the reading passages.

Concerning the types of exercises students would like to have less of in class, most of them felt fine the way it is; however, some students would like to have fewer quizzes in class. Other students would like to spend their time more efficiently in class. Some students made the following comments: "Have each student call upon and read aloud every sentence during the class." "The teacher calls upon one student and has him read the passage and answer the comprehension questions. The teacher spends too much time for one student." "Decrease the amount of similar exercises in the text." "Work on fewer exercises which are not related to the text."

Motivation and Satisfaction with the Class

Table 7

This class improved your motivation to study English

very much	pretty much	not very much	not at all
2.9%	50.6%	40.0%	6.5%

Students' satisfaction with the reading class

very satisfied	satisfied	not very satisfied	not satisfied at all
9.4%	66.1%	19.6%	4.9%

About half of the students responded that the class improved their motivation to study. They made comments, such as that they thought that they should study harder to improve their English, they learned how to study effectively, they increased their motivation to read because they understood how to read faster, and they increased their interest in English.

Close to half of the students responded that the class did not improve their motivation to study. They made comments, such as that the class was difficult, the class was monotonous, the class was not interesting, they didn't have interest in English from the beginning, and they were not good at English.

Most of the students responded that they were satisfied with the class and made the following comments: "I think I've improved my English." "I was able to increase my opportunities to read." "The class was fun and easy to follow." "The pace and the content

of the class were suitable for my needs." "Because of the placement test, most of my classmates are around the same level." "The teacher was good." "The class was fun."

Students who were not satisfied with the class felt that the class was boring, they did not feel that they had improved their English, they should have studied harder, they did not understand lessons well and the level of the class was not appropriate.

Any Other Comments or Suggestions

Since this section invited open-ended responses, I will reproduce a few positive and negative comments from students:

First, some of the positive comments: "I was able to study in a pleasant atmosphere. I really enjoyed taking this class." "The content of the text was interesting and the class was fun. I learned a lot from this class." I'd like to put forth an effort and improve my reading speed." "My instructor seemed to enjoy teaching and her good attitude helped me enjoy learning." "Because my instructor's teaching style was suitable for my needs, I was able to increase my understanding in class."

Among the negative comments: "I wanted my teacher to read the passage and translate in Japanese, especially some sentences including difficult vocabulary and structures." "The teacher should give us more opportunities to communicate among students." "I think we ought to have more opportunities to get exposed to English, such as reading the text before the class. Otherwise just meeting once a week for this class can't possibly help us improve our English." "The only thing the teacher does in class is to have us work on exercises by ourselves. The class is almost like a self-study time. The

teacher should give us advice on how to translate English sentences into Japanese or how to read effectively. Also, the teacher never speaks English in class and she never tells us what she's going to teach in the next class."

<center>Classroom Observation</center>

Communicating Clearly and Accurately

In this section I wanted to find out whether teacher directions and procedures are clear to students. In some classes, teachers' directions and procedures were very homogeneous as they went through the passage and had students translate into Japanese. Then teachers made corrections to students' translations and made additional comments. Some teachers added grammatical information as well. It seemed that the pattern of teaching was very predictable, so students knew what they were expected to do next.

In a few classes, teachers' explanation was not clear to students. For example, in one class the teacher tried to have students work on reading exercises regarding cause and effect, but since his explanation was not clear, students did not seem to know what they were supposed to do. It would have been better if the teacher had clearly explained the purpose and given an example before asking students to attempt the activity.

One teacher, whose text was geared toward reading skills, gave a clear explanation of the purpose and directions for completing exercises, so that most students seemed to know what they were supposed to do and why they were doing them. She also elicited answers from students and reminded them of key phrases and words related to the particular reading skills they were working on.

In one class, the teacher focused on skimming. She asked the students what the differences were between skimming and scanning and elicited answers. Then she taught students how to skim the passage and had students work on exercises. Students seemed to focus on the teacher's clear objective and knew what they needed to do in order to accomplish their task.

Using Questions and Discussion Techniques

In this section I would like to examine the quality of teachers' questions and see if there were any opportunities for students to discuss reading materials. Unfortunately, most teachers' questions concerned the meanings of words or sentences, and so the students' role in the class was limited to comprehending the passage in either Japanese or English. There were only a few teachers who asked students questions concerning background information, reading between the lines, main ideas or predictable questions.

One teacher read aloud some discussion questions and called on some students to answer individually. However, most students simply answered in a word or phrase. The teacher needs to know the level, interests and backgrounds of students and provide basic vocabulary items if necessary, so that students may have more opportunities to engage in discussions in pairs or groups during the class.

Engaging Students in Learning

In this section, I looked at four different questions. First of all, was the content of teaching appropriate and related to students' knowledge and experience? Second, were activities and assignments appropriate to students? Third, were text and supplementary

materials suitable to instructional goals? Finally, was the pace of the lesson appropriate and was the structure coherent? Overall, some teachers seemed to understand the objectives of the reading materials and tried to apply those objectives in their classrooms. For example, one teacher explicitly explained what skimming was and had students practice using this skill. The students seemed to know what skimming was and why they were doing the activities. In short, the lesson looked very coherent because by the end of the activity, students learned the objective of the lesson for the day. In addition, students were very involved in reading in class. The class was well-paced, as there was enough individual reading, checking answers in pairs and eliciting answers from students.

