

INSTRUMENTAL MOTIVATION AND READING SKILLS IN EFL AT TOTTORI UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

In a previous edition of this publication, the author reported on the current findings in second language reading research and the situation in Japanese universities in general (Sargent, 1992). The present study is based in part upon those findings. For the reader's convenience, the first section of this paper is a brief summary of the findings of that research. A discussion of Tottori University General Education students is also presented to provide additional, more specific data on the context of this study. This study attempts to compare the relative effectiveness of the instrumental motivation of learners, with inherently motivating activities in EFL reading classes, by comparing the results of a straightforward comprehension-based approach with a more innovative reading-skills program. The relative effectiveness of the programs is to be determined by the results of a reading ability pretest and posttest designed specifically for this study. The reading skills program was expected to provide better results because this program was expected to use more inherently interesting activities that would engage students' interest in classroom activities to a greater extent than the comprehension-based approach. In addition, these activities would be reading skills designed specifically to improve their general reading ability. The results are not unequivocal. This is partly because of shortcomings in the design of the study. Nevertheless, the results do show that both programs were effective, suggesting that the use of instrumental motivation should not be overlooked as a useful ally in syllabus planning, and may be combined with both reading skills and extensive reading programs.

PART I BACKGROUND

A. Summary of Research Findings

In discussing the English language needs and wants of Japanese university students, Sargent (1992) concluded that while all four skills need to be addressed, from a practical point of view, students will most likely be using their written skills more than their oral language skills.

Thus, it appears appropriate that even though there is a general call across the nation in many educational circles for increased oral language skill instruction, reading and writing instruction should not be excessively subordinated to this otherwise overdue movement. If the reading ability of students is generally intermediate, then it should be feasible to teach a reading skills program that aims at helping students transfer their Japanese reading skills into English. Finally, the focus of reading research and pedagogy is on the learner, and thus it is appropriate to consider a learner-centered pedagogical approach.

B. Tottori University General Education Faculty Students

During the first semester of 1992, the English Department of the Faculty of General Education conducted a survey of all 1242 second year students in the faculty (Ikadatsu et al., 1992). In the 994 valid responses it was found that a majority of students reported that they would prefer to study oral skills in English as opposed to reading and writing skills. However, this attitude is not reflected in student behavior. While English is a compulsory subject, it is possible for students to substitute the core reading classes ("A" course) with oral communication courses ("B" course). However, the former are fully attended while the latter are sometimes under-subscribed. While students expressed a disdain for literature, they reported that their preferred choice of reading matter was novels, 28.3%, light essays, 18.3%, or cultural topics, 17.3%. Such results suggest that students at Tottori University share the same lack of clear purpose characteristic of Japanese university students in general (Sargent, 1992).

In recent discussions with Tottori University students the author has learned that although many high school students aspire to be admitted to a university such as Tottori University, it is not unusual for the students who are eventually admitted to also carry a sense of disappointment. The reason for this is that virtually all university students in Japan hold out hopes, nurtured in high school, of being admitted to a more prominent institution than the one they finally enter. Students are encouraged to aim high—indeed beyond their reach in many cases—in order to be admitted to the most distinguished institution possible. Some, undoubtedly, are able to breathe a sigh of relief, however, many harbor the feeling that they deserved better.

Although students spend their first two years in General Education, they are still identified with the faculty they will eventually graduate from. Thus, classes are organized by faculty. English classes usually comprise about 60 students of mixed proficiency. A few students seem

to have a considerably better grasp of English than most, and a few have a rather poor grasp. By far the majority could be described as pre-intermediate to intermediate in their reading ability.

Students are enrolled in many more courses and spend much more time in classes here than students in Western universities. In fact, their weekly timetable is more like that of a high school student. On top of that, they also spend a great deal of time involved in club activities. And, like their Western counterparts, they often hold down part time jobs as well. Thus, students in their first two years of General Education have only a limited amount of time outside classes for independent study. The net result is that each particular course receives limited attention beyond the classroom.

C. Motivation

Views on the role of motivation in second and foreign language learning have been varied and mixed. However, most commentators agree on one point; this is one of the single most important factors in determining the success or failure of language students.¹

Although the word *motivation* is intuitively appealing, it has proved rather difficult to quantify and study in terms of its effects on language learning. One of the most useful ways of discussing motivation in the language learning context is the *integrative/instrumental* dichotomy (Gardner and Lambert, 1972). *Instrumental* motivation refers to motivation to learn a language as a means toward achieving certain goals, such as furthering a career, reading technical material or meeting an educational requirement. *Integrative* motivation on the other hand refers to the desire to integrate and identify with the target language culture. While some studies have pointed to the superiority of one kind of motivation over the other, other studies have found the opposite (Brown 1987, 116 and Larsen-Freeman and Long 1991, 173). Needless to say, both forms of motivation have been shown to have considerable influence on the learning outcome.

An earlier paradigm forwarded on the motivation conundrum is the *intrinsic/extrinsic* dichotomy. Here, the dichotomy refers to the difference between motivation that generally stems from within the individual, and motivation which is seen as driven largely by factors external. Philosophically, it is possible to argue that all motivation, by definition, must come from within. That is, that perhaps with the exception of the most extreme forms of coercion—akin to torture—no pressure from outside can affect a person's behavior unless the person

agrees to allow it to have such influence. And thus, the motivation is no longer external, but has become internalized by the act of choosing. However, for practical purposes, it is useful to distinguish between the kind of motivation that emerges naturally on its own, and the kind of motivation that is initially prompted by external, usually social, factors.

