Extensive Reading and After-reading Tasks for Four-skill Development for Japanese False-beginner University EFL Learners: Affective and Self-perceived Effects

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Abstract

　近年、多読は、英語習熟度の低い日本人大学生 EFL 学習者のリメディアル教育方法の１つとして注目されている。本稿では、これら学習者を疑似初心者と称する。 疑似初心者対象の多読プログラムにおいては、グレイディッド・リーダー(GR)がしばしば採用される。多読実施時には、これら学習者が順調に取り組めるよう、授業内多読が頻繁に採用され、また、多くの時間が必要な読書後課題を実施しないことがしばしばである。一方、本研究では、疑似初心者対象の多読プログラムを次のように実施した。学習者は１学期間、毎週 GR １冊を読むペースで授業外多読に取り組み、各 GR を読み終わる毎に、ブックレポート、口頭レポートに取り組んだ。この方法採用の動機は、本多読プログラム全要素実施に必要な時間を授業時間内に確保できなかったこと、リーディング科目で学習者の４技能養成を目的とした活動を実施したいと考えたことである。疑似初心者の多読教材として適切な難易度で書かれている GR については、精読用テキストに比べ、易しい語彙、構文で書かれていることから、学習者は、比較的容易に、GR の内容について書く、話す、聴くことができると予想される。本研究では、本多読プログラムの持続可能性、学習者の多読に対する姿勢、多読の学習者の情緒的要因への影響、学習者によって認識された本多読プログラムの４技能への効果を調査した。

1. Introduction

　In extensive reading (ER), the learner reads a large amount of simple texts with the purpose of smooth, confident, and pleasurable reading (Waring, 2000). ER has been adopted as an approach to L2 teaching and learning worldwide (e.g., Kirin, 2010; Lao & Krashen, 2000), and there has been an increasing trend of adopting ER in university English classrooms in Japan (e.g., Huffman, 2014; Nakanishi & Ueda, 2011; Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass, & Gorsuch, 2004).

　While ER has been adopted across various proficiency levels in Japanese university EFL classrooms, it has received attention as a remedial tool for students with low motivation

and/or proficiency such as retakers and false beginners (e.g., Kashima & Kihara, 2007; Takase, 2008; Takase, 2012). In Japanese universities, false beginners are students who failed to make sufficient progress during their six-year secondary English education and have not yet acquired the basic English skills that are necessary for university English education. In the present paper, learners with TOEIC scores in the range of roughly 200 to 300 are considered as false beginners. Because of the insufficient progress false beginners made during their secondary English education, the strength of their affective filters is generally high. The affective filter is a mental block that "acts to prevent input from being used for language acquisition," (Krashen, 1982, p. 32) and disrupts the learner's language acquisition process. The strength of the affective filter is affected by the learner's motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety (Krashen, 1982, p. 31).

In ER for false beginners, leveled readers (LRs) and/or graded readers (GRs) are frequently used. LRs are available in different levels and are designed to help young native speakers cultivate reading skills. Unlike LRs, GRs are designed for language learners. They are available in different levels, and the vocabulary and grammar structures that are used at each level are controlled.

In terms of the effects of ER on false-beginner learners, a number of questionnaire-based studies have demonstrated that they had positive attitudes to ER and that ER elicited positive affective effects toward learning English (e.g., Joichi, 2013; Kashima & Kihara, 2007; Takase, 2012; Tsurii, 2016). The model proposed by Nuttall (2005) provides insight to these findings. Since false beginners have tended to have trouble reading English texts throughout their secondary education, many of them are in the vicious circle of the weak reader (Figure 1; Nuttall, 2005), feel unmotivated, and even suffer from low self-esteem. If they engage in ER by choosing appropriate English texts, they will understand the texts and enjoy reading, which leads them to move out of the vicious circle of the weak reader and enter the virtuous circle of the good reader (Figure 2; Nuttall, 2005). It can be expected that the virtuous circle of the good readers brings about positive attitudes and affective factors among the learners including feeling motivated and more self-confident.