In some classes, teachers did not seem to stress the objectives and goals of the texts and they were merely engaged in translation work, which was not the main intention of the texts. They seemed to ignore reading skills and spent most of their time working on interpretation of the passage in Japanese: understanding vocabulary, phrases, sentences and grammar. There was usually no pair-work or group work. The classroom activity was either the teacher or an individual student reading aloud each sentence and one student translating the sentence in Japanese. This is a very teacher-centered activity, and most of the time students sat quietly and did not seem to do anything until they were called by the teacher. In other words, the pace of the class was very slow and the class seemed very boring. Moreover, the teacher didn't give students opportunities to maximize their participation in reading activities.

Three classes I observed used supplementary materials. One teacher used the extensive reading text called "Love Actually," which was based on a movie released last year. The teacher was asking some students about the content of the book that they were assigned in a previous week. The teacher's objective was to have students read extensively outside of the class.

Another teacher used a supplementary text for a reading comprehension activity. She had the students read during the class and work on comprehension questions right after their reading. Then she had the students elicit answers. The purpose of this exercise seemed to be to reinforce additional reading during the class. The material was somewhat easy for the students' level, but the teacher attempted to challenge students to read more during the class.

Another teacher reviewed a handout that students had worked on the previous week. However, most students seemed to have forgotten what they had read, and the teacher had not previously gone over difficult vocabulary in the passage. Therefore, even though she wrote a list of difficult vocabulary and asked some students for the meanings, only a few students could give the correct meanings in Japanese. The level of the material was a little too difficult for the students and simply going over vocabulary items did not seem to help students enhance their reading. Moreover, the pace of the class was slow, since the teacher had to wait for a while to get a response from individual students.

Providing Feedback to Students

In this section, I wanted to assess the quality of teacher feedback and determine whether it was made in a timely manner. Some teachers gave immediate feedback right after students responded in class. Most of the teachers' feedback was positive and encouraging. In one class, however, one teacher asked students to translate some difficult vocabulary in the passage. She walked around the classroom and asked students to answer without calling an individual name. Since she spent too much time giving feedback on one particular student at a time, all the other students seemed to be ignored. The teacher should remember the names of students and have a good rapport with them.

Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness

In this section, I wanted to find out whether the teacher made adjustments in the class, accommodated students' questions and interests, and persisted in seeking effective approaches for students who needed help. In most classes, teachers tried to make adjustments for students' levels and helped them understand the reading passage. While doing this, most teachers used Japanese as the means of communication and explained difficult vocabulary and grammar in Japanese. However, I did not see many teachers who accommodated students' interests and persisted in seeking effective approaches for students who needed help.

Student Interviews

Level of the Class

Contrary to the survey conducted in 2003, since the placement test had been implemented in 2004, most students were quite satisfied with the level to which they were assigned in freshman reading class. Although some students responded that they often encountered difficult vocabulary in the text, they did not have any problem with their reading comprehension. A few students mentioned that the level of the text was somewhat easy, but they found the class appropriate to their level.

How Teachers Use the Text

I asked students how teachers actually use the text in classrooms. This gave me ideas about teachers' teaching strategies in class. Moreover, I was able to find out some things that I could not see during the observation. Most teachers tend to ignore pre-reading activities such as discussion questions or exercises that activate students' background knowledge. Some teachers did not time students' reading and some did not pre-teach difficult vocabulary in the passage. Most teachers focus on the passage in the book for reading comprehension or skills that the text covers. Teaching strategies differ from teacher to teacher.

Likes and Dislikes about Textbooks

Regarding textbooks, answers varied according to the texts that students were using. The following are some representative comments regarding likes and dislikes about each textbook:

Active Skills for Reading Book 2 & 3

Likes:

1. "The text is useful for learning different reading skills such as skimming."

2. "Topics are interesting."

3. "I like the procedure of the text especially that the text begins with discussion

questions."

4. "I like English definitions in the text."

5. "It's easy to read."

Dislikes:

1. "Since all the explanations are written in English and difficult to understand, it might

be nice to have Japanese explanations in the text."

2. "Sentences are not difficult, but questions are all written in English and I sometimes

find them difficult to understand."

3. "There are no Japanese definitions in the text."

4. "Although reading skills are taught, they are very artificial and not many exercises are

presented. Therefore, I won't be able to acquire skills with such a small amount of work."

5. "Some of the vocabulary exercises are not very meaningful and useful."

6. "Nothing in particular."

Select Readings Pre-intermediate

Likes:

1. "Topics are related to our interests."

2. "The layout is easy to understand."

3. "It's easy to read and understand."

4. "The text is easy to review."

5. "Nothing in particular."

Dislikes:

1. " The list of vocabulary is in the back of the book; it would be easier to see the list if it

were in each unit instead."

2. "Noting in particular."

Reading Power

1. "Objectives of the text are clear."

2. "Exercises are not very difficult."

3. "Exercises are useful and practical."

Dislikes:

1. "The text is heavy."

2. "Nothing in particular."

Usefulness of the Class

As in the survey results, most students who called the class useful said that speed

reading and reading skills are helpful for developing their reading comprehension. Some

students said that since they do not have any opportunities to read English outside of

class, the reading class is useful. Some other students said that they had increased their

vocabulary. One student said, "Because I read every week, I get used to reading long passages."