These four components can be arranged in a matrix adapted from Kathleen Bailey (1986) as in the figure below:

	INTRINSIC	EXTRINSIC
Integrative	L2 learner wishes to integrate with the L2 culture (e. g., for immigration or marriage)	Someone else wishes the L2 learner to know the L2 for integrative reasons (e. g., parents in Japan send their children to an English language International school)
Instrumental	L2 learner wishes to achieve goals utilizing L2 (e. g., for a career)	External power wants L2 learner to learn L2 (e. g. corporation sends Japanese businessman to U.S. for language training)

With few exceptions, students here, as one would expect in most EFL settings, will belong to the instrumental category. What is not so clear, however, is how much students are intrinsically motivated, and how much they are extrinsically motivated. In all likelihood, these two labels are not so much separate categories as ends of a continuum with individual students located somewhere in between, depending upon their particular blend of these two characteristics.

Evidence of intrinsic motivation in the classroom is difficult to substantiate. Students have reported that they would very much like to have a good grasp of English. They have stated that they would study English even if it were not required. However, this more global attitude does not necessarily translate into intrinsically motivated students in the classroom. All through high school, students have been exposed to an examination-passing oriented education system. Unless they already have a genuine intrinsic interest in English, it is surely unrealistic, then, to expect them to suddenly discover some inner desire to better their English upon entering university. Probably students' most immediate need is to pass the course—a clear case of instrumental motivation.

Although Rod Ellis (1993) observes that language teachers cannot really do very much to influence learners' instrumental or integrative motivation, teachers are able to have influence over how much the in-class activities are *inherently* motivating. That is, teachers are able to

design the activities themselves, in ways that may encourage students to actively participate in procedures which are inherently engaging. This does not refer to an additional form of motivation, but rather to a way of designing and describing classroom activities.

On the one hand this could be interpreted as teachers taking on the additional role of entertainer—something they may have neither the desire nor the training for. On the other hand, this could provide the opportunity for teachers to be creative in the way they present activities. Thus, it is fair to say that in all likelihood, most students at Tottori University are more or less *instrumentally* motivated, while teachers endeavor to make their lessons as *inherently* motivating as possible.

PART II. THE STUDY

A. Overview

The purpose of this study is limited to general findings only and is not intended to reach a definitive conclusion on any one variable. The objective is to compare the efficacy of two different programs. One program would be based on the assumption that because students are mostly motivated instrumentally, they will readily engage in general reading activities that contribute directly to their passing a course. The other course would be based on the assumption that students would engage in meaningful and interesting tasks that have minimal value in contributing toward their passing the course, if they are sufficiently inherently motivating. These tasks would also be designed to help them read better in English. Thus a parallel assumption would be that students would actually improve more in this program because such tasks could be made more in line with the results of reading improvement research, reported by Sargent (1992), and students could take greater advantage of them because they would enlist greater active participation. The point of the study is to determine the relative effectiveness of these two programs by assessing the amount of improvement students make in their reading ability as a result of participating in the programs, as measured by the difference between their pretest and posttest results.

In the first course, students would have to read in order fulfill the requirements that would be graded and which would contribute to their passing the course. In the other course students would be offered lessons designed to be inherently interesting while also improving their reading ability. Here, participation would not be assessed or used in determining grades for the

course—thus removing the instrumental factor. Although strictly speaking, both groups are experimental, for the sake of convention, the former was labeled the control group and the latter the experimental group. The former group was chosen to be labeled the control group because the procedure in this class more closely follows the procedure in many reading text books. Preparation for this class would therefore be minimal. On the other hand, the procedure in the second class is more innovative, and—especially in this context—better suits being described experimental. Preparation for this class would be much more complex, as each week's work would depend a lot on feedback from the previous week's work.

Regarding appropriate content and material, for the control class, something with reading passages and comprehension questions which could be easily marked right or wrong was chosen. Students would be basically reading in order to answer questions in order to score points in order to pass the course. Any improvement in reading would result simply from the practice of reading sufficiently well to answer comprehension questions, with no reference to specific skills, strategies or techniques.

For the experimental group, however, a reading skills program would be taught. It was assumed that a reading skills program could be made more innovative and interesting in contrast to the rather straightforward kinds of comprehension exercises in the control class.

On the surface, then, the study may appear to be comparing the relative effectiveness of two different kinds of reading programs. However, the reason for choosing these two kinds of programs rests not only upon review of second language reading research, but also upon an analysis of the role of motivation in the EFL setting.

Preparation for the experimental group would be much more involved in the planning stages of this study as well as during each week of teaching. What follows is an overview of the development of this program.

It was deemed important to work in a way that had students balancing their top-down and bottom-up processing skills in order to encourage the interactive process as much as possible. Given the limited time available, it was decided to focus more on students' formal schemata development, as this is something that they can more readily transfer to subjects of their particular interest or focus. Some activities would be done to help students activate their content schemata for some readings, but this would not be central to the reading instruction. When working with the development of students' formal schemata for English passages, the attempt would be made to focus on some of the more basic skills to begin with and then move

toward patterns of organization near the end of the program.

For the other side of the interactive process—bottom-up processing—not too much class time would be devoted to overtly drawing attention to the linguistic characteristics of the text. Students have already covered a great deal of this in high school. Indeed, their high school experience of reading in English has already been so weighted toward bottom-up skills it is possible to exploit this situation by redressing the balance with an overt emphasis on top-down skills. In the Course of Study issued by the Education Ministry there is very little guidance offered for reading instruction apart from the goal of comprehension. Intensive reading and rapid reading are mentioned with no further explanation (Ministry of Education, Science and Culture, Government of Japan, 1983). There is no provision for reading skills instruction in the teaching of Japanese either. Thus, it can be assumed that in the reading process, they would be experiencing the interactive process as they put their linguistic knowledge into practice. Nevertheless, two other components to deal with issues of English grammar would be built in. First of all, the instructor would always be available as a resource for any students who needed assistance, and secondly students would be working in groups so they would be able to assist each other when necessary.

