

## Effects of extensive reading on reading attitudes in a foreign language

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### Abstract

Extensive reading (ER) is an instructional option steadily gaining support and recognition in second language (L2) reading pedagogy. Even though many attempts have been made to unravel the impact of ER on L2 development, there is a paucity of investigation into the affective domains of reading. The current study helps fill this gap by examining the effect of ER on L2 reading attitude. Participants were 61 undergraduates learning English as a foreign language at a Japanese university. Five attitudinal variables were measured using a 22-item questionnaire scored on a Likert scale in the categories of Comfort, Anxiety, Intellectual Value, Practical Value, and Linguistic Value. After the removal of Linguistic Value because of a ceiling effect, the result showed increases in Comfort and Intellectual Value and a decrease in Anxiety, with no effect on Practical Value. Implications for research and pedagogy are discussed.

**Keywords:** extensive reading, reading attitude, English as a foreign language, comfort, anxiety, value

Extensive reading (ER), an approach to reading pedagogy that encourages students to engage in a large amount of reading, is an instructional option that has been steadily gaining support and recognition in the field of second language (L2) reading pedagogy (e.g., Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2009; Grabe & Stoller, 2011). Sometimes called by alternative terms such as *pleasure reading*, *sustained silent reading*, *free voluntary reading* or *book flood*, ER “means reading in quantity and in order to gain a general understanding of what is read. It is intended to develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary and structure, and to encourage a liking for reading” (Richards & Schmidt, 2002, pp. 193–194). Although there are different ways of implementing ER in reading classes, those that incorporate ER best often operate under the following circumstances: a variety of reading materials are available on a wide range of topics at different levels of linguistic difficulty; students choose what they want to read, read unassisted, and view reading as its own reward, providing benefits such as pleasure or new knowledge; students often read at a faster pace because they can choose materials of interest for them at an appropriate level of difficulty; and teachers become model readers, guiding the students rather than teaching them explicitly (see Day & Bamford, 2002).

The more text L2 learners read, the more input they obtain. Therefore, the ER approach receives conceptual support from views and theories that prioritize the importance of input in second language acquisition. Krashen's widely known input hypothesis (e.g., 1982) and his reading hypothesis (1993), which focuses on the benefit of written input through reading, represent the strongest theoretical contention of the necessity and sufficiency of comprehensible input for many aspects of second language acquisition, including vocabulary, grammar, spelling, and linguistic skills. Despite criticisms of this position during the expansion of theories of second language acquisition (e.g., see reviews by Ellis, 2008 and Ortega, 2009, for instance), providing a massive amount of input remains one of the principles of language pedagogy, and ER is probably one of the easiest ways to implement an input-rich learning environment in a pedagogical setting (Ellis, 2005). There is a wealth of research reporting on ER's positive effects on a range of L2 skills and abilities: in various studies, positive effects have been seen in areas such as reading comprehension (Bell, 2001; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989, 1990; Tudor & Hafiz, 1989; Yamashita, 2008), reading rate (Beglar, Hunt & Kite, 2012; Bell, 2001; Fujita & Noro, 2009; Iwahori, 2008; Lao & Krashen, 2000; Matsui & Noro, 2010), vocabulary (Grabe & Stoller, 1997; Horst, 2005; Lao & Krashen, 2000; Pigada & Schmitt, 2006; Poulshock, 2010), grammar (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Yang, 2001), writing (Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Hafiz & Tudor, 1989, 1990; Tsang, 1996; Tudor & Hafiz, 1989), and general L2 proficiency (Iwahori, 2008; Mason & Krashen, 1997). It has also been maintained that ER has positive impacts on the affective domains of reading, such as attitude and motivation (Day & Bamford, 1998; Grabe, 2009). Many researchers have reported the joy and pleasure that they have witnessed among L2 learners in ER programs (details below). However, in contrast to the abundance of research on ER's effects on skills and abilities, there is a surprising paucity of methodical investigation into the ways in which affect may be influenced by the ER approach. The current study fills this gap by examining the effect of ER on L2 reading attitude.

