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和文要旨：本稿は、鳥取環境大学のインテンシブ・イングリッシュという集中英語教育プログラムの実践英語科目の項目として新たに確立された、多読に関する中間報告書である。インテンシブ・イングリッシュの実践英語Ｂの多読の今日までの影響、問題、将来に向けた改善案を考察したものである。結果は試験的なものではあるが、いくつかの結論は、学生の英文作成能力向上を長期目標とした、学習初期段階の学生の読解能力向上への効果を示唆するものである。
【キーワード】多読、インテンシブ・イングリッシュ

Abstract：This paper offers a preliminary report on a newly established extensive reading component within a university intensive English program at Tottori University of Environmental Studies, a small private university in Tottori, Japan. This paper will consider the effects of the program to date, problems that have arisen, and possible improvements to the program in the future. Although the results are highly tentative, some conclusions can be drawn concerning the effectiveness of extensive reading to improve students reading as a first step, with a long term goal of improving students' writing in English.
【Keywords】extensive reading, intensive English

This report is a summary of the extensive reading component of the Intensive English Practical English B (Reading and Writing) course for first year students at a private university in western Japan. Although the long-term goal of the reading program is to increase students' ability to express themselves fluently in written English, this report focuses on the first step, reading

1．The Students

One hundred forty-nine students were admitted as first year students in the 2010 academic year. Students enter one of four departments; Environmental Management, Information Systems, Architecture and Design, or Environmental Policy and Management and English is a required course for all first year students.

The students were first divided into groups by department, and then into class groups based on their scores on a placement test. Eiken (Society for the Testing of English Proficiency, STEP) provides a choice of four different placement tests, from A to D. Test A is the most difficult, and D the least difficult. Eiken level B was chosen for the incoming first year students. Using the scores from this test a total of six classes were created, with an average class size of 25 students.

Scores on the placement test reflect the students' lack of expertise in English. The maximum score possible on Eiken B is 680; it is designed for students in the range of Eiken Level Four through Pre-first Level. The average score of the incoming first year students was 318.6 (a score of 47%), with a mean score of 309.0.

Even taking into account the reported standard error of measurement（SEM）of ±25（Nakamura, 2010）, it is obvious that the majority of students did not achieve scores at the high end of the scale on this test.

2．The Intensive English Program

The university Intensive English program was revamped in 2010, and these students are part of this revamped program. Students take three classes a week: Practical English A（Speaking and Listening）, Practical English B（Reading and Writing）, and Academic English. In Practical English A and B, the language of the classroom is primarily English. Academic English is taught entirely in Japanese.

3．Extensive Reading: Rationale

Although it seems that most Japanese students of English, if asked, would say that they read English well even if they can't speak it. This idea has entered the realm of perceived wisdom in English language teaching in Japan, and is considered axiomatic. However, when the reading ability and habits of Japanese students at the tertiary level are examined empirically, it is found that this "axiom" is in fact a fallacy（Kitao, 1990）. According to one study（Yoshida & Kitao, 1986）, when Japanese students were instructed to read quickly, the average student could only read 105 words per minute, with a 54% comprehension rate.

Reading is a task that uses short term memory （STM）to process the language. While the information contained in the reading may be stored in long term memory, the actual initial decoding of the meaning is handled by short term memory（Fang, 2008）. Short term memory is, as the name implies, limited by time, and also by the amount of data that can be held. According to research（Fang, 2008; Reynolds, 2007）the average person can only hold 7±2 "chunks" of data in short term memory. Thus, university students' slow reading pace is a problem not only of time, but the method students use to decode the meaning. According to several researchers（Porcaro, 2005; Lavin, 2004; Kitao, 1990）and the author's personal experience, most first year Japanese university students have spent six years in *yakudoku*, often translated as grammar-translation, classes. A hallmark of *yakudoku*

instruction is the translation and substitution of each word from English to Japanese. If a student can only process English at the word level, the constraints of short term memory limit that student to sentences of between five and nine words in length. When confronted with a sentence longer than this, the student is forced to use regression（re-reading the beginning of the passage）to finally comprehend the sentence. A course of instruction in how to read English, without the word-by-word translation, would thus be useful to students.