Although there would be a risk of trying to squeeze too much into the program, work with speeded reading and automaticity, and schematic mapping would also be included. One of the hallmarks of a mature reader is the ability to read quickly, and thus it deserves a place in the program as it can be utilized with the teaching of several of the skills as well. Schematic mapping could easily be the focus of a study in itself. It provides the opportunity for students to think more deeply about what they have read and also to create a representation of the reading that is not too demanding linguistically. Thus, students are able to represent their reading in a way that does not turn a reading lesson into a writing lesson. This alone could also provide the instructor with ongoing feedback on how well students were comprehending the texts they were dealing with. With about sixty students in each group, this also would allow me to monitor their work in a time-effective way.

In order to minimize the number of variables in the study, the same text would be used for both classes, though students would be working with it in entirely different ways. As stated earlier, it isn't possible to know precisely how students will be using English in the future, but it was assumed that they would be using more reading and writing than speaking. Something with general human interest that might correspond more closely to Widdows and Voller's

(1992) *light reading* category seemed most appropriate.

Given the limited time that classes would be meeting every week, it seemed wise to also find something that would minimize their efforts needed to adjust to different writing styles and subjects; in other words, something that could be considered to be fulfilling Krashen's (1981) description of "narrow reading." This also suggests finding something that maintained somewhat the same genre so that it would not be a major task every week to activate students' schemata on the subject. Rather, after an initial adjustment period, hopefully, students would know the kinds of things they would be reading about from week to week. This could free up more of their attention to work on the reading process itself.

Reading specialists have stated that it is very important to have an extensive reading component to any reading program. All the classroom instruction in reading can come together in the extensive reading component as reinforcement and practice. Indeed one of the most viable reading programs would be one where the extensive reading component would be at the core and classroom instruction would primarily be there to support it. However, it was eventually decided not to include an extensive reading component in this program. There were two main reasons for this decision. The first had to do with logistics. The library here at Tottori University at present does not have sufficient English language books to support such an enterprise. Setting up a small library from my office proved to be too impractical at this stage, though in future that is a real possibility. The second reason was that it is not possible to be certain about how much reading out of class students would be likely to engage in. Students already have a heavy timetable of classes, club activities, and part time jobs and it seems unlikely that many students would be willing to give up much of their precious free time reading something in English for pleasure.

B. Design

As stated earlier, this study was intended to be exploratory in nature as opposed to attempting to come to a definitive conclusion about the effects of any one variable. There were too many variables between the control group and the experimental group, beyond an experimenter's control, to warrant such experimental rigor. Classes met once a week for 100 minutes, and each class also met for the same amount of time with a Japanese teacher also teaching reading. It would be impossible to claim that differences between the control and experimental group were exclusively the result of one teacher's treatments alone, as each class

also had a different Japanese teacher teaching different material.

Two first year ("A" course) classes from the same faculty—Engineering—were chosen to be used as the experimental and control groups. The first class of 62 students met at 8:40 on Tuesdays and this became the control group. The second class of 56 students met at 1:10 on Wednesdays and this became the experimental group. The reading text chosen—*Famous Personalities* by Fieg, (1988)—seemed appropriate to their level as well as their interests. This is a book about the lives of American movie stars, singers, and sports personalities, with comprehension questions following each chapter. In short, the control group would be given the task of working through the exercises in the textbook, and the experimental group would use the readings in the book in a variety of other ways in accordance with a reading skills program.

Many aspects of the classes were organized in similar ways. On the first day of class, a course outline was given out to point out the organizational aspects of the course and the goals of the course, and then students sat the pretest. They were to work in groups of three and complete an assignment each week which would be evaluated and the grade recorded. Collectively these grades would account for 50% of their final grade, with the rest of their grade coming from a test—in this case the posttest—and class participation. Each group had one notebook to record their weekly project and rotated the responsibility of secretary.

In other ways the classes were completely different. The control group classes followed a set routine. At the beginning of the class, groups exchanged notebooks, then the class would be guided through the list of questions that comprised the previous week's assignment with students calling out their answers and marking the notebooks in front of them. The number of correct answers would be totaled and then the notebooks returned. Any misunderstandings were sorted out and finally the notebooks were collected and their grades recorded. The next personality to be studied would be briefly introduced and then students would begin work on the next assignment. If they did not finish answering the questions by the end of the class, they automatically had homework to do before the next week's class. While they were working on each assignment the instructor circulated and gave assistance as needed and also conducted interviews with groups to discuss their work.

Students were assigned to mixed proficiency groups based upon the results of the pretest, such that each three person group consisted of one superior student, one average student and one weak student. Students were ranked from top to bottom first, and then three lists were

made. The first list was the top one third of the students, the second list the middle third of the students and the third list the bottom third of the students. From here, the first from each list were put into one group, the second from each list into the next group etc. That is, from a class of 60 or so students, students #1, #20 and #40 were in one group. The rationale for this came from Grabe (1991) where he advocated the use of cooperative learning, discussed earlier (Sargent, 1992). This specific method of making up groups comes from Daniel Fader (1976).