ER has been carried out in many different ways. While learners read a book a week in some ER programs, learners in other programs may read a book every day, for 20–30 minutes a day, or only one book a month (Takase, 2007). Learners read ER materials in class, out of class as homework assignments, or a combination of the two. Some ER practitioners adopt ER in isolation, and others with after-reading tasks such as book reports or summaries.
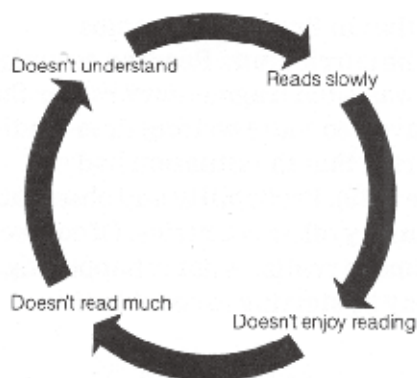
Figure 1   The vicious circle of
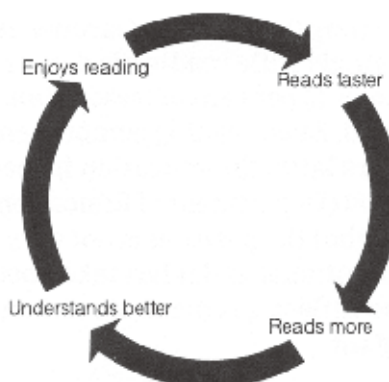the weak reader (Nuttall, 2005)

Figure 2   The virtuous circle of the
good reader (Nuttall, 2005)

However, for false-beginners, in-class reading without time-consuming after-reading tasks is often assigned (e.g., Kashima & Kihara, 2007; Kurihara, 2017; Takeyama, 2014) for several reasons. First, in-class reading allows the learners to secure reading time. Being busy with their extracurricular activities and part-time jobs, Japanese university EFL learners often find it difficult to secure time for sufficient out-of-class reading (Takase, 2008). Second, in-class reading helps false beginners to stay motivated with ER. False beginners often feel unmotivated to engage in English learning because of their poor records of acquiring basic English vocabulary, grammar, and other skills. Accordingly, it can be expected that some of the learners may have trouble staying engaged with out-of-class ER. In a case study by Takase (2007) for presumably a mix of mainly false and upper beginners, the percentage of learners who did not participate in extensive reading was larger in the out-of-class reading groups than that in the in-class reading groups. Third, in-class reading allows all the learners in class to engage with reading on their own, creating an environment where they can concentrate on their own reading (Takase, 2008). Fourth, in-class reading helps some learners develop the habit to read, which serves as a step toward engaging in out-of-class reading (Takase, 2007). Finally, while simple reading logs or on-line quizzes may be adopted, time-consuming after-reading requirements such as book summaries or reports are often omitted as they can become a demotivational factor for ER. As the purpose of ER is to have learners read a large amount of print, incorporation of book summaries and other time-consuming after-reading tasks can take time away from ER (Takase, 2007).

Previous studies (e.g., Joichi, 2013; Kashima & Kihara, 2007; Takeyama, 2014) demonstrated that false-beginners held positive attitudes to ER with in-class reading with or

without time-consuming after-tasks. These studies also showed that ER elicited, among these learners, various positive affective factors and self-perceived gains in their linguistic knowledge and skills. How would false beginners respond then to out-of-class ER conjoined with time-consuming after-reading writing, listening, and speaking activities? Would they continue to hold positive attitudes to ER? Would ER continue to elicit positive affective factors? Would the after-reading activities elicit positive self-perceived effects? These questions are motivated by a desire to effectively integrate four skills in a reading course for false beginners using GRs that the learners read extensively. Since GRs that are appropriate for false beginners for the purpose of ER are written with easy vocabulary and grammar structures compared to the intensive reading materials that they read for their reading courses, it can be expected that not only can many of these learners comprehend the content of the GRs but they can also write about, talk about, and listen to the content of GRs without much difficulty. Accordingly, GRs may potentially serve as an excellent platform to incorporate writing, speaking, and listening activities for developing the learners' writing, speaking, and listening skills. However, if ER and the after-reading activities combined were all carried out in class, they would, in many reading courses, take a significant amount of in-class time away from activities that are necessary to meet specific goals set for the courses by the curriculum, making incorporation of ER and the after-reading activities infeasible.

The present study probes into the following research questions:

1. Do false-beginner learners stay engaged in one-semester long weekly ER even when it is carried out outside class and time-consuming after-reading tasks are assigned?

2. Do false-beginner learners hold positive attitudes to ER and does ER elicit positive affective factors among these learners even when it is carried out outside class and time-consuming after-reading tasks are assigned?

3. Do ER and the after-reading tasks result in self-perceived improvement in false-beginner learners' four skills and linguistic knowledge?