Some students who responded "not useful" made the following comments: "Since I don't know whether my English has improved or not, I'm not sure whether the class is useful or not." "Because we never practice timed-reading and reading for accuracy, the class is not very useful." "The text is easy to understand, but there are no new discoveries or challenges. I can handle this class without any preparation or review." "Because our teacher talks too much in Japanese, we don't have many opportunities to read during the class."

Types of Exercises

In answer to the question regarding what types of exercises students would like to have more of, most students said they would like to spend more time reading. Some representative comments are: "I'd like to read more both in and outside of class." "We don't have much time for individual reading in class." "I want my teacher to teach more reading skills." "Speed reading." "More exercises related to comprehend the content of the passage." "Since the teacher controls most activities in class, more student-centered activities would be helpful." "We'd like to understand more about the content of the passage, especially in Japanese." "Sometimes the class gets monotonous (working on similar exercises and finding out answers). It'd be nice to do something different every once in a while." "I'd like to know the overall picture of this reading class by learning specific reading skills that help me improve my reading."

There were some other comments regarding the same question. One student said that while a student was responding to the teacher's question (mainly translating) other students were not doing anything. She said that it would be better if there were activities that could allow students to participate more in class. Another student mentioned that it would be better to include pair practice in class. One student said that he would like to have more practice in vocabulary building.

In response to the question regarding what types of exercises students would like to have less of in class, most students said that they could not think of anything. A few students said the following: "After reading one paragraph, the teacher asks one student what the passage is about. Sometimes it takes a long time and during that time the rest of the students have nothing to do." "Even though some sentences are not difficult to understand, the teacher asks one student to translate and the teacher reads the same sentence and translates. This takes too long." "Too much teacher talk during the class. The teacher should ask more students and elicit answers from us."

Ideal Class

In response to the question concerning what the ideal class is, students made the following comments: "Since the atmosphere is not good in my class, I'd like to feel at home." "Everyone in class is motivated." "Students can share various opinions in class." "Fun class." "More active class." "Students can show more interest in class." "If students have any questions, they can ask our teacher any time." "More opportunities for reading

and improving our reading comprehension." "Students can take more initiative and give their own opinions in class." "Our present class is ideal."

Opportunities for Reading Outside of Class

Most students said that they do not have any opportunities to read outside of class other than reading the text in advance. In some classes, students are assigned to read one or two graded readers during the semester as their extensive reading homework, and most of them said that these are helpful to improve their reading. It seems that students need reading assignments such as extensive reading outside of class.

Evaluation

Concerning how students are evaluated in class, most students said that they were given a syllabus at the beginning of the year and that the teacher explained the grading scheme. However, none of the students know their overall grade in the previous semester. Because this reading class is a one-year course that starts in April and ends in January, it is not mandatory for the teachers to inform students their grade in the previous semester. When I asked students how they felt about not knowing their previous semester's grade (their half-year performance), most students said that they would like to find out their grade if possible. Some students said that if they got an A in the previous semester, they would try to do their best to maintain that grade. Some other students said that if their grade was not good enough, they would try to study harder for the second semester. Overall, revealing half-a-year grade seems to motivate students to study for the second semester.

Any Other Comments or Suggestions

Students made various comments regarding their classes. Some positive comments were as follows: "I'm very satisfied with the class since our teacher is very good." "I really like the way our teacher teaches our class." "Our teacher is very energetic and I can focus on the class." "I like the way it is. Our teacher pre-teaches some vocabulary we don't understand in the passage."

Some students complained or made the following suggestions: "Our class is good, but quizzes are somewhat easy. Sometimes there are true/false questions and answers could go either way." "I'd like to use a different textbook if possible because there aren't enough comprehension questions to check understanding of the content of the passage." "We need to give speeches in our class and I feel very uncomfortable with these assignments." "I always talk to the same partner all the time in Japanese, and we never communicate in English. I cannot learn anything new in this class, and I don't feel that I need to study hard in this class." "The teacher needs to clarify our evaluation. In my first report, I spent so much time for the report, but I only got five points. Then I didn't work so hard on the second one and the length of the paper was much shorter than the first one, but I got the same five points." "I'd like to find out what mistakes I made on my report. I cannot get much feedback from my teacher." "The class is boring sometimes. I wish the class was a little more active." "The grading scheme is different from class to class. Needs more standardization in each class." "Some students make mistakes on purpose in the placement test and take lower level classes in order to get a good grade."

Summary

Student surveys, classroom observations and student interviews revealed many factors regarding what is happening in class and what we need to improve in our EFL reading class. First of all, the survey results showed generally what students felt about EFL reading class, particularly such factors as the level, the usefulness of the class, the amount of reading skill activities, students' evaluation of the textbook, the amount of exercises covered in each class, the types of exercises, and the motivation as well as the degree of satisfaction with the class. Additional open-ended responses gave me more detailed information regarding the reasons for students' responses. It seemed that the survey results identified for me a lot of significant factors in students' satisfaction with the course.