The procedure in each experimental group class was organized around the particular reading skill that was the focus of that particular lesson. Although some of the questions from the book were used sometimes, it was only in a specific way in order to give practice with a particular reading skill—such as skimming or scanning. In the experimental group, instead of assigning students to their three person groups according to their proficiency, students were allowed to make up their own groups.² While students in the control group class spent a good deal of time working on their assignment in class, in the experimental class, a lot of time in every class was spent working together intensively on some particular reading skill, with a relatively short project assigned at the end of the class to be begun in class and if not completed, then finished as homework. This assignment was usually designed to reinforce the reading skill covered in the lesson. In the control group class, assignments were given a discrete point score based on the number of right or wrong answers, but in the experimental class, assignments were usually given a letter grade.

Here is an outline of the 12-class, one-semester curriculum for the experimental group class:

- 1 . Orientation, give out class outline and give pretest.
- 2 . Previewing
- 3 . Predicting
- 4 . Schematic Mapping—level one
- 5 . Finding the Topic and Main Idea and continue Schematic Mapping
- 6 . It is not necessary to read every word: Speeded Reading and Mapping level two
- 7 . Scanning
- 8 . Patterns of Organization 1—Listing, and Time Order
- 9 . Patterns of Organization 2—Cause and Effect, and Comparison
10. Skimming for the four patterns
11. Skimming and Summarizing

12. Posttest

The first two classes on previewing and predicting served the dual purpose of providing practice with these techniques in English, and also familiarizing students with a way of working that they were most likely used to in Japanese, but not in English. For previewing, some prepared texts were introduced and after a brief explanation of the reasons for previewing and the steps involved, students were given the opportunity to preview the texts for very short periods of time and then they answered yes/no questions about the text. They were pleasantly surprised to find out how much they could understand and answer with such brief but focused exposure to the text. They were then assigned a unit from the text, given a few minutes to preview it and then required to answer the series of yes/no questions from the text. Again students could see how much they were able to grasp in a very short period of time.

With predicting, students were shown some pictures before having to predict what they thought would happen next. Following that, students were given a series of headlines and they predicted what the stories were about. Moving to the textbook, a story about a famous person was selected and students were asked to make five questions about the story that they expected to be answered in the story. The instructor circulated and offered assistance and then had them go ahead and read the story and then answer their own questions as best they could.

Along with the various reading skills we were going to be practicing, students were instructed in the use of schematic mapping (Hanf, 1971) as a way of deepening their comprehension of what they were reading as well as giving them a useful device that they could apply to their studies in Japanese. In this first class with mapping, students simply found the topic of the text and wrote this in a box in the middle of a page and then put the key points of the story in boxes surrounding the topic. The usefulness of this practice was explained and a model map on one of the readings covered in the previous class was offered. Most students noted this down and then went on to making a map of the next assigned reading.

The idea of topics and main ideas were introduced in this graphic way and then students went on to do some more practice with simply listing the topic and main idea of a passage. Most students could do this fairly easily, but others had a great deal of difficulty and groups were called upon to help each other with this task while I also circulated and offered assistance. Finally, another chapter from the text was chosen and students, working in their groups, produced another map showing only the topic and the main ideas surrounding this topic—level 1 mapping.

The idea that it isn't necessary to read each and every word in order to understand what the text is about was introduced in the next lesson. This was intended to reinforce the experience that students had had with previewing by giving them cloze texts to read where words had been deliberately deleted and then doing an oral comprehension exercise. Once again students had limited time to read the passage and then answer questions. Most of them were able to see for themselves how much they could grasp from a text where they weren't able to know what every word was. It was hoped that this would also boost their confidence in reading materials in English too rapidly to do formal translations into Japanese and yet be able to see that they grasped the key points. Following this exercise, the idea of schematic mapping onto level 2 mapping was developed. This meant including some of the important details around the key points. The next reading in the text was assigned and students made a level 2 map of it.

The seventh class was devoted to scanning. This was another exercise in having students work quickly with a text without translating or reading every word. Students were given an initial introductory explanation of the procedure and its rationale, and then given some prepared texts with which they were to work as rapidly as they could to find the answers to questions called out by the instructor. This was followed by a similar activity using their text book. I began asking questions about characters in the book at random and had groups compete with each other to find the answer first. Students became very involved with this game-like activity. Groups then worked with other groups to continue the procedure with smaller numbers of students. Their previous weeks' work with mapping showed that too few students had a workable grasp of how to use it, and so the class finished off with an explanation of some of the shortcomings of their previous maps. Students were then assigned a new reading from their text to be mapped.

The next three classes were devoted to looking at patterns of textual organization. In the first class, time-order and listing patterns were dealt with and in the next class, cause-effect and comparison were covered. Students were given minimal introduction to these concepts and a rationale for the usefulness of knowing the predominant pattern of a passage. After that, they did some examples with the whole class before being assigned related exercises from their reading text. This actually proved to be one of the most difficult tasks to do and was met with only limited success. Only a few groups were able to accurately identify the patterns of the passages assigned and show the markers which indicated which pattern was in use. Most of the passages assigned contained parts of more than one pattern, although there was always one

clear pattern which predominated.

In the next lesson, skimming was introduced by practicing skimming passages to identify their predominant pattern. With simple and short passages of no more than three or four sentences, this proved to be no obstacle, but with longer more complex passages, many students were clearly becoming overwhelmed, while others were able to identify the patterns with little difficulty. The students worked with some fairly short and simple paragraphs to begin with, and then skimmed them for a limited time before summing them up in one sentence. The reading was not a problem, but usually students chose the topic sentence of the paragraph as the summary. In some cases this was adequate but in others it was clearly not enough.

In the last class before the summer break students from both groups sat the posttest and filled out a survey. Both the survey and its results are shown in the Results section below.