2. Method

a. Participants

Two groups of participants, consisting of 19 and 18 participants, respectively, participated in the present study. The participants in both groups were first-year Japanese undergraduate students at a liberal arts private university, majoring in economics. Groups #1 and #2 enrolled in the same required reading course in two consecutive academic years. The participants in

Group #1 are those who were included in the analyses of Nakamura (2017), while the participants in Group #2 are those who were included in the analyses of Nakamura and Nishizawa (2020) as the ER treatment group. In actuality, two more students participated in the study with the 19 participants in Group #1. However, they did not complete all the reading tests administered in Nakamura (2017), which will be referred to in a later section of this paper, and they were not included in Group #1. All the participants participated in the study with consent on a voluntary basis. The TOEIC scores of Groups #1 and #2 were 285–320 and 275–310, respectively.

b. ER Materials

Although both LRs and GRs were frequently adopted for false-beginner learners in previous studies (e.g., Joichi, 2013; Kashima & Kihara, 2007; Takase, 2007), only GRs were adopted in the current study. LRs are designed for the development of young native speakers' reading skills, and the author made the judgement that the plots and storylines of these books are generally not as well suited for university EFL learners as GRs. Specifically, GRs from the following series were adopted: Cambridge English Readers, Oxford Bookworms Library, Dominoes (publisher: Oxford University Press), Penguin Readers (currently published as Pearson English Readers) (publisher: Pearson), and MacMillan Readers. None of the GRs was in comic-book style. Totals of 31 and 58 GR titles were available for Groups #1 and #2, respectively. The numbers of headwords in these titles were in the range of 200 to 800.

c. Design of the Study

With the aim of cultivating the learners' communicative competence, an ER program was designed in conjunction with two after-reading tasks, namely written (book) and oral reports on the GRs the participants read. Because the reading course in which the participants enrolled had a series of goals set by the curriculum, it was necessary to spend a large portion of in-class time on activities for these goals. Accordingly, there was not enough in-class time to accommodate all the ER and after-reading tasks, and both groups engaged in ER and book reports as homework and oral reports as in-class activities.

The specific details of the ER program are as follows. Groups #1 and #2 engaged in ER over 11 and 12 calendar weeks during a semester, respectively. Both groups read a GR as homework every week except for one two-week period. During the two-week period, they read only a single GR since two class sessions were separated by two weeks because of a holiday.

The GRs were made available in the classroom, and the participants were able to select a GR to read at the end of each class session. The participants were instructed not to read the same GR more than once during the semester.

To ensure that the participants could read a selected GR smoothly, confidently and pleasurably, they were advised to select a GR for which they were able to answer "yes" to all of the following questions from Waring (n.d.):

Q.1　Can I read the book without a dictionary?

Q.2　Can I read it quite quickly, without pausing?

Q.3　Can I understand most of the book?

Q.4　Is the book enjoyable?

These questions were presented to the participants on a sheet of paper in English, and the meaning of each question was also explained orally in Japanese. With regard to Q.1, the participants were repeatedly informed that they should choose a GR in which the percentage of unknown vocabulary was about 2%, based on the finding of Hu and Nation (2000).

Regarding the book report, it asked the participants questions that are difficult to answer without reading the content closely (see Appendix A). These questions were created based on students' responses to book reports from previous classes. Since it was expected that some participants would have trouble writing their thoughts adequately in English, the participants were told that they could add their responses in Japanese following their responses in English. Each book report was graded and returned to the participant with feedback, including compliments for good responses and well-written parts, corrections, and hints on how they could improve their responses and writing. The grades from the book report were incorporated into the participants' course grades.

The participants gave oral reports in every class session that was held immediately after reading a GR. The participants were instructed to review the book reports they wrote for a minute or two before submitting them. While showing the GRs they read, the participants gave oral reports in pairs. One participant gave a two-minute book report to the other participant, who asked two or more questions after the report. The roles were then switched. For the oral report, the participants talked about the main character, the best or most memorable part of the story, and/or other aspects of the GR. In order to assist the participants to ask relevant questions about their partners' oral reports, a list of questions was given to the

participants. The list included 13 questions including: "Who is the author?" "How long did it take to read the book?" and "What was the most memorable part of the story?" (Appendix B).

d. Post-questionnaire

A post-questionnaire on ER and its related activities was administered in Japanese to each group after the ER period. The post-questionnaire was administered in such a way that the respondents were not identifiable. The post-questionnaires administered to the two groups were slightly different, but both consisted of a number of questions on 1) their attitudes to ER, 2) the effects of ER on their affective factors, and 3) self-perceived effects of ER and ER-related activities on their linguistic knowledge and four-skill development (see Tables 4 and 5 in Section 3b). Both groups responded to each question on a 5-point Likert scale with values ranging from 1 to 5. However, the exact wordings of the Likert-scale values 2 and 4 differed slightly between the two groups. The wordings used for Group #1 were: 1: "strongly disagree," 2: "somewhat disagree," 3: "neutral," 4: "somewhat agree," and 5: "strongly agree." On the other hand, those used for Group #2 were: 1: "strongly disagree," 2: "disagree," 3: "neutral," 4: "agree," and 5: "strongly agree." In addition to the Likert-scale questions, the questionnaires asked the participants to share their thoughts about the book and oral reports in the form of free writing. While some of the responses from Group #1 were reported in Nakamura (2017), their responses were reevaluated to answer the research questions of the present study.