Why is it important or useful for students to read English, as opposed to translating it? First, it is subjectively more pleasant to do something smoothly, without having to struggle. Perhaps more importantly, from the students' point of view, reading at or beyond the threshold for comprehension should improve scores on tests such as TOEIC, which have a reading component and require near-native reading speed for successful completion.

This then became the goal of the extensive reading component of Practical English B; to bring students to the threshold level. What is the threshold level for comprehension? According to one reading site（Cousin, 2000）, the average native English reader reads around 240 words per minute, with a comprehension rate of 60%. Another study（Hunziker, 2006）showed that the average 18 year old read their native language（English, French or German）in a range from 170 to 250 words per minute. Although the threshold level seems to be a range, rather than one number, it is safe to say that the average reading speed of 104 words per minute of first year students at this university is below the threshold of comprehensibility（Figure 1）. However this number（104）does seem to follow the pattern of the other 25,000 students surveyed by Kitao et al.（Kitao, 1990）, whose average score was 105 words per minute.

4．Curriculum and Methodology

As mentioned before, students take three English classes each week; Practical English A（Speaking and Listening）, Academic English, and Practical English B （Reading and Writing）. This report focuses on the extensive reading component of Practical English B

（PB）.

PB meets for one *koma*（90-minute lesson）each week for 15 weeks. It is a practical English class, and grades are thus based on students' use of English, rather than a paper test. On the first day of class in first semester, in addition to the usual orientation, students were taken to the university library to choose their first reading book. The university library contains 2,292 graded readers by a variety of publishers, and ranging from starter level（16 pages）to near-native level. There are also around 200 other books written for native speaking children available.

While it is important to consider the difficulty when choosing a reading text, and there are indexes and headword counts available（Nation, 1997）, PB is a practical English class, with most instruction in English. Rather than trying to explain these concepts in English, students were simply instructed to find five books that looked interesting to them, open each book to a random page and read. If there were more than five words on that random page that the student didn't know, and couldn't guess from context, the student was instructed to discard that book, and move on to the next. The students repeated this process until they had a book that they thought they could read without recourse to a dictionary and that, more importantly, they had selected because it appealed to them for some reason.

For the first seven weeks of the semester students read for 30 minutes in class, rather than as homework. This allowed the teacher to monitor their reading and the level of the book they had chosen.

There was also weekly instruction in how to read. This instruction began with a survey of students' reading habits in Japanese on page 67 of their textbook （Begole, 2010）（Appendix A）. Since the survey is a page in the textbook, the results were not collected, but used as a springboard for discussion. In the classes which the author personally observed, many students had beliefs about reading, even in Japanese, that hamper both their speed and comprehension.

On other class days students tried their hand at simple skimming and scanning exercises, as well as practice in "seeing" two or three words at once. This skill, "chunking," allows a reader to keep more information in short term memory, by making one chunk contain more information. Since as mentioned before, short term memory is limited to five to nine "chunks" of information this skill should improve students' speed and comprehension, and minimize the need for regression. Students also viewed excerpts of a television show on improving reading skills（*Gatten*, Wednesday, April 7, 2010, NHK）.

In the eighth week, students had a reading speed and comprehension test. The students read a simple text, *Mouse Soup*（Lobel, 1977）, complete with illustrations（text and illustrations used with permission of HarperCollins Publishing）. *Mouse Soup* contains words that can be expected to be unknown to the students （"weasel"）, but that should be clear from context. It contains six short, independent chapters, with a total word count of 1341 words. On the reverse of each test page were four simple, multiple choice comprehension questions. Although the answers were checked for accuracy, students had been told that the accuracy would not affect their score; that this was simply a test to get used to this style of test, and to establish an individual baseline reading speed. As stated before, the average speed of students on the first test was 104 words per minute.

From the eighth week, students began to do their reading at home. They were to read for 30 minutes at one sitting, once a week. The time of 30 minutes was selected for no other reason than because it seemed to be the maximum possible while maintaining some sort of homework parity with the other Intensive English classes. Students are required to write one A 4 page in their journals each week, which takes about 30 minutes. In Academic English, students are supposed to read between three and six paragraphs from their AE textbook and summarize them in Japanese. Students filled out a chart each week on page ten of their PB textbook documenting their homework reading.