The pretests and posttests were developed as parallel tests.³ The first exercise in each test was a multiple choice cloze activity designed to check for the presence of prediction skills with the pretest and for the development of these skills in the posttest. The second exercise was a multiple choice comprehension test to assess reading comprehension ability. The third exercise was an editing task where students had to cross out the extra words I had added to various parts of each sentence in the passage. In order to do this successfully, readers must be able to grasp the text not only on the sentence level, but also on the discourse level. This exercise therefore tests students' ability to grasp the cohesion of the passage. None of these exercises were the same as activities we were doing in either class.

It is practically impossible to design a pretest and posttest that are absolutely identical in terms of difficulty, but it is necessary to try to make them as close as possible. I conducted an independent examination with a class outside this study to compare the degree of difficulty of the two tests. The results indicated they were not significantly different for the purposes of this study.

C. Results

The average scores for the two classes on the pretest and posttest are summarized in table 1 below.

These results are remarkable for the degree of similarity between the two groups. There is no significant difference in their average pretest scores, posttest scores, or the difference

TABLE 1
AVERAGE SCORES FOR PRETEST AND POSTTEST

	Control Group				Experimental Group			
	Ex.1	Ex.2	Ex.3	Total	Ex.1	Ex.2	Ex.3	Total
Pretest	$\frac{3.2}{20}$	$\frac{3.4}{20}$	$\frac{5.0}{30}$	16.6%	$\frac{3.5}{20}$	$\frac{3.7}{20}$	$\frac{5.4}{30}$	18%
Posttest	$\frac{12.3}{20}$	$\frac{10.3}{20}$	$\frac{5.7}{30}$	40.4%	$\frac{12.7}{20}$	$\frac{10.4}{20}$	$\frac{5.5}{30}$	40.9%
Change	$+\frac{9.1}{20}$	$+\frac{6.9}{20}$	$+\frac{0.7}{30}$	+23.8%	$+\frac{9.2}{20}$	$+\frac{6.7}{20}$	$+\frac{0.1}{20}$	+22.9%

between the two tests for the two groups. The average scores for each exercise show the same high degree of similarity. The experimental group shows no significant improvement over the control group. In fact, the control group shows slightly more improvement, but again the difference is not big enough to show a real difference. What is significant, however, is the degree of improvement that both groups showed.

Table 1 above, shows the differences in the average scores of the classes. It is also interesting to note, however, how well many individuals had improved their scores from the pretest to the posttest. Tables 2 and 3 below show the number of students on the vertical axis and the number of points they improved on between their pretest and the posttest scores on the horizontal axis for the control group and experimental group respectively. These tables show the amount of change made by the students who made the greatest improvement in their posttest scores over their pretest scores. The rest of the students improved on their pretest scores by only fourteen points or less. These tables should reveal the number of students who were able to grasp and utilize the reading skills instruction best.

However, as these tables show, it is not possible to conclude that any individuals from the experimental group actually outperformed anyone in the control group. In fact, the tables show that 70% of all the control group improved by 15 points or more, while 64% of all the experimental group improved by the same margin. In addition, 32% of the control group improved by more than twenty points while only 22% of the experimental group improved by a similar margin.

In addition to the tests, students were given the following survey, the results of which are summarized beneath it.

TABLE 2
POINTS DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
PRETEST AND POSTTEST: CONTROL GROUP

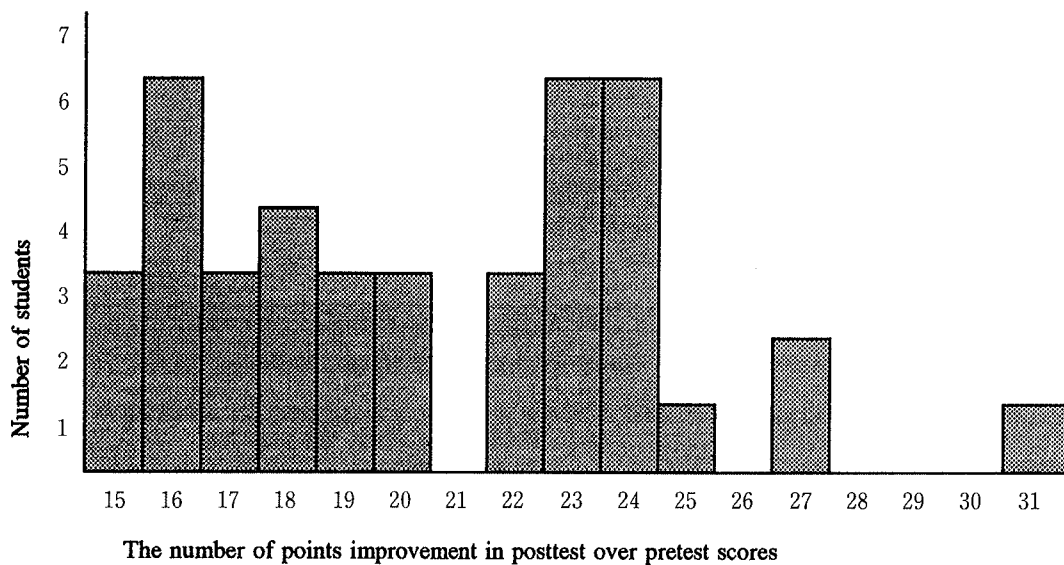
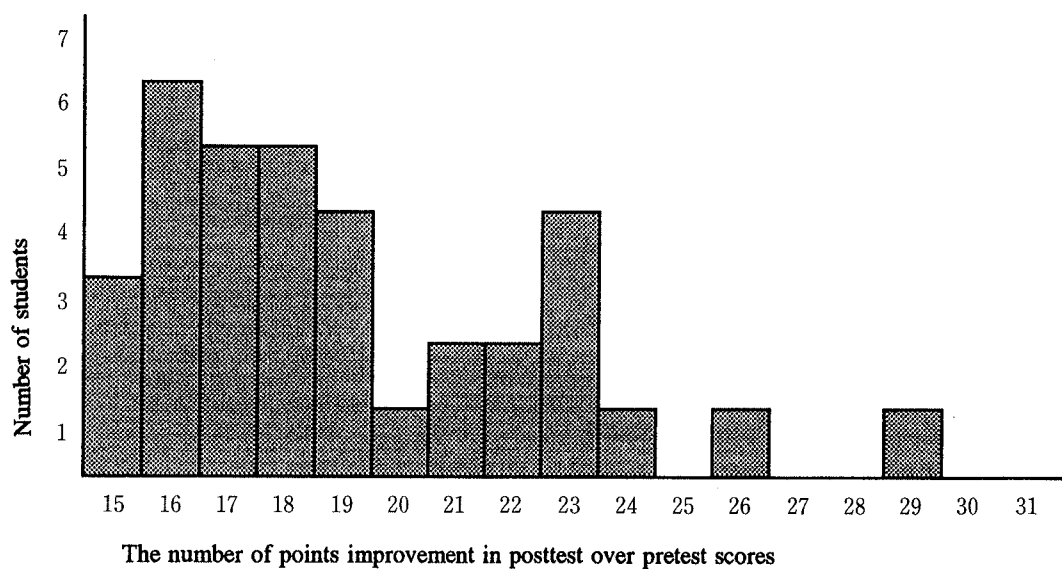