### **Extensive Reading and Reading Attitudes**

Attitude is a complex psychological construct. It refers, in one definition, to "a learned predisposition to respond in a consistently favorable or unfavorable manner with respect to a given object" (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975, p. 6, cited in McKenna, 1994). Reading attitude has been defined as "a system of feelings related to reading which causes the learner to approach or avoid a reading situation" (Alexander & Filler, 1976, p. 1) and as "a state of mind, accompanied by feelings and emotions, that makes reading more or less probable" (Smith, 1990, p. 215). Various first language (L1) reading models have looked at different aspects of reading attitude, for instance, acquisition of reading attitude (McKenna, 1994), influence of reading attitude on reading behavior (Mathewson, 1994), and reading attitude as a reader-internal factor in the process of constructing the meaning of a text in the classroom (Ruddell & Unrau, 1994).

The common themes emerging from these theoretical works are of direct relevance to the current study. One such theme is that reading attitude is an acquired predisposition; it is shaped by readers' individual experiences. Therefore, we can expect ER to influence learners' attitudes. Another is that attitude is one of the factors that influence the decision to read. We can expect that if ER can foster a positive attitude, then it can further enhance readers' engagement in reading thereby. A third crucial theoretical point is that reading attitude has multiple dimensions

or components. Traditionally, three components have been distinguished: affect (feeling), cognition (thought and belief), and conation (intention for action), (e.g., Mathewson, 1994 or McKenna, 1994). These traditional components seem to have served as a foundation for the conceptual development of reading attitude, and we can see their legacy in some more recent models. As a case in point, Mathewson (1994) included *prevailing feelings about reading*, *action readiness for reading*, and *evaluative beliefs about reading* as three aspects of attitude toward reading, which obviously connote affect, conation, and cognition, respectively. However, since researchers' primary interest has been to explain behavioral outcomes using attitude as a possible predictor rather than to elaborate solely upon the concept of reading attitude, the way in which various components (either traditional or newly added) are interactively depicted in different models varies largely depending on the researcher's theoretical interests. Although the field has not yet reached a consensus on the construct of reading attitude, a multi-component view seems to have fairly general support. For instance, based on a large-scale study of secondary school students, van Schooten and de Glopper (2002) have argued that researchers should not adopt any one score as representative of reading attitude because not all the five reading attitude variables that they examined (*cognition*, *affect*, *subjective norm*, *perceived behavioral control*, and *intentions*) "predict the actual [reading] behavior equally well" (p. 185), and different factors (e.g., gender, home environment, and literacy education) affect different aspects of reading attitude (van Schooten, de Glopper, & Stoel, 2004).

On the basis of the above conceptual framework, we can ask some critical questions for the understanding of the relationship between ER and reading attitudes in L2: How does ER influence L2 reading attitudes? Does a positive L2 reading attitude enhance L2 learners' involvement in reading? If so, how do L2 reading attitudes influence the act of reading? Two models proposed by Day and Bamford (1998), which are the only ones currently depicting the relationship between reading attitudes and ER in the context of L2 reading, offered a good framework for considering these questions.

Day and Bamford's (1998) model of the acquisition and development of L2 reading attitudes hypothesized that four sources contribute to the formation of L2 reading attitudes: L1 reading attitudes, previous L2 reading experiences, attitudes to the L2 and the related culture and people, and L2 classroom environment. Day and Bamford also proposed a model stipulating factors motivating the decision to read. It is based in spirit on the *Expectancy + Value* models of motivation, and maintains that expectancy comprises materials and L2 reading ability, while value consists of L2 reading attitudes and sociocultural environment. Among these four subcomponents, materials and L2 reading attitudes have primary importance in determining motivation to read in an L2.

In the context of these models, we can first presume that ER may influence the formation of L2 reading attitudes by affecting two of the source constituents: one is learners' attitudes towards the language, culture, and people in the L2 context, and the other is L2 classroom environment (Day & Bamford, 1998). ER is likely to influence L2 learners' attitudes towards the culture and people if reading materials cover a wide range of topics. Since the ER approach often involves free individual choice of books, it has the potential to give rise to situations where learners can make their own discoveries in their areas of interest on their own terms. The pleasure of learning in areas of personal interest and curiosity is hard to foster in more traditional reading classes, in

which every student reads the same texts selected by the teacher. The ER approach can also provide a “noncompetitive, nonjudgmental” (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 26) classroom environment. Students’ engagement with ER is in most cases not evaluated by high-stakes tests. If comprehension assessment is implemented in the classroom, it often takes the form of quizzes for formative assessment to keep or boost learners’ motivation (see Stoeckel, Reagan, & Hann, 2012 for an example of such quizzes). Likewise, the emphasis in ER programs is usually not on right answers but on sustained reading experiences and personal reactions to reading material. The teacher is typically not the authority or knowledge source, but instead functions as a model reader or participant in the reading community created in the classroom as well as the manager of the program and a reading advisor. Fear of evaluation by the teacher or judgment by peers is thus minimized, and the potential of the ER classroom environment to promote positive attitudes towards reading expands. Regarding the way in which attitudes may relate to the act of reading, Day and Bamford’s second model suggested that good reading attitudes increase motivation to read. Although attitudes are not the only factor affecting motivation, the model assumes that they are one of the central components.