3. Results

a. ER Reading Amount and GRs Read by the Participants

Table 1 shows the levels of GRs the participants in both groups read. Table 2 summarizes the total reading amount for both groups. In this table, statistics of the total numbers of GRs, running words, and standard words read by the participants are reported. A standard word is six character spaces as defined by Carver (1976), in which a letter, a space, and punctuation counts as a character space. The number of standard words in each GR was calculated using the method adopted by Huffman (2014). Table 3 shows the percentage of participants who engaged in ER in each week. The data reported in Tables 1–3 are based on the submitted book reports, and those for Group #1 are strictly for the combination of all the participants in Group #1 and the two additional students who were not included in Group #1 due to their incomplete reading tests (Section 2a). It was not possible to calculate the data in Tables 1 and

2 for Group #1 alone because the reading tests that the two students could not complete were administered semi-anonymously, making it infeasible to exclude their book report submission data. In Table 3, a participant was considered to have engaged in ER for a particular week when the author made a judgement that the participant had read a GR based on his/her responses to the questions on the book report he/she submitted for that week.

Table 1 GRs read by the participants

Headwords	Group #1		Group #2	
200	5	(2.5%)	0	(0%)
250–300	192	(95.5%)	150	(78.5%)
400	2	(1.0%)	25	(13.1%)
600	2	(1.0%)	15	(7.9%)
800	0	(0%)	1	(0.5%)

Note: The numbers in columns 2 and 3 indicate the total number of GRs read by the participants. The numbers in parentheses indicate the frequency distribution of the levels of the GRs read by the participants.

Table 2 Total ER reading amount

	Group #1		Group #2	
The average number of GRs read by each participant	9.6	(0.73)	10.6	(0.95)
The average number of running words read by each participant	18,214	(2,811)	24,566	(9,050)
The average number of standard words read by each participant	15,899	(2,623)	21,091	(7,811)

Note: The number in each cell indicates the mean. The numbers in parentheses indicate the standard deviation.

Table 3 Percentage of participants who engaged in ER

ER Week #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
Group #1	95.2	85.7	100	95.2	100	100	95.2	100	95.2	85.7	—
Group #2	100	94.4	100	94.4	100	100	88.9	94.4	100	88.9	100

b. Post-questionnaire

Table 4 summarizes the participants' responses to questions related to their attitudes to ER and the effects of ER on their affective factors. Table 5 summarizes the participants' responses to questions related to self-perceived effects of ER and the after-reading tasks on their linguistic knowledge and four-skill development. While the statistical values reported for Group #2 were evaluated using the original Likert-scale values selected by the group participants, those reported for Group #1 were evaluated using adjusted values of the Likert-scale values selected by the group participants. The adjustment was made for a more logically sound comparison of the post-questionnaire responses between the two groups since the wordings associated with the Likert-scale values 2 and 4 were different between the post-questionnaires administered for the two groups (Section 2d). Specifically, the Likert-scale values for the wordings "somewhat disagree" and "somewhat agree" on the questionnaire for Group #1 were adjusted from 2 and 4 to 2.5 and 3.5, respectively, as the Likert-scale values 2 and 4 on the questionnaire for Group #2 represented "disagree" and "agree," respectively.

The statistics for items A-9 for Group #1 and A-6 and A-8 for Group #2 (Table 4) are based on all the participants but one as a participant failed to respond to each of the relevant items on the questionnaire. The statements given in the tables are English translations of those given in Japanese on the questionnaire.

4. Discussion

a. Do false-beginner learners stay engaged in one-semester long weekly ER even when it is carried out outside class and time-consuming after-reading tasks are assigned?

Table 3 shows that the participants in both groups stayed engaged in the weekly out-of-class ER and book reports throughout the semester. Some of the participants occasionally missed ER. This was generally because they did not attend class and could not check out GRs for that week. As was the case for ER and book reports, the participants engaged steadily with the oral reports throughout the semester as observed by the author in

Table 4 The learners' attitudes to ER and the effect of ER on their affective factors

Item	$M(SD)$ [Percentage]	
	Group #1	Group #2
Attitudes to ER		
A-1 I participated in ER actively.	4.16 (0.81) [89.5%]	3.83 (0.69) [77.8%]
A-2 It was good to participate in ER.	4.11 (0.77) [94.7%]	4.00 (0.58) [83.3%]
A-3 I enjoyed ER.	3.74 (0.80) [73.7%]	3.50 (0.76) [55.6%]
A-4 I would like to continue ER next semester.	3.42 (0.77) [52.6%]	3.22 (0.98) [44.4%]
A-5 I would like to continue ER next semester if more varieties of GR titles are added to the collection.	3.84 (0.95) [73.7%]	3.72 (0.65) [72.2%]
A-6 I would recommend ER to my peers.	3.74 (0.80) [73.7%]	3.53 (0.78) [55.6%]*
Effects on the learners' affective factors		
A-7 ER helped me increase my motivation to study English.	3.66 (0.84) [57.9%]	3.50 (0.76) [44.4%]
A-8 I gained confidence for English reading through my engagement in ER.	3.29 (0.68) [42.1%]	3.35 (0.76) [41.2%]*
A-9 I experienced a sense of achievement when I finished reading a GR.	3.64 (1.02) [72.2%]*	4.06 (0.78) [72.2%]