In second semester, after the summer break, students began reading again. The amount was increased slightly; students read together in class for 15 minutes each class period in addition to the standard homework assignment of 30 minutes. In second semester students again kept a homework reading log on page 65 of their textbook. Students were informed in both

English and Japanese that in second semester their reading speed and comprehension would again be checked, and that their progress would comprise ten percent of their score for the class.

At the time, it was hoped that most students would make significant gains in their reading speed, but as the reader can see from Figure 1, this did not come to pass. As in first semester, students took a reading speed and comprehension test on the eighth lesson. The text in second semester was an original retelling of a traditional Japanese story, *Momotaro, Peach Boy of Okayama*. This text was slightly shorter than *Mouse Soup*, at 1320 words. Although prior knowledge of the story was expected to help students' comprehension, there were no illustrations to help this time, and the tale was a contemporary retelling and thus slightly different than the version that students had grown up with! There were five multiple choice comprehension questions on the back of each page, and students were instructed to read at a pace that would allow them to answer three of the five questions accurately.
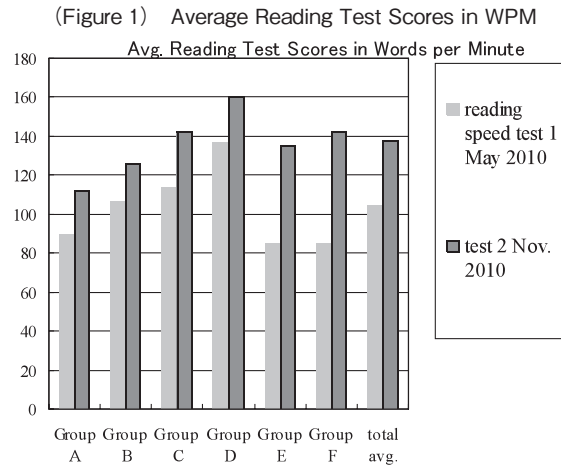
5．Results

Test results were not precisely disappointing; after all, 92 students of the 120 students present for both tests did make gains in their reading speed (Table 1).

Table 1.

	# of students whose scores increased	# of students whose scores decreased
Group A （n=18）	15	3
Group B （n=18）	13	5
Group C （n=16）	13	3
Group D （n=27）	16	11
Group E （n=21）	19	2
Group F （n=20）	16	4

However, the gains in general were less than teachers had hoped for (Figure 1.).

It has been noted in other research (Krashen, 2001) that gains are most apparent in longer-running programs, and it is hoped that students will make still

（Figure 1)　Average Reading Test Scores in WPM

more progress next year. It has been anecdotally reported that gains accelerate in the second year.

There were also a number of variables that may have affected the test results. Not all students did the homework, and a number of students refused to move up to the next level of graded readers. One student read the same small children's book every week for two semesters.

Reading for a mere 30 minutes a week, even if done religiously is also going to result in slower progress than a truly intensive program, such as that done by Mason and Krashen (Mason & Krashen, 1997). In that study, students were required to read 2000 pages (about 400,000 to 500,000 words) over two semesters, and students made significant gains, often doubling their reading speed, over the course of the year. At this university it is not possible to implement such an intense program, but continuing on at a slow but steady pace can only benefit students.

6．Student Feedback

Students were given a mid-semester *enquête* during first semester. Although the purpose of the *enquête* was not directly related to extensive reading, but to the class requirements and teaching, several students chose to write comments about reading in the comments section. One student wrote, "I am able to read English books, and I had a very relaxing experience in this class"（英語の本も読むことができ、とてもリラックスして授業をうけることができた), while another wrote, "By reading a book at my own level I felt like I was able to make a bit more contact with English"（自

分のレベルに合った本を読むことで少しでも多くの時間英語に触れることができること）, and yet another, "I have become able to read books in English," （英語の本が読めるようになってきた）[translations by author].

In addition, one question on the first reading speed and comprehension test was open-ended, asking students for their opinion of the book they had just read. Again, students wrote positive comments, although there was also a lot of sympathy expressed for the poor weasel（who had been tricked by the book-reading mouse）.

7．Conclusion

While it seems that the extensive reading component of the class has had some positive effect on students' reading, there are still problems to be addressed and improvements to be made.