Viewed collectively, Day and Bamford’s (1998) two models have shown that successful ER programs may create a virtuous circle for L2 readers. The ER approach is likely to promote positive reading attitudes because of its inherent flexibility—allowing learners to learn about a foreign culture, people, and language on their own terms—and due also to the less competitive classroom environment that emphasizes personal interests and pleasure. The resulting positive attitudes should enhance motivation and lead to the decision to continue reading. Sustained involvement in reading will not only strengthen these positive attitudes but also improve abilities and skills, providing learners with solid linguistic and cognitive resources to help them read more demanding texts; it will also increase readers’ background knowledge, helping them understand the texts more easily and deeply.

This virtuous circle may or may not always arise because other factors that are not affected by L2 ER—such as learners’ L1 reading attitudes or previous experience reading a different L2 as depicted in Day and Bamford’s (1998) model—could also influence motivation. Nevertheless, some research suggests that positive reading attitudes may indeed motivate learners to read if other factors do not interfere. For example, Yamashita (2004) reported that comfort with reading and positive self-perception as a reader in both L1 and L2 correlate with the amount of reading completed by students in an ER program for Japanese learners of English as a foreign language (EFL). Takase (2007) found that intrinsic motivation for both L2 and L1 reading determined the amount of ER. A careful examination of her questionnaire items shows that three out of seven items which loaded on the L1 intrinsic motivation factor and three out of six items which loaded on the L2 intrinsic motivation factor assessed positive feelings towards reading, based on the use of words such as *prefer*, *enjoy*, *hobby*, and *like*. Since positive feelings are an aspect of reading attitude, this result also suggests that positive attitudes and feelings constitute part of motivation for reading. Judge (2011) conducted a qualitative study focusing on nine high school students who were avid readers and read much more than they needed to do well in the class. Common characteristics among these readers included a love of reading in L1 and L2 and the appreciation of reading autonomy (free choice of books). Although the relationship between L1 and L2 literacy was not uniform or straightforward for all the students, the majority integrated a love and respect for L1 reading, nurtured in their childhood through family encouragement, into their L2

reading.

A substantial number of positive remarks are found in the literature concerning the effect of ER on L2 reading attitudes (e.g., Cho & Krashen, 1994; Elley, 1991, 2000; Hayashi, 1999; Lao & Krashen, 2000; Mason & Krashen, 1997; Poulshock, 2010; Robb & Susser, 1989; Taguchi, Takayasu-Maass, & Gorsuch, 2004). Some of these are anecdotal in nature, based on observations by teachers and researchers. Amongst typical examples are “After the first volume, all four women were clearly hooked on the *Sweet Valley Kids* series” (Cho & Krashen, 1994, p. 665) and “extensive reading [ ... ] according to teacher observations, was much more popular with students [than traditional approaches]” (Mason & Krashen, 1997, p. 101).

Other studies have used questionnaires to investigate the attitudes of learners engaged in ER. For example, Robb and Susser (1989) compared two classes, one involved in ER and the other taught with a more traditional method focusing on reading skills. Out of 10 items related to attitudes and motivation, the ER class outperformed the skills class in two: interest in homework and perception of the usefulness of writing at home. It seems, in other words, that the students enjoyed the homework given in the ER program, but other than that, there was no difference between the two groups. Lao and Krashen (2000) gave a four-item questionnaire to a group of L2 learners involved in literature-based pleasure reading and another group who received traditional academic instruction in the four skills. It is not surprising that the former were far more positive about literary reading because only this group had had the opportunity to read novels for pleasure. However, one item also showed that the pleasure reading group felt far more strongly than the skills group that what they had learned in the course would help them in their university careers. Stoeckel et al. (2012) examined the effects of quizzes on EFL learners’ attitudes to reading by comparing learners in two types of ER classes: one including quizzes (comprehension questions) on reading materials and the other without them. No significant difference was found, showing that undergoing comprehension assessment of what they read, at least in the form of relatively simple quizzes, did not negatively influence students’ reading attitudes.