Note: M : mean, SD : standard deviation, Percentage: percentage of the participants who selected "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" and "agree" or "strongly agree" in Groups #1 and 2, respectively. The asterisks indicate values that were calculated from all the participants but one within each group. See the text for further details.

class. This result is surprising given the following two findings by Takase (2007). First, 14.3% of the participants (presumably a mix of false- and upper beginners) failed to participate in semester-long ER, which was implemented as an out-of-class assignment with only reading-logs as the after-reading task. Second, after engaging in in-class ER for one semester,

Table 5 Self-perceived effects of ER and ER-related activities

Item	$M(SD)$ [Percentage]	
	Group #1	Group #2
S-1 ER helped me improve my reading rate.	3.55 (0.69) [68.4%]	3.78 (0.79) [55.6%]
S-2 ER helped me improve my vocabulary and expressions.	3.16 (0.99) [42.1%]	3.33 (0.82) [44.4%]
S-3 The book report was helpful for my English learning.	3.79 (0.78) [89.5%]	－
S-4 The book report helped me improve my writing skills.	－	3.72 (0.80) [61.1%]
S-5 Having engaged in the oral report, I can now orally express my own thoughts better than before.	3.58 (0.67) [73.7%]	3.11 (0.81) [27.8%]
S-6 By listening to my classmates' oral reports, I can now comprehend others' speaking in English better than before.	－	3.06 (0.70) [27.8%]

Note: M : mean, SD : standard deviation, Percentage: percentage of the participants who selected "somewhat agree" or "strongly agree" and "agree" or "strongly agree" in Groups #1 and 2, respectively.

that is, after presumably having developed a habit of reading, 31.2% of false-beginner participants failed to participate in out-of-class ER in the following semester.

There are several plausible reasons the participants in the present study continued to engage in ER throughout a semester. First, the participants were able to select GRs to read in their classrooms. This setting ensured that the participants selected GRs to read every week. Because some of the participants were busy with other classes, their extracurricular activities, and/or part-time jobs, it is possible that some of the participants would have found it difficult to make a trip to the library to select GRs to read every week. With the collection of GRs available in the classroom, the participants were also able to get advice from their classmates on which GRs they would likely enjoy reading next. Second, the book and oral reports served as activities to foster their motivation to keep up with ER. While time-consuming

after-reading tasks can take time away from ER and can adversely affect some learners' engagement in ER as was discussed in Takase (2007), it is possible that some after-reading tasks such as those adopted for the present study can foster motivation for ER among some false beginners. According to the survey of Hayashi (1999), the teacher's comments and other feedback on the book reports encouraged and gave upper-beginner and intermediate-level participants motivation to continue with ER. Similarly, the questionnaire data of Maass and Shimada (2018) showed that sharing stories from GRs in pairs in a supportive atmosphere gave the participants with a wide range of proficiency the incentive and motivation to read more. Although the pair-work was done in L1 in that study, the nature of the pair-work from the study was similar to that from the present study, that is, it was done collaboratively in a supportive atmosphere. Third, the participants were positively rewarded by engaging in ER. Good performances on their book reports contributed positively to their final grade of the course. They were also able to receive feedback and correction on their book reports to improve their English language skills and knowledge. Finally, the participants in the present study might have been motivated false beginners. While Takase (2008) advocated in-class ER for busy Japanese university EFL learners, the study pointed out that out-of-class ER could be successful among motivated learners with appropriate guidance from the teacher.

b. Do false-beginner learners hold positive attitudes to ER and does ER elicit positive affective factors among these learners even when it is carried out outside class and time-consuming after-reading tasks are assigned?