TABLE 3
POINTS DIFFERENCE BETWEEN
PRETEST AND POSTTEST: EXPERIMENTAL GROUP



Survey

- 1 . From this course, my reading in English has become faster.
- 2 . Now I know more about *how* I read in English.
- 3 . After I graduate and begin work, I will probably need to read and write more than speak in English.
- 4 . I am enjoying reading about famous people.
- 5 . The weekly notebook assignments are too long.
- 6 . By working in a group I am learning more than if I was working on my own.
- 7 . I would like to practice *speaking* in English more than *reading* in English.
- 8 . If English was not a compulsory subject, I would still choose to study it.
- 9 . I am enjoying this class.

The statements in the survey were translated into Japanese to facilitate students' comprehension and to make it as easy and simple as possible for students to respond, in order, hopefully, to make it more representative of their genuine feelings and thoughts. The test results are remarkable for the similarities they show between the two classes, but here these survey results (Tables 4 and 5) point up some significant differences between the two classes. The first statement shows that the experimental group generally thought that their reading speed had made significantly more progress than did the control group. Similarly, the experi-

TABLE 4
SURVEY RESULTS: CONTROL GROUP

	strongly agree	agree	midly agree	TOTAL AGREE	TOTAL DISAGREE	midly disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
1	3%	19%	37%	59%	41%	14%	27%	
2		5%	48%	53%	47%	22%	25%	
3	5%	24%	11%	40%	60%	19%	32%	9 %
4	21%	41%	27%	89%	11%	6%	3%	2 %
5	2%	5%	14%	21%	79%	28%	48%	3 %
6	16%	30%	22%	68%	32%	14%	18%	
7	22%	29%	27%	78%	22%	14%	8%	
8	18%	38%	25%	81%	19%	8%	8%	3 %
9	27%	52%	21%	100%	0%			

TABLE 5
SURVEY RESULTS: EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

	strongly agree	agree	midly agree	TOTAL AGREE	TOTAL DISAGREE	midly disagree	disagree	strongly disagree
1		18%	56%	74%	26%	9%	13%	4%
2	9%	26%	44%	79%	21%	6%	13%	2%
3	19%	17%	7%	43%	57%	13%	42%	2%
4	11%	24%	44%	79%	21%	10%	11%	
5	8%	13%	13%	34%	66%	28%	23%	15%
6	9%	38%	28%	75%	25%	19%	6%	
7	17%	20%	33%	70%	30%	21%	9%	
8	19%	26%	20%	65%	35%	17%	11%	7%
9	15%	61%	17%	93%	7%	6%		1%

mental group also reported a greater degree of metacognitive awareness of what they were doing as they read. The results for the fourth statement seem to indicate that more students in the control group found the reading text interesting, and the results for statement eight seem to point to there being more students in the control group who were interested in studying English than in the experimental group. The results for the last statement seem to support the view that more students in the control group enjoyed the class as a whole too. The third statement was included in order to compare the views of these particular students with the views of other students reported earlier. Students seem to be fairly evenly divided on this issue, though more seem to think they will be using their speaking skills rather than their reading and writing skills in their future careers. The seventh statement was similarly included to gauge the students' relative desire for spoken and written English. Slightly more students in the control group agreed with this statement, but given their relatively stronger degree of agreement, it seems that there are more students in the experimental group who are simply ambivalent about studying English in any form. The responses to the fifth statement seem to indicate clearly that both groups had little difficulty with the amount of work assigned each week. In retrospect, and beyond any intention on my part, the control group probably had more work to do outside the class than the experimental group. Finally, the sixth statement was designed to give me some direct feedback on how students viewed the effectiveness of their work in groups. Students completed this survey anonymously and while still seated in a test formation—no two students sitting adjacent to each other—so these results are probably fairly

free of peer influence. It is worth noting that it was the class which formed its own groups that came out more strongly in favor of the effectiveness of the groups. However, both classes came out overwhelmingly in favor of working in groups.