These studies, although more systematic rather than simply unstructured observations, did not deal with the same question as the current study, since they were primarily interested in students’ attitudes to pedagogical activities: various ER approaches (Hayashi, 1999; Lao & Krashen, 2000; Poulshock, 2010; Robb & Susser, 1989; Taguchi et al., 2004) and quizzes under the ER approach (Stoeckel et al., 2012). This concern on the part of researchers about students’ attitudes towards ER approaches is warranted, because ER is very different from more traditional teacher-centered methods. It may appear, at least on the surface, that teachers in ER programs are not actually “teaching”—because, for instance, they are not lecturing in front of the class, or because the entire class is merely reading silently without taking notes or overtly asking or answering questions. Therefore, it is understandable why many of the researchers have felt the need to unravel students’ attitudes toward classes in which ER has been implemented. The interest of previous researchers in pedagogy is obvious in their research designs. Many of them, with the notable exception being Stoeckel et al., administered a questionnaire only once, at the end of the ER program, and some items explicitly asked about or prompted the assessment of students’ reactions to their courses (e.g., “What do you think about the teacher’s comments on your reading reports?” Hayashi, 1999, p. 123; “Thanks to this course, I can read faster and more

accurately” [to be marked by the student on a Likert-type scale], Robb & Susser, 1989, p. 246). While these studies have demonstrated that positive attitudes towards the ER approach exist among L2 learners, research designs of this sort are not optimally suited to examine changing attitudes towards reading as a result of the ER experience.

Two relatively recent studies, however, have addressed this issue. Fujita and Noro (2009) examined the influence of 10-minute ER (10 minutes of free voluntary reading in regular English class hours) on EFL high school students’ reading motivation. Two interesting findings were revealed using Factor analysis of a 30-item questionnaire given before and after the ER. One is that a new factor, which the researchers called *integrative intellectual motivation* (e.g., “I want to broaden my view by reading English books”), emerged in the post-ER responses, suggesting that the construct of reading motivation changes after the experience of ER. The other is that a factor called *exam-related extrinsic motivation* (e.g., “I read English books to pass entrance exams”) explained a substantially larger amount of variance in post-ER responses compared to pre-ER responses. Although the researchers argued that ER enhanced both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, the second result may point to the possibility that the questionnaire captured students’ concern for exams as cultivated in their regular classes.

Matsui and Noro (2010) looked at the effect of 10-minute ER on junior high school students’ EFL reading motivation by comparing an ER group and a control group. They factor-analyzed questionnaire items given at the end of the classes; *intrinsic motivation* and *exam-related extrinsic motivation* were commonly identified in both groups, but a factor called *self-confidence* appeared only in the ER group, indicating that the ER increased students’ self-confidence. However, a factor labeled *anxiety and negative attitudes toward English reading* was also uniquely found in the ER group. The researchers held that teachers’ encouragement of a large amount of reading may have had an adverse effect and called for more attention on the part of teachers to how they guide students.

As these studies have demonstrated, the effects of ER are far more complex than has been previously maintained on the basis of anecdotal evidence. This warrants more research effort in this area.

## Research Question

The research question this study attempts to answer is as follows: How does ER affect attitudes to reading in a foreign language? This question is rooted in the assumption that attitude is a complex construct comprised of multiple components. Thus, the study is interested in identifying different effects of ER on various components of reading attitude.

## Method

### *Participants*

The participants were 61 second-year undergraduate students enrolled in compulsory EFL classes taught by the author at a university in Japan. There were 59 L1-Japanese and two L1-Chinese students. They came from three academic backgrounds—agricultural studies, economics, and informatics—with approximately 20 in each field. They were not taking any other EFL class during the semester when the study was conducted. Therefore, the ER provided in their classes was their major reading experience in English.