Attitudes to ER

Table 4 shows that ER elicited positive attitudes among the participants even though it was carried out outside class and time-consuming after-reading tasks were required. A large percentage of the participants participated in ER actively (Item A-1: Group #1: 89.5%; Group #2: 77.8%) and found it good to participate in ER (Item A-2: Group #1: 94.7%; Group #2: 83.3%). These two findings combined may imply that the participants had expectations that they would benefit from engaging in ER and that their expectations were sufficiently met. The level of affirmative attitudes for ER in the two groups is comparable to those reported in previous studies, in which false beginners engaged in ER mostly in class with after-reading tasks that were limited compared to the present study. In Joichi (2013), after engaging in ER either for a semester or two semesters, 86.7% of the participants ($N = 49$) in three groups on

average agreed that they had been able to engage in ER actively. (All of the percentage values reported from Joichi (2013) hereafter are those of the participants who engaged in ER either for a semester or two semesters.) In Kashima and Kihara (2007), after engaging in ER for three semesters, 95.5% of the participants (N = 22) responded that their experience of engaging in ER was good for a number of reasons including enjoyment and satisfaction.

ER elicited a sense of enjoyment in a moderately large percentage of the participants, that is 73.7% and 55.6 % for Groups #1 and #2, respectively (Item A-3). These percentage values are low compared to those reported in Joichi (2013) and Kashima and Kihara (2007), which were 94.6% and 81.8%, respectively. This result is likely attributable to the way ER was implemented in the study, that is, the participants engaged in ER outside class and a significant amount of time-consuming after tasks were assigned. As suggested by Items A-1 and A-2 above, the participants generally perceived ER as positive and beneficial, but they had to engage in it as "weekly homework" together with the book report assignment. As a result, some of the participants might have perceived ER as a task they needed to do at expense of their "free time," which adversely affected their sense of enjoyment.

Regarding the participants' interest for further engagement in ER, approximately half of the participants were interested in continuing ER in the following semester (Item A-4: Group #1: 52.6%; Group #2: 44.4%). Although these results seem to indicate that a half of the participants felt discouraged about further engagement in ER, a closer look at the participants' responses reveal that this was not the case. Specifically, only 15.8% and 22.2% of the participants in Groups #1 and 2, respectively, selected 1 or 2 for Item A-4, disagreeing with the statement "I would like to continue ER next semester." Therefore, even though ER was implemented with time-consuming after-reading tasks, most of the participants did not feel discouraged about continuing with ER. A comparison of the results on Item A-4 to the results reported by Tsurii (2016) reveals that the addition of time-consuming after-reading tasks does not necessarily discourage false beginners from continuing with ER. In Tsurii (2016), 39.1% of the participants expressed their interest in continuing ER beyond the one-semester study period as opposed to 52.6% (Group #1) and 44.4% (Group #2) in the present study. Similarly, 30.4% of the participants in Tsurii (2016) expressed disinterest in continuing ER beyond the semester in contrast to 15.8% (Group #1) and 22.2% (Group #2) in the present study. While many aspects of the study by Tsurii (2016) were similar to those of the present study (e.g., the duration of the ER program, the number of words read by the participants, and in-class ER vs. out-of-class ER), the major difference of that study from the

present study was its after-reading task, that is, the participants were only required to answer ten M-Reader quiz questions for each LR or GR they had read instead of engaging in book and oral reports. M-Reader is a free online tool that assists ER practitioners to check the progress of learners' ER. Typical types of M-Reader quiz questions are multiple choice, "who said", true/false, and event ordering questions (McBride & Milliner, 2016). See McBride and Milliner (2016) for further details of M-Reader. Although the after-reading tasks in the present study were time-consuming compared to M-Reader quiz questions, it is possible that the nature and features of the after-reading tasks were such that they fostered the participants' motivation to stay engaged with ER (Section 4a.)

The participants' response to Item A-5 suggests that addition of more GR titles would motivate roughly 20% to 30% more participants to continue ER in the following semester in Groups #1 and #2, respectively. Even though 27 more GR titles were available for Group #2, a higher percentage of the participants in this group responded, compared to Group #1, that they would feel motivated with the addition of more GR titles. This finding was obtained probably because many of the 27 additional titles that were available for Group #2 were at the 400-headword level, and a large number of participants did not feel comfortable reading them for ER.

Affective Factors

Table 4 reveals that approximately half of the participants' motivation to study English increased with ER (Item A-7: Group #1: 57.9%; Group #2: 44.4%). Roughly half of the participants' confidence for English reading also increased (Item A-8: 42.1% for Group #1 and 41.2% for Group #2). Regarding a sense of achievement, a relatively large percentage (i.e., 72.2%) of the participants experienced such a sense in both groups after finishing reading a GR (Item A-9).