7-1．Students who fail to do the homework reading

While it might be tempting to encourage students to do the homework by making the number of pages read a component of the grade for the semester, for this particular group of students it seems that is only perceived as a "stick," rather than a "carrot." That is, students feel they are being penalized for not doing the homework, rather than rewarded for doing it. To circumvent this problem, yet still increase compliance, adding a classroom discussion session at the beginning of each lesson may prove effective. Students can then discuss what they read at home during the week with other students. Another option is to detach the homework report sheet from the textbook, and have a separate page that teachers can collect and write feedback on.

7-2．Students fail to move up to more difficult texts

Some students who have become comfortable at a particular level in the graded readers seem reluctant to move up. The essence of extensive reading is that the texts are selected by the students, so assigning a level or text would defeat the purpose of the extensive reading activity. However, by weighting the reading, for example in the manner of Jarrell（Jarrell, 2003）, students can then choose whether to read more pages （and spend more time）at a lower level, or move up

to the next level using the following scale:

Table 2.

Graded Reader Level	Value per Page
1	0.5
2	0.75
3	1.0
4,5,6	1.25

Thus, a student who reads 100 pages of a Level 1 text would be credited with reading 50 pages; a student who reads 100 pages at Level 4 would receive credit for 125 pages. This system will increase the recordkeeping burden on the teachers, but should encourage students to challenge themselves. Using the average reading rate for each group of students, the teacher can calculate approximately how many words students in that class can read in 30 minutes, and set a realistic page number that encourages students to move up for each separate group.

7-3．Students are uncomfortable with the idea of less than 100 percent comprehension on a test

Students who may read fluently at home seem to panic when faced with a test. In speaking to a number of students after the second, scored test, the author was told by students that they had purposely slowed down so that "they could answer all the questions correctly." To solve this problem, more time needs to be spent on what reading is, and how to do it. Although it is explained to students that even native-speakers do not read with 100 percent comprehension, most students when faced with a test, are unable to undo years of *yakudoku* training, which requires word-by-word understanding（translation）.

In summary, the extensive reading component of the program needs more attention from the teacher to both monitor and encourage students, and more overt instruction in how to read. When these goals have been accomplished, then students will begin to be able to apply their new knowledge of English norms to their writing.

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Appendix 1　Reading Habits When Reading Japanese

　　今日は初めに日本語の読み方について話し合ってみましょう。その前に、まず皆さんが<u>日本語で</u>読む時について、アンケートにお答えください。下記の文章について、×または○を記入してください。

　　Today we are going to talk about reading in Japanese first. Before we do that, please fill in the enquete below with an × or an ○ .)

1．私は必ず、一つ一つすべての文字（漢字・送り仮名など）を読んでいる。

2．声に出して読むことで、私の日本語の読解力が上がる。

3．読む時は、声に出して読んでいる。

4．日本語をよく理解する為には、ゆっくりと読むほうが良いと思う。

5．知らない文字が出てきた時は、私はいつも辞書をひく。

6．日本語をより速く読むためには、文法を勉強するのが一番良い。

7．日本語の読解力を上げるためには、語彙を増やすのが一番良い。

8．日本語を読んでいて、知らない文字があると、内容が理解できない。

9．文字の読み方が分からないと、その意味も理解できない。

10．段落に新しい単語がいくつか混じっていると、その段落の内容が理解できない。

11．私は日本語の読み物（漫画・インターネット・教科書・小説など）をすべて同じ様に読んでいる。

English translation:

1．I always read every character（kanji, *okurigana*, etc.）

2．I read out loud to improve my reading.

3．I say all the words when I read.

4．I can understand Japanese better when I read it very slowly.

5．If I don't know the kanji, I always stop and look it up in the dictionary.

6．I should study Japanese grammar more.

7．I should memorize more kanji.

8．When I read in Japanese, I can't understand the meaning if there is one kanji that I don't know.

9．When I read in Japanese, I can't understand well when I don't know the *yomi-kata* of a kanji.

10．If there are several unknown words in a paragraph, I can't understand the meaning of the paragraph.

11．Anything I read, whether manga, the internet, a textbook or a novel, I read in the same way.