### *Materials*

A common approach to the measurement of attitudinal variables is the use of a questionnaire employing a Likert scale. In the current study, a questionnaire of this style constructed in Yamashita (2007) was adopted. It was designed to measure two aspects of reading attitude—*affect* (feeling) and *cognition* (thinking)—based on a five-point scale. Factor analysis of data from approximately 300 Japanese students similar in profile to the current participant population yielded five factors. Two were interpreted as representing the affective aspect of EFL reading attitude (Comfort and Anxiety) and three, the cognitive aspect (Intellectual Value, Practical Value, and Linguistic Value). Comfort and Anxiety refer respectively to the feelings of comfort and anxiety that students feel towards EFL reading, while the three value variables denote different kinds of value that students attach to reading (e.g., “I can get various kinds of information if I read English”). Another large-scale study (Stoeckel et al., 2012) that employed this questionnaire found nearly identical factors in the responses of Japanese university students; items which loaded on each factor were also highly similar, if not identical, thus providing a piece of supporting evidence for the instrument’s reliability at least for university students learning English in the Japanese context. The current study’s questionnaire, using 22 items, is presented in the appendix.

### *Procedure*

A pretest–posttest design was used; the reading attitude questionnaire was administered in the first class (pretest) and the last class (posttest) of a 15-week course based on the ER approach. The class met once a week for 90 minutes. During class, students were able to access approximately 500 graded English readers (a series of Oxford, Cambridge, Heinemann, and Penguin), and were encouraged to choose whichever books they wanted to read. If they preferred to read their own books, that was also accepted.

Students read books both in and outside of class. Submitting a book report on each book they read was the requirement for credit. Book reports included information such as title, author, grade level, content outline, and the student’s thoughts and feelings about the content, as well as an optional report on anything that they noticed about the use of the English language in the book. The reports were presented uniformly on B5-size paper. In a survey conducted in previous classes, this length (i.e., space available for reporting) had been found appropriate (neither too short nor too demanding) for the students. Although it was not required, all students chose to write the report in Japanese. The class was divided into two parts; the first 45 minutes were used for classroom administration, short lectures and various other activities, such as reading non-demanding short texts (e.g., jokes or proverbs) together, while the latter half of the class was devoted to free, voluntary reading. The students read books silently at their own pace. They also

returned finished books, borrowed new books, and wrote book reports. The teacher answered questions from the students individually and gave advice to facilitate and encourage reading. Students received a grade based on class participation and the amount of reading they accomplished—accompanied by the submission of book reports.

### *Analysis*

This study adopted the same grouping of items as in Yamashita (2007), because the sample size of the current study was not sufficiently large to reliably run an analysis to identify underlying factors, and, as mentioned previously, the five attitude factors used had been identified using data from a similar population of EFL learners. There were six items for Comfort (items 3, 9, 13, 16, 18, and 21), four for Anxiety (5, 10, 17, and 20), five for Intellectual Value (1, 2, 8, 14, and 22), four for Practical Value (4, 7, 12, and 19), and three for Linguistic Value (6, 11, and 15). A slight adjustment was made, however, as described below, in order to tailor the item combination to the current data set and obtain the most informative result. Responses on conversely worded items (e.g., “Reading English is dull” to measure Comfort) were reversed, so that a higher score indicated a higher degree of feeling or belief in that variable.

The internal consistency of the questionnaire items was estimated by Cronbach’s alpha. Although the coefficients in Yamashita (2007) were all higher than .70, those in the present study varied from .35 to .85. The lowest estimate was the pretest score for Linguistic Value. Cronbach’s alpha for this variable was also low in the posttest (.54). This was likely due to ceiling effects on this variable, in addition to the small number of items used for it and the much smaller number of respondents than in the original study. The mean scores were 4.15 and 4.26 on the pretest and posttest, respectively (out of the maximum score of five), indicating that even before the start of ER, the students had formed the belief that reading would help improve their linguistic ability. Therefore, the low reliability of this variable did not necessarily mean that there were problems with the items. However, the high mean score on the pretest pointed to the difficulty of identifying measurable improvement, and the preliminary result supported this concern. Based on this observation, this variable was not included in further analysis.

In addition, the reliability of Anxiety was found to improve with the removal of item 20 (“I don’t mind even if I cannot understand the book content entirely”), whose item-total correlation was low (.12). This item used different wording from the other items, which all began with “I feel anxious....”. This item may thus have been functionally different from the other items. Therefore, it was deleted.

Scores for the variables were obtained by taking the means of the assembled items. Z-scores for kurtosis and skewness were calculated. None exceeded the absolute value of 1.96, suggesting that the normality of the data was within the acceptable range. Distributions were also carefully checked visually, and no severe departure from normality was observed. Therefore, all data were used in the final analysis. A 2 x 4 repeated-measures ANOVA with time (pretest and posttest) and attitude (Comfort, Anxiety, Intellectual Value, and Practical Value) as within-subject variables was conducted, accompanied by Bonferroni-corrected multiple comparisons (Field, 2009), in order to answer the research question.