D. Discussion

The results do not substantially support the reading skills program as initially expected. The experimental group showed virtually the same degree of improvement as the control group. Individually, none of the students in the experimental group showed an improvement in the posttest result greater than students in the control group. In addition, the experimental group showed no greater enthusiasm for this kind of instruction either. The only result that seems to come out clearly in favor of the experimental group is their own self report on their improved speed and greater awareness of how they read in English. Before looking at that result, however, it is worthwhile to look at other factors which may have played a part in the results.

Clearly, one major drawback in this study is the assumption that an innovative reading skills program would be inherently more motivating than the control group activities. The control group activities appear to have been more inherently motivating than expected, and the experimental group activities were less motivating than expected. In effect, this result means that this study can no longer really be considered a comparison between two different kinds of motivation, but rather a comparison between two different reading programs. As such, it still provides much useful information.

The time span of this study has probably played the most significant role in determining the lack of difference between the results.⁴ A twelve week semester, with only ten weeks of instruction, and classes meeting for 100 minutes once a week is simply not enough time for a skills oriented program to be significantly effective—especially with no extensive reading or voluntary reading to support it. Nearly all the students in the control group and most students in other classes outside this study were interviewed during the semester, and virtually no students do any reading in English on their own outside the assigned work at university. In other words, there is no real opportunity for the skills learned in class to become second-nature in their reading in English. Every skill presented in class was practiced in an intensive session in class, but this may not be sufficient for students to really *own* the skill.

Along the same lines, it appears that time constraints on the tests could easily have worked

against students who were trying to consciously apply skills they had practiced in class. In all likelihood, students simply fell back upon whatever strategies they have put together over the past six years of instruction in high school. This would explain the remarkable similarity in scores by the two groups. The differences between the pretest and posttest contexts may provide another explanation altogether. For example, the pretest was given on their very first day of classes with me during their first week of classes at the university and with all the newness and distractions, they may well have under-performed. The posttest by contrast was given after they had the opportunity to become more accustomed to their classes and also was to be used for credit for the course, encouraging them to do their level best.

Another contributing factor to the lack of difference between the groups could be that perhaps there were simply more students genuinely interested in English in the control group, as the survey results for the eighth statement suggests. This factor may have counteracted any small degree of greater improvement on the part of the experimental group. It was this writer's opinion about the two classes that the atmosphere in the control group class was more pleasant and conducive to study than in the experimental group class. More students in the experimental group class made only minimal efforts at participating in class work than in the control group. It is interesting to note here that it was the control group, which did not make up its own groups and which showed slightly less enthusiasm in the groups, as the results from the sixth statement in the survey indicate, which exhibited a more favorable learning climate. The time-of-day of the classes may also have had something to do with this.

It is meaningful to look also at the issue of the relative effectiveness of the control group program. The results of this study are inconclusive, but still it is impossible not to notice the effectiveness of a program where students' passing a course is contingent upon their being able to read passages sufficiently well to be able to answer set comprehension questions. This shows that such a program seems to be at least as effective as a skills oriented program. It does appear that there were more students in this group who were motivated to improve their English, but still the results of the survey also indicate that there were also no students at the other end who seemed disaffected by this approach. It was expected, that the experimental group would have a favorable impression of the class, because every effort was made to make it interesting as well as effective. It was also expected that students would be able to apply some of what they worked on in these classes, in their other subjects in Japanese, and therefore for them to experience the relevance of the instruction directly. The control group was not

expected to report comparable enjoyment with the class. In face to face interviews with students of this group, very few reported an interest in reading in English, or in regularly reading anything in English. Their frankness and openness on this point was more than a little surprising. Considering this, it was expected that their honest feelings expressed in a more anonymous survey would reveal more ambivalence toward this class. It seems, however, that this kind of class was actually quite appealing to students. This will be an area to examine in the future and to try and determine what it was that was appealing about this class. It seems that as much as the popularity of the control group approach was underestimated, the degree of interest shown in the reading skills approach was overestimated.

Perhaps one of the shortcomings of the reading skills program was that it was—for the students—unusual and unpredictable. These students, not only had to deal with trying to practice several different skills, but also had to try and make sense of them. On the other hand, the students in the control group had the benefit of a highly predictable and repetitive program where they knew exactly what was expected of them each week. Most likely, the control program would have been the more familiar one for students. Whatever this program lacked in novelty, it made up for in security. Students in the control group were able to experience more success with their particular activities and more of a sense of completion each week. However, this was not always the case for the experimental group. They did not always grasp what was expected of them and must have had to deal with more feelings of frustration as a result.

This appraisal is not intended as a criticism of innovation in this context, but rather a warning that it may have important side effects that need to be taken into consideration when planning such developments. By the same token, this is not intended to be blanket support for the status quo either. Certainly the research reviewed earlier suggests improved teaching methods in the classroom. Yet, it may not be necessary to change everything.

It is worth noting the self reports of the students in the experimental group about having become faster in their reading in English, and knowing more about how they read in English. Perhaps the experimental group did benefit from the reading skills program, yet not in ways that could be detected by the reading tests. The second statement in the survey is aimed at students' self report on a metacognitive ability that was only implicitly a part of the reading skills program. If indeed, students in the experimental group come away from the program with a heightened awareness of their reading process, then they come away with something

that may well be of lasting benefit for their reading ability in both English and Japanese.

E . Conclusion

This study has been approached from three different points of view, corresponding to the author's three distinct roles; student, teacher and researcher. This conclusion, then, will address three areas related to these three roles—(1) what has been learned from the study, (2) plans to further develop a reading program and (3) areas to research in the future.

(1) At the very least, it is possible to conclude that the teaching of reading skills was just as effective in helping students improve their reading ability as the control group approach. Students in the reading skills program reported a greater degree of metacognitive awareness of their reading.