Classroom observation enabled me to see things I could not have seen with the information from the survey alone. Participating in actual classes helped me find out what strategies each teacher used to teach EFL reading. Even though some teachers used the same textbook, their teaching techniques differed and some teachers seemed to use the text effectively because they understood the objectives and goals of the text. Meanwhile, other teachers seemed merely to be working on exercises presented in the text, without understanding clearly the purpose of the text. The observation also allowed me to see how students participated in classrooms. In some classes, students were actively engaged in learning while in other classes, students were sitting quietly and waiting for their turn to answer their teacher's questions. Overall, classroom observation

was a good opportunity to see clearly how teachers and students actually perform in classrooms.

The follow-up student interviews helped me clarify some ambiguous points that had come up in students' surveys and classroom observations. The more in-depth information from students helped me to understand clearly students' perceptions of the reading class, especially how they perceived their teacher's strategies in classrooms.

Although a more detailed summary and conclusions will be made in the next chapter, overall this evaluation method helped me understand in detail about students' perceptions of reading class and the strategies that teacher used in classrooms. Therefore, the results of the evaluation gave me enough information concerning what we could do to improve our EFL reading class in the future.

CHAPTER FIVE: SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Summary

EFL reading is a very popular class in most Japanese universities and this class is usually a graduation requirement. However, most schools do not seem to know what is actually going on in classrooms, and as a result, they do not know what to do to improve this class. In order to improve EFL reading class, in addition to the quantitative data gathered through a student survey, qualitative data from such sources as classroom observation and student interviews are very useful.

The results of a student survey, classroom observation and student interviews revealed many factors involved in how teachers and students are performing in class and what can be done to improve this EFL reading class. I shall discuss the findings of both quantitative and qualitative evaluation and point out implications and suggestions for improving this class in the future.

Discussion of the Findings

Student Survey

Even though many students indicated that the level was right for their class, some students pointed out the class was either difficult or easy for them. This reveals that the placement test is crucial to EFL reading class, and that we need some improvements in our computer-adaptive placement test. If students of several levels study together in one class, teachers naturally find it difficult to use classroom materials effectively and often have difficulty in setting and achieving lesson goals. Grabe and Stoller (2002) suggest

that L2 readers should read materials appropriate to their levels. Therefore, the placement of students in the appropriate level is indispensable to any language program.

About 60% of the students responded that the class was useful, and their reasons were that they were learning about reading skills, increasing their reading speed and getting more opportunities to read. This shows that having clear objectives such as improving reading skills, reading speed and extensive reading is more important for students than merely translating reading in Japanese or working on exercises without a clear purpose in mind.

About 40% of students said that the class was not useful and the main reason was that the class was either too difficult or too easy. Again, the placement test is another crucial factor, since students do not feel that the class is useful if it is not appropriate to their level from the beginning. Also, classes that do not provide enough opportunities to read English, and classes that consist of merely translating readings into Japanese are viewed negatively by students; they probably think that extensive reading is essential to improving their reading.

Anderson (2003a) states that the interactive model is an ideal approach in helping students develop their reading because this approach involves both intensive and extensive reading. Students can learn various skills intensively in classrooms and practice their reading skills extensively outside of the class.

The amount of activities targeted to reading skills seemed to differ from class to class. While some teachers focused on skill-based exercises, other teachers tended to focus more on translation and grammar explanation.

Regarding the evaluation of the texts, most students seem to be satisfied with the text they were using, since the content was seen as interesting and relevant to everyday life, and the exercises were seen as useful for developing reading skills. It seems that the choice of texts is appropriate to students' interests and levels; however, a few students said that the level was difficult or easy.

In response to questions regarding students' perception of the exercises covered in each class, and the degree of students' comprehension, most students reported that the amount of exercises covered in each class was appropriate, and by the end of the class most students seemed adequately to understand the material covered in class. Concerning the amount of exercises, about 20% of the students said that there were not enough exercises, since teachers were dealing with exercises superficially or not enough reading took place during the class.

The degree of comprehension of reading materials is related to the level of materials and students and to how well teachers help students understand the content. If materials are difficult and the teacher does not make an effort to adapt them to their students' levels, students may find reading materials hard to understand.

Regarding the pace of the class, although most students felt the pace was right, some students thought the pace was slow when teachers spent too much time on

translation, exercises or dealing with the subject in too much detail, without many students' participation. On the other hand, students felt the pace was fast when they could not keep up with other students, and it took time to understand the materials because they were difficult.

The results of the survey showed that many students would like to have more reading in class. This suggests that not enough reading exercises are being done in class and that most students feel reading is essential to learning. In response to the question concerning what exercises they would like to have less of in class, most students said, "Nothing in particular." Some wished that there would be a fewer quizzes and others expressed their desire that the teacher spend class-time more efficiently. Concerning the students' motivation in class, the results showed that students tended to be motivated when they felt that they needed to study harder, increase their interest in English, and learn how to study effectively and to improve their reading. Meanwhile, students lost their motivation when the class was monotonous, difficult and uninteresting. This suggests that the teacher should incorporate various techniques to arouse students' interest and challenge them to improve their reading. Harmer (2001) suggests, "If students are to continue to be intrinsically motivated they clearly need to be interested both in the subject they are studying and in the activities and topics they are presented with" (pp. 53-54). He says that teachers need to provide a wide range of subjects and exercises to keep students involved.