## Results

Descriptive statistics and reliability estimates for the four attitude variables are summarized in Table 1. In running the ANOVA, Mauchly's test indicated that the assumption of sphericity had been violated. Therefore, Greenhouse-Geisser corrected results were used. The main effect of time was not significant,  $F(1, 60) = 0.364, p = .549, \eta_p^2 < .001$ , but the main effect of attitude and the interaction between time and attitude were significant,  $F(2, 138) = 94.053, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .611$ ;  $F(2, 134) = 12.101, p < .001, \eta_p^2 = .168$ . Multiple comparisons identified significant differences between the pretest and the posttest for Comfort, Anxiety, and Intellectual Value ( $p < .05$ , Bonferroni-adjustments), but no difference for Practical Value. Effect size was large for Comfort ( $r = .54$ ), medium for Anxiety ( $r = .34$ ), close to medium but still small for Intellectual Value ( $r = .26$ ), and negligible for Practical Value ( $r = .09$ ) (Cohen, 1988; Field, 2009).

Table 1. *Descriptive statistics of four attitude variables*

Variable	k	Minimum	Maximum	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Skewness	Kurtosis	$\alpha$
<u>Pretest</u>								
Comfort	6	1.00	4.00	2.25	0.63	-0.22	0.18	.85
Anxiety	3	1.00	5.00	3.17	0.86	0.05	-0.07	.68
Intellectual Value	5	2.40	5.00	3.97	0.55	-0.38	0.35	.71
Practical Value	4	2.00	5.00	3.79	0.62	-0.09	0.63	.60
<u>Posttest</u>								
Comfort	6	1.17	4.33	2.60	0.68	0.22	-0.01	.82
Anxiety	3	1.33	4.67	2.84	0.92	0.20	-0.98	.72
Intellectual Value	5	2.80	5.00	4.10	0.49	-0.23	-0.08	.72
Practical Value	4	2.50	5.00	3.74	0.67	0.37	-0.52	.66

## Discussion

The present study investigated how a 15-week course implementing ER both inside and outside class hours affected L2 reading attitudes, focusing on four attitude variables. During the course, the students read 649 pages ( $SD = 201$ ) on average, which was approximately 13 readers ( $SD = 3.8$ ) or 120,634 words ( $SD = 50449$ )<sup>1</sup>. Measurable impacts of ER were identified on three variables: ER increased students' feelings of comfort and reduced anxiety towards EFL reading, and also had a positive effect on the intellectual value that the students attached to reading. However, it did not increase perceived practical value, despite the fact that the students knew that the amount of reading they did would be reflected in their class grade. Considering that it requires a time commitment for ER to be reasonably successful (Grabe & Stoller, 2011) and the period of 15 weeks is not necessarily sufficiently long for the full benefits of ER to materialize, this result shows that ER's effects on reading attitudes can manifest in a relatively short period.

As mentioned earlier, feelings of comfort and of anxiety were hypothesized to represent the affective component and intellectual and practical values to represent the cognitive component of reading attitude. The fact that there was a larger effect size in the former group than in the latter indicates that ER had a greater positive influence on feelings and emotions than on thinking or

recognized values in reading. Among the affective components, the effect size was large on comfort and medium on anxiety. Thus, ER had a stronger effect of enhancing positive feelings than of reducing negative feelings.

The contrast between cognitive and affective components, as well as the difference between positive and negative feelings, gives rise to an important implication when we consider the virtuous circle of reading that we hope to nurture through ER. Arnold and Brown (1999) maintain that “[...] one should not lose sight of the importance of developing the positive [emotions]. Motivation, after all, is better guided by a move towards pleasure [...] than by a move away from pain” (p. 2). Support for this contention was supplied in Yamashita (2004), who found that feelings of comfort correlated with amount of EFL reading, but anxiety did not. Yamashita maintained that “[i]t seems that experiencing a positive feeling is more motivational than not experiencing a negative feeling” (p. 12). In an L1 study, among secondary students in the Netherlands, van Schooten and de Glopper (2002) argued that three components of reading attitude constituted a chain of causal links leading finally to the act of reading. In their model, first Cognition (belief in and evaluation of an outcome) influenced Affect (liking and enjoyment), then Affect influenced Intention (to read), and finally Intention predicted actual reading behavior. Thus, cognitive and affective components each had an indirect impact on reading behavior. However, the influence of affect on behavioral intention was direct and very strong, and the researchers stated, “we may conclude that the most viable way to promote the reading of secondary students is to stimulate them to enjoy their reading” (p. 185). Assuming, as these studies have suggested, that the most potent driving force determining actual involvement in reading is positive feelings (e.g., liking, pleasure, excitement, joy, and love), and also assuming that the current results are generalizable, ER should indeed have good potential to encourage L2 readers to read and to help increase their opportunities to develop their language skills and abilities in their L2 as well as expand their general knowledge.

