Extensive Reading vs. Audio-Assisted Extensive Reading: A Comparison of Performance and Motivation

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Extensive Reading is gradually becoming an integral part of many university EFL curriculums across Japan. With the introduction of large online graded reader libraries and robust learning management systems, it is becoming easier and easier for students to gain access to extensive reading materials with audio support features. This study aims to explore the degree to which reading with audio support – Audio-assisted Extensive Reading (AR) – can affect student performance and motivation.

At the beginning of the 2021 academic year, 109 students were given a one-year license granting them access to the online graded reader library *Xreading.com.* In the first half of this study, students were asked to read a set number of graded readers over the course of the Spring semester, with the audio feature of Xreading turned on. They were then asked to complete a bilingual survey asking them to share their impressions on using this audio feature. Of the 109 students doing Xreading, 80 students participated in the survey. In the Fall semester, students were asked to continue reading graded readers on Xreading.com, this time with the audio support feature turned off. The Fall semester survey has yet to be conducted at the time of this writing.

Some of the preliminary quantitative results from the Spring survey are shown in figures 1 and 2 below.   Figure 1 shows the scaled responses to the question, "How effective do you think listening to the audio track while reading was in helping with the following items?". Ten language-learning-related items were listed. Figure 2 shows the scaled responses to the statement, "Reading along while listening to someone's voice…". Seven motivation-related items were listed.

With regard to AR's effects on performance (Figure 1), students seemed to feel that it was most effective in helping with "reading smoothly" (item b), "learning the pronunciation of a new word" (item e), and "remembering the pronunciation of a new word" (item f). These results make good sense given that fluency and pronunciation are most often associated with the oral/aural aspect of language. While most other items in the performance section of the survey bridged the "effective" and "somewhat effective" categories, it is interesting to note that many students seemed to feel that AR was "not very effective" or only "somewhat effective" in helping with "understanding new grammar points" (item g) or "remembering new grammar points" (item h). Again, this would seem to make good sense given a general
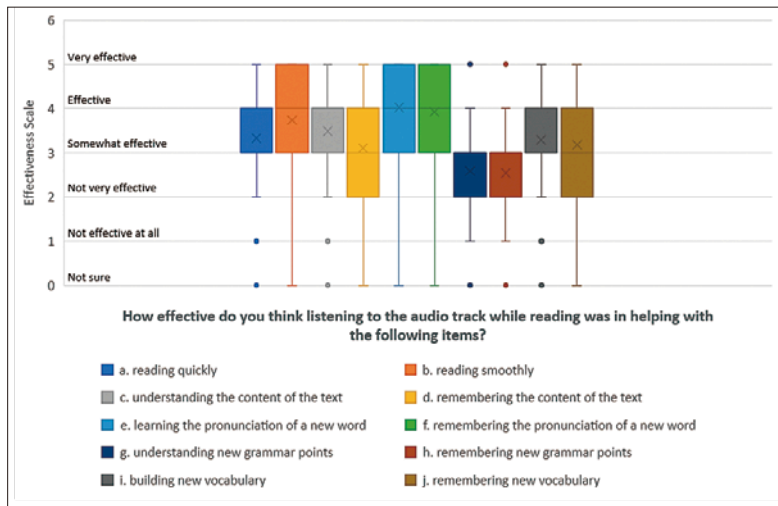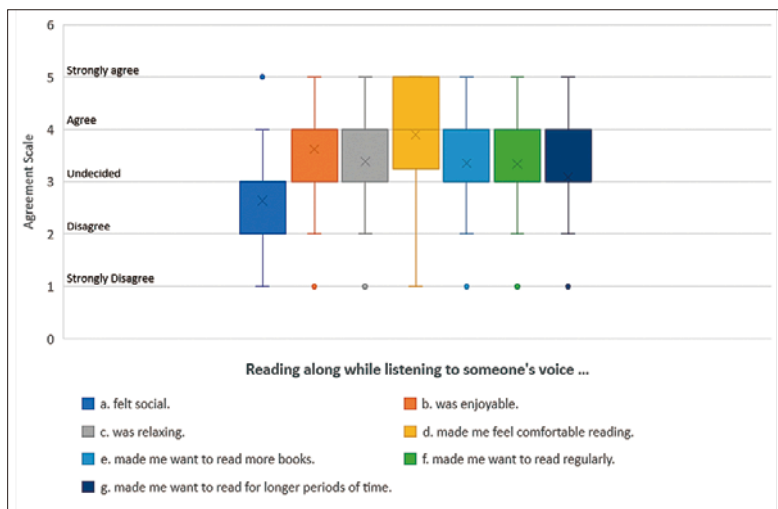
Figure 1：Effects on Performance

Figure 2：Effects on Motivation

tendency for students to associate the learning of grammar points with study approaches that favour a more "intensive" kind of reading, and are perhaps less focused on oral/aural aspects.

The preliminary results from the motivation section of the survey (Figure 2) also provide some interesting indications. Perhaps most surprising is the low agreement scores for "felt

social" (item a), which bridged the "undecided" and "disagree" categories. It might be expected that the more active nature of AR, especially in times of remote learning, could help students feel somewhat less solitary in their studies. However, this doesn't seem to be the case here. Also of note is the generally high agreement with "made me feel comfortable reading" (item d). It is unclear at this stage what specifically about AR is making students feel comfortable, however some comments in the qualitative section of the survey seem to indicate that listening while reading is "fun" and "helps us understand more easily". Finally, agreement for many of the motivation-related items tends towards the "undecided" level. It is perhaps possible that students' views will become clearer on this after completing the second survey in which they will compare a more typical Extensive Reading experience against what they did in the Spring semester with Audio-assisted Extensive Reading.

Overall, the preliminary results seem to indicate that Audio-assisted Extensive Reading may have a generally positive effect on students' performance in certain language-related areas. Comparison with the results of the Fall survey should help shed more light on the motivational aspects of AR.

研究所概要

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