Finally, students' satisfaction with the class has a lot to do with the level, interest, and content of the class and how students' needs are met and how much they have improved their reading. As one student who responded "satisfied" said, "I think I've improved my English." The results show that in order for students to feel satisfaction with the reading class, teachers need to establish an optimal learning experience for their students. Egbert (2003) suggests flow experiences (balance of skills and challenge, concentration on tasks, clear task goals, positive feedback on a given task, a feeling of minimum self-consciousness) can lead to optimal learning. People experience flow when they are fully engaged in tasks "in which their growing skills match well with task challenges" (Grabe & Stoller, 2001, p. 200).

Classroom Observation

We could see from the observation that reading activities were quite passive in some classes. Most students were quietly sitting in the class and they spent most of their time listening to the teacher's talk or their classmates' answers as they were called on by the teacher. Some students looked very bored and a few students were even sleeping in the class. In many classes there was almost no interaction among students. The classes were very teacher-centered and there was a lack of student-centered reading and communicative activities. Larsen-Freeman (2000) points out that in traditional classrooms the teacher has the authority, there is almost no interaction between student and student, and initiation takes place from the teacher to students. Brown (2003) states that the teacher-centered approach mainly focuses on the transmission of knowledge.

Teachers usually focus on the content that students are learning rather than the process of learning.

Regarding teaching, some teachers did not elicit answers from students. For example, in one class the teacher asked students to work on reading exercises in groups for a few minutes. Then the teacher called one student from each group to write his or her answer on the board. However, instead of asking where in the passage they could find key phrases or sentences for answers, the teacher simply identified the location of the key phrases in the passage and gave away the answers right away. Moreover, he even elaborated more detailed reasons for the answers. I wondered why he did not give students opportunities to think about the answers in pairs or groups and elicit the answers from them. If the teacher continually uses the same technique, students will probably lose their motivation to work on exercises since there will be no contribution from them.

It seems that some teachers believe the goal of reading class is to help students understand the passage in Japanese. As a result, the Grammar-Translation or *yakudoku* method is probably dominant in many Japanese EFL reading classes. Even though we explained to our teachers that the main objective of this freshman reading class was to help students develop their reading skills, and chose texts focused on reading skills, in reality some teachers did not seem to implement our objectives in our EFL reading class. Moreover, as Hino (1987a) pointed out, some students seem to take for granted that reading class means understanding the passage in Japanese.

Student Interviews

Student interviews revealed many factors regarding the level of the class, the texts, the usefulness of class, the types of exercises, the ideal class, and opportunities for reading outside of class and evaluation. Since we implemented the placement test for freshman reading classes in 2004, most students seem to be satisfied with the level of their class. The placement test made a significant improvement, since students are using the appropriate text for their assigned level. Although students expressed likes and dislikes about their texts, overall most students felt that their texts were useful and topics were interesting. Some students pointed out that they wished that there were some explanation in Japanese in the text. Perhaps this is due to the fact that they were used to using texts with some Japanese definitions of vocabulary and grammar explanations in high schools.

Regarding how teachers used the text, most students mentioned that their teachers seldom or never used the pre-reading activities. It seems that most teachers do not recognize the importance of pre-reading's role in reading comprehension. Anderson (1999) says that activating prior knowledge helps reading comprehension and skills. He points out that the reader does not only understand the meaning in the text, but that background knowledge influences comprehension. Murtagh (1989) suggests that using appropriate schema with proper pre-reading activities is very useful for learners.

Concerning the usefulness of the class, as indicated by the survey results, most students tended to feel that the classes focused on reading skills and speed reading were

most useful. However, students felt a class was "not useful" if it was not challenging and practical. It seems that a practical class that develops such skills as skimming, scanning and speed reading is useful for the students. Day and Bamford (1998) state that good experiences with the teacher, classmates, materials, tasks, procedures, and so on will encourage positive attitudes in reading.

Many students would like to have more opportunities for reading in class rather than the teacher-centered grammar translation or *yakudoku* class. They felt that some teachers took too much time asking students to translate while other students were doing practically nothing. They think that class time could be more efficiently spent by maximizing students' participation.

A high level of motivation among the students, a good atmosphere, more opportunities for reading to improve their English, more student participation and a more interesting class were identified as components of the ideal class. It seems very important for teachers to keep these components in mind and think about how they can create such an ideal class.

The results of the interviews showed that most students do not have any opportunities to read outside of class. The opportunity to practice their skills frequently is such an essential criteria for improving their reading. However, since adequate reading practice does not seem to take place in, as well as outside, of some classes, we need to consider implementing more reading in our EFL reading class in the future. Renandya and Jacobs (2002) say that by implementing extensive reading, students can fulfill two

purposes: reading a large amount of books or materials to nurture their life-long reading habit and reading fluently. Grabe and Stoller (2002) also say that in order to become a fluent reader, students need to practice reading for a long time.