The contrast between the two cognitive variables is also interesting. To reiterate, Intellectual Value increased with ER (albeit less than the affective variables) but there was no change in Practical Value. The former result is probably due to the intellectual satisfaction that students experienced from gaining new knowledge and information through reading, and is reminiscent of Fujita and Noro’s (2009) finding showing the emergence of *integrative intellectual motivation* after their students experienced ER. The construct labeled Intellectual Value in the current study may relate to enjoyment because it is a pleasure to acquire new knowledge when learning is internally driven. The appeal to learner autonomy made by affording students a free choice of books may have contributed to this joy of intellectual satisfaction (Judge, 2011). An excerpt from a book report cited in Yamashita and Kan (2010) illustrates an autonomous learning experience through ER, “I chose this book because I knew the name of Shakespeare but I did not know what kind of life he had. I was surprised to know that [...]” (p. 383). Teachers who have implemented ER reasonably effectively in their classes would often observe similar autonomous learning experiences among their students. Sometimes the voluntary choice of books would help learners’ interest override the linguistic difficulties involved, as exemplified by a student whom the current author has encountered. This student, who was a great fan of Sherlock Holmes, read all the Sherlock Homes stories in the stock of graded readers, regardless of their linguistic level.

In sum, the current study demonstrates the positive effect of ER on L2 reading attitude. The

results suggested that ER exerts a reader effect on the aspects of reading attitude that may foster intrinsic motivation (e.g., positive feelings and intellectual satisfaction) than on those that may relate to extrinsic motivation (e.g., higher grades or future career benefits). Based on insights from past studies and on the motivational model developed by Day and Bamford (1998), we can hypothesize that positive feelings fostered through ER may indeed enhance the decision to read and create a virtuous circle of reading.

Finally, we look at the implications of our findings for research and pedagogy as well as the limitations of this study. First, although the study identified a positive effect of ER, how long the effect continues is a critical question. Future studies should address this issue. Second, the current result should be seen as an outcome of this study's context. Obviously, there are different ways of implementing ER in educational settings (e.g., exclusively outside of class or using only a small portion of class time). Generalizability of the result to different educational and socio-cultural circumstances may be limited, and therefore, more studies are necessary. Third, by adopting the instrument in Yamashita (2007), the study was necessarily conceptualized within the traditional framework of reading attitude. Although the cognitive and affective components have long been elements in the development of reading attitude models (e.g., Mathewson 1994; van Schooten & de Groot, 2002), it is worth considering what new frameworks or what changes to the present model might be fruitful in future studies. Further, in L2 research, the only models we have of reading attitude are those by Day and Bamford (1998), but no study has ever attempted to test them. To advance research in this field, we need to ensure that we have sound theoretical frameworks. Since L1 reading attitude is a possible component of L2 reading attitude, we will need L2-specific models that reflect insights from L1 models. Fourth, the current study only examined change in each attitude variable; plausible interactions among them were not investigated. Research including this type of investigation may contribute to construction of better models of reading attitude, but it will require a much larger sample than that in the present study. Fifth, regarding the research design, it is always good to have a control group. Despite the difficulty of conducting highly controlled studies in a classroom setting (Grabe, 2004), efforts should be made to address this limitation.

The limitations notwithstanding, the current study has provided an encouraging result for the improvement of L2 reading pedagogy. The result supports previous anecdotal statements and demonstrates the awareness of many teachers who have successfully implemented the ER approach, that ER has positive effects on L2 learners' affect. There are, however, two cautious remarks that need to be made when we apply this result to pedagogical settings. First, we must be aware of the fact that positive attitudes do not always foster increased reading. An example of the discrepancy between positive attitudes and L2 reading was documented in Crawford-Camiciottoli (2001), who found that Italian university students had positive attitudes towards English reading probably because of their cultural interests and recognition of the importance of English for career prospects, but nevertheless read little in English because of lack of time, lack of access to English books, and lack of knowledge of what would be most interesting or useful to read. Crawford-Camiciottoli thus gives partial support to Day and Bamford's (1998) motivational model. Two major factors influence the motivation to read: materials and reading attitude in the L2. Lack of access to books is a clear example of lack of material. Positive attitudes may not compensate for inadequate conditions that can work against reading. Probably, teachers can do little about the lack of time in students' lives, but they should be able to find

ways to improve students' access to L2 reading materials. Establishing a good library system for ER programs is a responsibility of teachers. The library should ideally have a large number of easily accessible books on a wide range of topics at various levels of linguistic difficulty.