The above findings suggest that ER had a moderate effect on lowering the affective filter of the participants as a whole. As was discussed in Section 1, the strength of the affective filter is affected by the learner's motivation, self-confidence, and anxiety (Krashen, 1982, p. 31). Since the participants' sense of achievement likely enhanced their overall self-confidence, the findings from the participants' responses to Items A-7, A-8, and A-9 together indicate that ER lowered the affective filter of approximately half of the participants. The lowered affective filter is, based on the discussions in Tennant (2017), likely attributable to learner autonomy and the use of comprehensible reading materials in the ER program of the present study. In

the ER program in the present study, the participants chose GRs to read on their own based on the four questions from Waring (n.d.) (Section 2c). Thus, many of the participants likely selected GRs that they found interesting to read and were comprehensible to them. It can be expected that interesting, comprehensible reading materials are more motivating, increase self-confidence, and reduce anxiety (Tennant, 2017). The affective filter of approximately half of the participants was not lowered for several plausible reasons. One such reason is that the contents of the available GRs were not interesting enough for some of the participants. Another plausible reason is that some of the participants continued to generally feel unconfident and uneasy about reading English texts realizing that many English texts they read outside the ER program were difficult to comprehend.

c. Do ER and the after-reading tasks result in self-perceived improvement in false-beginner learners' four skills and linguistic knowledge?

ER elicited positive self-perceived effects among the participants. Nearly 70% and 60% of the participants in Groups #1 and #2, respectively, self-perceived that ER had helped them improve their reading rates (Item S-1, Table 5). Reading rate gains self-perceived by significant percentages of the participants are consistent to the actual reading rate gains of both groups over the periods of ER treatment that were reported in Nakamura (2017) and Nakamura & Nishizawa (2020). The mean reading rate gains in standard words per minute (swpm) for Groups #1 and #2 were 15.8 swpm (26.2% gain) and 21.0 swpm (28.1% gain), respectively, and statistically significant. Nakamura & Nishizawa (2020) also demonstrated that the mean reading rate gain of Group #2 (i.e. 21.0 swpm) was attributable to ER by comparing the reading rate gains of Group #2 to those of a control group which received no ER treatment. The reading rate gains of Groups #1 and #2 were achieved while maintaining adequate levels of reading comprehension, thus without adversely affecting the participants' reading comprehension rates. Although self-perceived effects of ER on false-beginner learners' reading rates were also reported in a number of previous studies (e.g., Kashima & Kihara, 2007; Kurihara, 2017; Tsurii, 2016), the self-perceived reading rate gains were not confirmed by actual reading rate measurements in these studies.

Roughly half of the participants reported that ER had positive effects on improving their vocabulary and expressions (Item S-2: Group #1: 42.1%; Group #2: 44.4%). Since the amount of reading was relatively small (i.e., 18,214 and 24,566 running words on average for Groups #1 and #2, respectively (Section 3a)), the number of new words they learned from the ER was

likely small. Learning a new word requires repeated encounters of the word in reading. The measurements by Waring and Takaki (2003) suggest that it would take much more than 20 or 30 encounters to learn new words. Given the participants in the present study read at about 98% coverage rate of known words (Section 2c), similar to the participants in Waring and Takaki (2003), they would have to read several hundred to several thousand words to learn a single new word in their reading. Although the participants in the present study likely learned only a small number of new words, it is possible that some of the learners gained an improved knowledge of words they had already known through contextualized input, leading to the response that they had self-perceived improvement in their vocabulary and expressions.

Subsequently, the participants' self-perceived effects of the after-reading tasks are examined. The participants perceived that the book reports had positive effects on their English learning (Item S-3: 89.5%, Group #1) and helped improve their writing skills (Item S-4: 61.1%, Group #2). Although the Group #1 participants were not specifically asked about self-perceived effects of the book reports on their writing skill, one-third of the participants voluntarily and explicitly stated in their free writing response that they had self-perceived improvement in their writing skills because of the book reports. These results support the notion that GR-based ER serves as an effective platform to incorporate writing tasks that help false beginners improve their writing skills.

Regarding the self-perceived effects of the oral reports on the participants' speaking skills, there was a large difference between Groups #1 and #2. While 73.7% of the participants in Group #1 self-perceived positive effects of ER on their speaking skills, only 27.8% of the participants in Group #2 self-perceived such effects (Item S-5). However, the written responses by Group #2 clearly indicate that an additional 16.7% of the participants in that group self-perceived progress in their speaking skills although they responded with 3 (i.e., neutral) to Item S-5. Thus, in actuality, 44.5% of the participants in the group self-perceived improvement in their speaking skills from the oral report activity. That is, the oral reports elicited self-perceived improvement in speaking skills among a moderate to moderately large percentage of the participants in the two groups. The difference in the degree of the self-perceived effects between the two groups may be partly attributed to the difference in the participants' attitudes as was observed by the author. Throughout a semester, Group #1 was generally less reserved and more eager to learn from various class activities than Group #2.

Such attitudes of Group #1 might have helped them improve their speaking skills more than Group #2.