Concerning evaluation, most students knew how they were evaluated since most teachers, it seems, explained the grading scheme explicitly to students. The syllabus plays an important role in classrooms, and Hadley (1993) states the importance of the syllabus in language program as follows:

> A well-designed course syllabus is a necessary component of a successful language program, from both the teacher's and the students' points of view. For teachers, the course syllabus provides direction and guidance in the scope, sequence, and pacing of classroom activities; for students, the syllabus provides at a glance the profile of the semester's work and the expectations for successful completion of that work. It is strongly recommended that teachers distribute course syllabus and any accompanying information sheets on the first day of class so that students will know what is expected of them. (p. 485)

However, none of the students knew their grade in the previous semester, and they wanted to find out how they were evaluated mid-year.

Conclusions

Triangulation of evaluation allowed us to see different perspectives of teaching and

learning in EFL reading class. First of all, survey results showed how students generally

felt about EFL reading class. Overall, the results were very positive; many students were

satisfied with the class, and reported that they felt that the class was useful, the materials

were fairly good, and the amount of exercises and the pace of the class were appropriate.

However, classroom observation enabled us to see different views of the reading class.

Some teachers did not seem to implement objectives that we had set for the reading class;

the main component of their classroom activities was the translation of English passages

into Japanese. Some students seemed to accept this approach since most of them had

experienced a similar approach in junior high school and high school English education.

Therefore, we felt that it is necessary to educate both teachers and students that in order

to improve their reading, one method such as grammar translation or *yakudoku* is not

adequate.

Students' interviews helped me further understand how students feel about their

own classes and what needs to be done to improve EFL reading class. Although most

students made positive comments about reading class, there is a lot of room for

improvement. For example, the survey results and interview results confirmed that

reading is essential to improving this course, since reading opportunities are lacking, both

in class and outside of class.

Students' interviews also made it possible to ask for further explanation from students. In my survey research experience, I often find it difficult to interpret students' written comments in response to a questionnaire. Without follow-up interviews, it is impossible to ask for further explanation from students. However, in an interview situation, I was able to stop and ask questions for clarification.

The triangulation of student surveys, classroom observation and student interviews helped me expand my knowledge of what is going in classrooms and how teachers and students are performing in class. In conclusion, using both quantitative and qualitative methods together is far more efficient for improving EFL reading class than merely giving out surveys and getting quantitative data, since both researchers and teachers get a "true picture" of the classroom experience. This gives us a clear idea of what to do to improve EFL reading class in the future.

<center>Implications and Recommendations for Practice</center>

There are several things that we could do to improve EFL reading classes, according to the results of the evaluation. First of all, a student survey in 2003 revealed that about half of the students did not feel the class was appropriate to their level. In 2004 we implemented a computer-adaptive placement test for all freshman students. Then according to the results of the test, we placed students in appropriate levels. This seemed helpful for students, since many of them said in the interviews that we conducted in 2005 that they were satisfied with the level to which they were assigned. However, some students did not seem to be placed in appropriate levels, since they indicated that the text

was either difficult or easy and the class was not useful because of the inappropriate level of the class. It seems that we need to investigate more thoroughly the validity and reliability of this computer-adaptive placement test.

Second, some teachers' main focus in class was the translation of English passages into Japanese, and this is contrary to the objectives of our reading class. In order to help them understand our objectives and help them think about using a variety of techniques in the classroom, I chose a good teacher and asked her to videotape her class. The teacher I videotaped uses a lot of student-centered activities and discovery methods. During the faculty meeting next spring, teachers of reading classes will watch this video and reflect on their teaching. They will also be encouraged to use student-centered activities and discovery methods during their own classes in the future.

Third, perhaps the biggest advantage of this triangulation method is that it permits us to focus on an individual teacher to help him or her improve the individual class rather than focusing collectively, as in a traditional survey method. After obtaining the results of the survey, the interviews and the observations, I was able to contact each teacher and talk about how to improve his or her class. For example, one particular teacher totally misunderstood the intention of the textbook, since this teacher had missed the textbook orientation session a couple of years ago. Because students pointed out that she never used certain exercises in the text, I explained to her specific techniques she could apply to teach reading skills in the text. As a result, she became more confident about using the text.

Another teacher tried to implement group work in classrooms when I observed. However, since the directions were not clear to students, they did not know what to do. Moreover, a group of five or six students without clear guidance made it even more difficult to know who was responsible for what. During the interview, students also mentioned that this teacher's instructions were sometimes difficult to understand. I suggested that the teacher make clear and simple instructions and assign specific tasks to each student so that they feel more responsible and feel a sense of accomplishment.

Furthermore, I was able to talk to each teacher about the rationale for pre-reading exercises and why this section is significant for activating students' background knowledge and enhancing their reading comprehension. I also gave some suggestions for adapting pre-reading activities to their students' levels and needs and I encouraged them to use more student-centered pair-work or group-work. It seemed that most teachers would implement pre-reading activities in classrooms from then on.

These individual conferences were very beneficial for me as well as for all the teachers. Because of these individual conferences, I was able to establish a good relationship with each teacher and helped them support and improve their teaching.

Fourth, because many students did not have many opportunities to read extensively, we purchased various graded reading books. This year, in at least two departments for freshman reading classes (about 800 students), it is required that students read a few books outside of class each semester. So far, this extensive reading assignment seems to be working very well, and a lot of students express their interest in choosing books they

want to read. Next year, we are planning on including the rest of the freshman students in

this program to read books extensively.