The second remark is an appeal to teachers' sense of balance when implementing ER. Despite the demonstrated positive effect of ER on affect across several studies, we have also seen some counter-intuitive results in the literature. For instance, van Schooten et al. (2004) found that, in their sample of students at the lower grades of secondary school (grades 7 to 9), both teaching methods using structural analysis of texts and those supporting student-centered literary experience showed positive effects on students' feelings about reading literature. However, "contrary to expectations" (p. 366), the greatest effects were exerted by structural analysis, not by text experiencing. In L2 reading, Stoeckel et al. (2012) observed that, although there was no statistically significant difference, students in the ER program tended to show higher perception of intellectual value when quizzed. The authors contended that these students "may have felt slightly greater intellectual benefit from the reading task" (p. 193) and that "possible positive effects of ER quizzes should be explored" (p.194). This implies that teachers should not take the extreme view that the ER approach is always superior in cultivating positive feelings towards reading and improving excitement about learning for all kinds of readers. Sometimes students prefer to be taught. Careful observation of students by teachers will promote the best choice of methods, including eclectic ones, for their students in their context. Having said that, however, it seemingly remains true that reading programs that incorporate ER are more likely, than those that do not, to foster a love for reading.

## Conclusion

The affective domain of reading has received less attention than has the cognitive domain in both L1 and L2 research. The assessment of the effects of ER is no exception. The present study has gone a step further into the affective domain and expanded our understanding of the impact of ER by documenting its positive effect on changes in different aspects of EFL reading attitude. As discussed above, however, many questions remain to be solved. Future investigation may be merited from different perspectives such as reading motivation (e.g., Kim, 2011; Mori, 2002; Takase, 2007).

## Acknowledgments

I thank Rob Waring for his feedback on an earlier draft of this paper. I would also like to express my gratitude to the anonymous reviewers of *Reading in a Foreign Language* for their constructive comments.

## Notes

1. These represent only an estimate, because five students read their own paperbacks as well as graded readers. Since their paperbacks were some hundred pages long, they read them little by

little each week, and reported the number of pages read per week. To obtain a rough estimate of the number of books and words, the amount they read per week (from 17 to 93 pages, with one surprising exception of 231 pages) was counted as one graded reader. The number of words was inferred on the basis of the graded readers. For example, a student read 263 pages of her paperback in addition to 500 pages (91,837 words) of graded readers. With 763 pages in total, this student was estimated to have read 140,143 words. Although these evaluation methods probably underestimate the true amount of reading, because the paperbacks were denser in text than many graded readers, the approximation still helps us determine the amount of reading achieved in various units.

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## Appendix A

### *Reading attitude questionnaire items (original items are in Japanese)*

- 1 I can become more sophisticated if I read English.
- 2 I can get various kinds of information if I read English.
- 3 Reading English is troublesome.
- 4 Reading English is useful for my future career.
- 5 I feel anxious if I don't know all the words.
- 6 I can acquire vocabulary if I read English.
- 7 Reading English is useful to get a good grade in class.
- 8 I can acquire broad knowledge if I read English.
- 9 I feel relaxed if I read English.
- 10 I sometimes feel anxious that I may not understand even if I read.
- 11 I can develop reading ability if I read English.
- 12 Reading English is useful to get credit for class.
- 13 Reading English is dull.
- 14 I get to know about new ways of thinking if I read English.
- 15 I can improve my sensitivity to the English language if I read English.
- 16 I feel tired if I read English.
- 17 I feel anxious when I'm not sure whether I understood the book content.
- 18 I feel refreshed and rested if I read English.
- 19 Reading English is useful to get a job.
- 20 I don't mind even if I cannot understand the book content entirely.
- 21 Reading English is enjoyable.
- 22 I get to know about different values if I read English.

### **About the Author**

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