Finally, only 27.8% of the participants in Group #2 self-perceived effects of the oral report on their listening skills (Item S-6). One possible reason for the low percentage of participants who self-perceived such effects is that many participants did not perceive improvement in comprehending native-speakers' speech. During the oral reports given by their partners, the participants received speech input from their false-beginner partners. It can be expected that most of the output from these partners contained numerous errors ranging from intonation to word choice. With repeated listening practice with such output, many participants did not perceive that they had improved their listening skills to comprehend speech by the native speakers that they would normally listen to, for instance, in their listening classes.

As discussed above, a relatively large percentage of the participants self-perceived the effects of the book and oral reports on their writing and speaking skills. This finding gives an incentive for objective measurements of the learners' writing and speaking skill improvement in future studies. It is desirable that these measurements be accompanied by measurements of the learner's writing and speaking skill development due to ER itself given that some previous studies (e.g., Cho and Krashen, 1994; Lee and Hsu, 2009) have provided evidence for the effects of ER on writing and speaking skill development among some learners.

5. Conclusion

In the present study, two groups of Japanese false-beginner university EFL learners engaged in a one semester-long ER program, in which the learners read a GR outside class weekly. After reading a GR, the learners were assigned to complete a book report for submission and give oral reports in pairs in class. The study examined the sustainability of the ER program, the false-beginners' attitudes to ER, the effects of ER on their affective factors, and the self-perceived effects of the ER program on their four skills.

Regarding the sustainability, despite the assignment of out-of-class reading and time-consuming after-reading tasks, the learners in both groups stayed engaged in ER throughout the semester. Given that a significant proportion of false beginners did not participate in out-of-class ER in Takase (2007), even with no time-consuming after-reading tasks, several plausible reasons for the participants' engagement in ER in the present study were discussed. Such reasons included the participants' motivation level and the motivational effects of the after-reading tasks adopted for the ER program of the present study.

The learners held positive attitudes to ER, and ER elicited positive affective factors among the learners even though it was carried out outside class and time-consuming after-reading tasks were required. Although the percentage of the participants who enjoyed ER was lower than those from previous studies, in which in-class ER was implemented with limited after-reading tasks, the percentage of the participants who evaluated their engagement in ER positively was comparable to those from the previous studies. ER also elicited a sense of achievement among a moderately large percentage of the learners when they finished reading a GR. Finally, ER had a moderate effect in lowering the learners' affective filter.

ER and the written and oral reports elicited positive self-perceived improvements in the learners' language skills and linguistic knowledge. Specifically, moderate to moderately large percentages of learners self-perceived that their reading rate and knowledge of vocabulary and expressions had improved as a result of ER. Likewise, moderate to moderately large percentages of the learners self-perceived improvement in writing and speaking skills as a result of the book and oral reports. However, only a small percentage of the learners self-perceived that the oral report had helped them improve their listening skills.

The above results lead to the following three findings. First, the current ER program can be sustainable even among false beginners for a semester and possibly longer. Second, the majority of the learners in the program held positive attitudes to ER, and ER elicited positive affective factors among approximately half of the learners. The program can have positive effects on the learners' affective factors even though out-of-class ER and time-consuming after-reading tasks are assigned to the learners. Finally, the self-perceived positive effects of the book and oral reports among the learners support the notion that GR-based ER serves as a platform for incorporating effective speaking and writing tasks and effective listening tasks to a lesser degree. In the future, it is desirable to conduct objective measurements of the changes in these skills to investigate whether they match the leaners' perception.

The findings of the present study may give incentives for teachers to implement an ER program with book and oral reports in false-beginner classes to develop learners' English language skills and linguistic knowledge. However, as the program requires a teacher's time for providing feedback on the book reports, it may be feasible for only relatively small classes as was the case for the present study.

Note

Figures 1 and 2 from Nuttall (2005). Reprinted with permission.

Acknowledgement

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Appendix A: Questions on book reports

1.　Book title　　2.　Publisher　　3.　Level　　4.　# of pages

5.　Write about one of the main characters:

　　a. Name　　b. How old is (s)he?　c. What does (s)he do?

　　d. Where does (s)he live?　　e. What is her (his) personality like?

6.　Did you like this character? Why? Why not?

7.　What was the best or most memorable part of the story? Why?

8.　Do you recommend the book to others? Why? Why not?

Appendix B: Suggested questions to be asked after oral reports

1. What is the title of the book?

2. How many pages is the book?

3. What level is the book?

4. Who is the author?

5. Who is the publisher?

6. What genre is the book?

7. How long did it take to read the book?

8. Was the book easy to read?

9. Are there a lot of pictures in the book?

10. Tell me about one of the main characters.

11. Did you like this character? Why? Why not?

12. What was the best or most memorable part of the story? Why?

13. Do you recommend the book to others? Why? Why not?