Fifth, from this year, all the teachers were required to distribute their syllabus to

their students in our school and most students knew how they were evaluated. However,

most students expressed a desire to find out their grade from the previous semester. I

shared this result with all the teachers and they said they would show the half-year grade

starting next year. This may help students to increase their extrinsic motivation.

Finally, regarding textbooks, we will give out surveys to our teachers to ask them

to evaluate our current textbooks and ask for suggestions for any other texts that match

with our objectives for reading class. We will take their suggestions into consideration

and think about possibilities for using other books in the future.

<center>Implications and Recommendations for Further Research</center>

Cashin (1999) states, "Student ratings are one excellent source of data both for

summative evaluation, to make personnel decisions; and for formative evaluation, to

improve teaching" (p. 28). Student surveys gave me helpful insight about what is

happening in EFL reading class. Moreover, open-ended comments for each question gave

me further understanding of the reasons for their choices. Cashin (1999) points out that

these two types of quantitative and qualitative data are helpful for evaluation. He states:

> The two types complement each other. Sometimes just reading
>
> students' comments gives us a negative impression while looking
>
> at the numerical ratings shows relatively high numbers giving a

positive impression. Combining both qualitative and quantitative

data is useful for improvement. (pp. 37-38)

However, my survey research had some limitations, because I was not able to see

fully how teachers and students were performing in class. For example, instead of asking

if the class was helpful for reading, I should have asked a more open-ended question such

as, "Describe one or more things about this course that you found helpful. Please be

specific and give examples" (Cashin, 1999, p. 37) or "Describe something that the

instructor did not do that you personally would have found helpful" (Cashin, 1999, p. 37).

These questions would have focused more on students' point of view and give me more

information about students' experiences in class. In addition, my survey did not ask any

questions about the teacher's effectiveness in class. Therefore, "Overall, how effective

was the instructor" (Cashin, 1999, p. 34) could have been an interesting question to ask.

Regarding the classroom observation, although I have learned a lot from visiting

each class, the time spent with each teacher (30 minutes) was a little short for finding out

about their overall performance. Also, visiting only once may not have allowed me an

accurate assessment of each class's real performance. Furthermore, the instrument I used

included a lot of teaching criteria to look at within a short period of time. As a result,

some of the criteria were not applicable and some others tended to be neglected. I found

that criteria should have been simpler and easier to cover in a limited amount of time. In

order to avoid individual bias and conduct classroom observation effectively, Seldin

(1999) suggests the following:

Classroom visits have won increased popularity as an evaluative

tool. Today there is considerable recognition that classroom visits

can and should play a role in a multisource evaluation process.

From the comments on deans, it seems clear that the most successful

institutions using classroom visits do so in a common way: They

rely on several extensively trained observers who make several visits

to dilute the possibility of individual bias by the observer or atypical

performance by professor. Pre- and post-observation meetings are

held between the visitors and the faculty member. The entire process

is characterized by careful planning, appropriate training, open

communication, prompt feedback, and mutual trust. (p. 19)

Finally, group interview with students was an effective way to find out about

students' experiences in classrooms. In general, standardized open-ended questions

helped me focus on the interview and cover all of the questions in about half an hour. If

these had been informal conversations with students, we would have spent much more

time and ended up going off on tangents.

Meanwhile, I worked on classroom observations and interviews almost

simultaneously after the student surveys were completed. In some classes, I had to

interview students prior to observing their classes. In other words, I interviewed students

without much knowledge about what was going on in classrooms. This limited the

exploration I could make through interviews and I regretted that I should have done

observation for all the classes before interviews. Then I would have focused more on what specific questions, besides standardized questions, to ask for each class.

Even though the triangulation of quantitative and qualitative evaluation is an effective method for finding out what is going on in classrooms and what to do to improve our EFL reading class, revising some of the questions and methods could be even more helpful for doing further evaluation research in the future. By doing so, we should be able to see a "truer picture" of how students perceive the class and what strategies teachers use for the class. Then more effective and efficient evaluation will allow us to come up with better ideas for improving EFL reading classes in the future.

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APPENDIX A

Student Questionnaire

Introductory Reading Class Questionnaire, Fall 2005

The purpose of this survey is to gather information that will help us evaluate and improve the reading class. Please respond to all the questions by circling the appropriate letters. Your participation is strictly voluntary and will be treated confidentially. No identifiable information will be disclosed or published; all results will be presented as aggregate, summary data.

1. The reading class is generally:

    a. too easy b. a little too easy c. just right d. a little too difficult e. too difficult

Comments:

2. In order to improve your reading comprehension, this class is:

    a. very helpful   b. somewhat helpful   c. not very helpful   d. not helpful at all

Comments:

3. The amount of reading skill activities are:

    a. too much   b. a lot   c. not enough   d. too little

Comments:

4. The textbook is:

    a. very good   b. fairly good   c. not very good   d. poor

Comments:

5. The amount of reading exercises covered in each class is:

    a. too much b. a little too much c. just right d. not quite enough e. not enough

Comments:

6. By the end of the class, I usually understand the material covered in class:

    a. very good   b. fairly good   c. not very good   d. poor

Comments:

7. In general, the pace of the class is:

     a.   too slow b. a little slow c. just right d. a little too fast e. too fast

Comments:

8. What types of exercises would you like to have more of in class?

9. What types of exercises would you like to have less of in class?

10. Does this class improve your motivation to study English?

   a. very much b. pretty much   c. not very much   d. not at all

Comments:

11. Generally, how satisfied are you with this class?

   a. very satisfied   b. satisfied   c. not very satisfied   d. not satisfied at all

Comments:

12. Any other comments or suggestions:

Thank you for your cooperation.