Most of the assumptions about the student population—in this article above and in the study by Sargent (1992) it draws upon—have been more or less confirmed. The use of light reading material was received well, just as the group work proved equally popular. Though more students reported that they will probably need speaking skills more than written language skills, the results are not overwhelmingly in support of this view. In the absence of more reliable field data of what graduates actually do, the results of the JACET (1990) survey of graduates which indicates the significant predominance of reading and writing over speaking skills are the most tenable available. However there is one notable exception to prior assumptions made about students. They seem to be prepared to do far more work outside the classroom than given credit for.

Inevitably, it is impossible to ignore the significance of having final grades contingent upon class work. This seems to be quite acceptable to students and indeed welcome. Such an approach to teaching may not be ideal, yet seems quite realistic. Such a conclusion is not entirely unexpected though, as the very design of this study acknowledged the efficacy of an approach based upon instrumental motivation—in this case, learning in order to obtain an educational requirement. While grades and tests and assessment may have a limited role to play in language learning and can easily be detrimental to the process, in this context, the opportunity also exists for utilizing this situation to the students' advantage. That is to say, that given the results of research which has found instrumental motivation to produce highly favorable results, and the context here, it is not only reasonable and practical to design classroom activities to reflect this situation, but also a sound pedagogical decision.

(2) Although the results of this study do not suggest that the reading skills program significantly improved students' reading ability, neither do they suggest that such an approach should be abandoned. Indeed, there are clearly several areas of the program initiated which could be improved. Some of the skills taught in this program proved to be less than essential. Previewing and predicting are skills that students do not really seem to lack in reading English. Likewise their ability to skim and scan are not deficient and need not take up valuable class time. Speeded reading is perhaps something that could be incorporated quite separately and briefly into every class. Schematic mapping on the other hand is something that was not well developed by all students. Those who did develop this ability well were also the better readers. Probably their better reading allowed them to map better, rather than the other way around, and so at the very least this did provide an excellent means of gaining feedback on how well texts were comprehended by students. The very act of becoming better at schematic mapping, however, requires students to understand texts better anyway—leading to more practice in reading for understanding by those who need it most. Likewise, the ability to identify patterns of organization in texts was not grasped well by all students in the time devoted to this. It would seem wise in the future to devote more attention to developing this ability. It would be interesting to see how much better students could read after becoming proficient in both map making and identifying patterns of organization. Summarizing seemed to be a less effective way of encouraging students to deepen their comprehension of texts than schematic mapping and thus, is by no means indispensable.

In short, these findings suggest developing a way of working creatively with the kinds of skills most useful for students, in ways where their classroom participation counts toward their final grade for the course. One possible way of doing this would be to devote most of the class time to practicing a particular skill and then design an activity to assess their ability to use the skill and have this assessment count toward their final grade. In this way, the pressure is off students while they are encouraged to take risks in the practice stage, yet they are also encouraged to participate knowing that later they will be assessed on this ability. Another way of reducing the pressure on students would be to only count their best six performances out of the twelve for the semester.

Another direction to move in is to develop an extensive reading program. It was encouraging to see that students were actually not dismayed by the amount of time they had to spend on completing assignments after class if they were not able to complete them in class as

indicated in the results to the fifth statement in the survey. This suggests that an extensive reading program would be much more welcome than previously imagined. The logistics involved are not small however, though neither are they insurmountable.

(3) In terms of future research, then, it is not always going to be possible to teach such similar groups as this year to allow for comparable experimental groups and control groups. However, there are other ways of doing research. For example, Hatch and Farhady (1982) describe effective ways of doing quasi-experimental research without control groups. Much of what was gained from this study came directly from the survey given to students, in the form of qualitative data—another possibility for continued research.

It would be valuable, while changing and adapting a reading skills approach, to be able to record how effectively students were able to master each particular skill. The reading tests employed in this study do not reveal this information and were not designed to do so either. However, given that at least a reading skills program is viable, it would be possible to monitor the relative success of students with each skill along the lines suggested by Barnett (1989, 147-153). At the end of each course, a self report on just which skills students themselves found most beneficial could be elicited.

As noted above, this was intended to be an exploratory study to help gain a better understanding of what would be appropriate for this particular context. In that regard the study has been successful, for although the results are limited, certain directions have been endorsed for future research and teaching.

NOTES

1. Brown (1987, 114-117) provides an overview of research and commentary on the role of motivation in language learning, while Finocchiaro (1989, 42-52) and Stevick (1976, 48-49) provide practical and useful discussions of the issue. In terms of ESL/EFL reading, Eskey (1986, 3-4) offers a realistic framework for reading teachers, while Fransson (1984, 86-121) explores in depth the relationship between extrinsic and intrinsic motivation in relation to learning and test performance.
2. The case for letting students make up their own groups in college English classes in Japan has been made rather forcefully by McDonough (1990). This is in contrast to Fader (1976) who makes an equally strong claim for having teachers make up the groups. I wanted to try both ways and compare the results—especially affectively.
3. There were three exercises in each test, and the original reading passage that formed the basis of each

exercise, came from a different place. That is, exercise 1 in both tests came from the same text (Hill 1981); exercise 2 in both tests came from another source (Ramsay 1986); and exercise 3 in both tests came from a third location (Taniguchi and Hartley 1992). However, in each case the material was substantially reworked.

4. Grabe (1991, 379) notes that, "reading *develops gradually*; the reader does not become fluent suddenly or immediately following a reading development course. Rather, fluent reading is the product of long-term effort and gradual improvement." He goes on to point out that it cannot simply be taught in one or two courses.

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