Konan University, Institute for Language and Culture

APPENDIX B

Classroom Observation Form

Name:

Unsatisfactory Basic Proficient Distinguished

(Communicating clearly and accurately)

1. Directions Procedures

2. Oral and Written Language

(Using questions and discussion techniques)

3. Quality of Questions

4. Discussion Techniques

5. Student Participation

(Engaging Students in Learning)

6. Representation of Content

7. Activities and Assignments

8. Instructional Materials & Resources

9. Structure and Pacing

(Providing Feedback to Students)

10. Quality: Accurate, Constructive

11. Timeliness

(Demonstrating Flexibility and Responsiveness)

12. Lesson Adjustment

13. Response to Students

14. Persistence

General Comments:

APPENDIX C

Student Interview Questions

Student Interview Questions

1. Is the level of the class appropriate?
2. How does your teacher use the text?
3. What do you like/dislike about the textbook?
4. Is the class useful for improving your reading?
5. What exercises would you like to have more or less of in class?
6. What is an ideal reading class?
7. Do you have any opportunities to read English outside the class?
8. How do you feel about evaluation of your reading class?
9. Do you have any other comments or suggestions?

APPENDIX D

Letter of Informed Consent

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Student

My name is Nobuo Tsuda, Associate Professor of English at Konan University, Institute for Language and Culture. I am also a doctoral student in the College of Education at Argosy University/Sarasota, Florida in the United States. I am conducting a study to learn about your experience in the reading course that you are enrolled in the year 2005. Your attitudes and perceptions of the reading course are the focus of this study.

Your participation in this research is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate at all, or choose to stop your participation at any point during the research, without fear or penalty or negative consequences of any kind.

If you participate in this study, you will complete a questionnaire that will last approximately 15 minutes. There are no risks associated with your participation. The information/data you provide will be strictly confidential. Results of the research will be reported as aggregate summary data only, and no individually identifiable information will be presented. Moreover, all raw data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office. You also have the right to review a copy of the research results by contacting me at the following address:

Nobuo Tsuda

Konan University, Institute for Language and Culture

8-9-1 Okamoto Higashinadaku, Kobe Japan 658-8501

Your input will provide valuable information that may be used to improve your reading class at Konan University.

I, _____, understand the foregoing information explaining the purpose of this research and my rights and responsibilities as a subject. My signature below designates my consent to participate in this research according to the terms and conditions outlined above.

Signature _____ Date

Print Name

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Student

My name is Nobuo Tsuda, Associate Professor of English at Konan University, Institute for Language and Culture. I am also a doctoral student in the College of Education at Argosy University/Sarasota, Florida in the United States. I am conducting a study to learn about your experience in the reading course that you are enrolled in the year 2005. Your attitudes and perceptions of the reading course are the focus of this study.

Your participation in this research is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate at all, or choose to stop your participation at any point during the research, without fear or penalty or negative consequences of any kind.

If you participate in this study, you will participate in a group interview that will last approximately 30 minutes. There are no risks associated with your participation. The information/data you provide will be strictly confidential. Results of the research will be reported as aggregate summary data only, and no individually identifiable information will be presented. Moreover, all raw data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office. You also have the right to review a copy of the research results by contacting me at the following address:

Nobuo Tsuda

Konan University, Institute for Language and Culture

8-9-1 Okamoto Higashinadaku, Kobe Japan 658-8501

Your input will provide valuable information that may be used to improve your reading class at Konan University.

I, _____, understand the foregoing information explaining the purpose of this research and my rights and responsibilities as a subject. My signature below designates my consent to participate in this research according to the terms and conditions outlined above.

Signature _____ Date

Print Name

PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM

Dear Teacher

My name is Nobuo Tsuda, Associate Professor of English at Konan University, Institute for Language and Culture. I am also a doctoral student in the College of Education at Argosy University/Sarasota, Florida in the United States. I am conducting a study to learn about your reading course that you are teaching in the year 2005. Your teaching performance and students' performance of the reading course are the focus of this study.

Your participation in this research is strictly voluntary. You may refuse to participate at all, or choose to stop your participation at any point during the research, without fear or penalty or negative consequences of any kind.

If you participate in this study, your class will be observed for approximately 20 minutes. There are no risks associated with your participation. The information from your classroom observation will be strictly confidential. Results of the research will be reported as aggregate summary data only, and no individually identifiable information will be presented. Moreover, all raw data will be stored in a locked filing cabinet in my office. You also have the right to review a copy of the research results by contacting me at the following address:

Nobuo Tsuda

Konan University, Institute for Language and Culture

8-9-1 Okamoto Higashinadaku, Kobe Japan 658-8501

Your input will provide valuable information that may be used to improve reading classes at Konan University.

I, _____, understand the foregoing information explaining the purpose of this research and my rights and responsibilities as a subject. My signature below designates my consent to participate in this research according to the terms and conditions outlined above.

Signature_____ Date

Print Name