L2 Japanese learners' responses to translation, speed reading, and 'pleasure reading' as a form of extensive reading

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Abstract

Fluency development instruction lacks in reading in Japanese as a foreign language instruction. This study examined how 34 upper-intermediate level learners of Japanese responded when they first experienced pleasure reading and speed reading. The participants also engaged in intensive reading, the main component of which was translation. Survey results indicated that the two novel approaches were more welcomed than translation. There was a positive correlation between the participants' favorable ratings of pleasure reading and speed reading. The participants exhibited flexibility toward the two novel approaches in that they were willing to be meaningfully engaged in pleasure reading, whereas they put complete understanding before fluent reading when speed reading. The latter phenomenon may be explained by their predominantly-accuracy-oriented attitudes, fostered by long-term exposure to the grammar-translation method. The study's results imply that key to successful fluency development is an early start that nurtures well-rounded attitudes toward the target language reading.

Keywords: fluency development, learners of Japanese, pleasure reading, speed reading, translation

Grabe (2009) maintained that fluency instruction is generally neglected in second and foreign language (L2) reading pedagogy. L2 reading classes have traditionally tended to employ an intensive reading approach (Sakurai, 2015), and L2 Japanese reading classes are no exception (Nishigoori, 1991; Tabata-Sandom, 2013, 2015). In such traditional approaches, learners are expected to perfectly understand a given text which is often above their current proficiency level even if they have to spend a tremendous amount of time on translating a given text. Translating does not develop learners' reading fluency. Reading is learnt only by reading (William, 1986). In practice, however, learners' own and school administrators' views that individual silent reading is neither active learning nor appropriate to the classroom (Macalister, 2014) interfere with implementation of fluency development components in L2 curricula.

In more recent years, however, the importance of fluency development in reading instruction has come into the limelight. Penner-Wilger (2008) asserted that "A key reason that fluency is viewed as a critical component of reading programs is that fluency is associated with reading outcomes,

including comprehension" (p. 2). In order for learners to acquire fluency in L2 reading, their lower-level reading processes have to be automatic. Grabe (2009) claimed that incremental reading practice will automatize L2 readers' lower-level reading processes. In other words, learners need to read large quantities of comprehensible L2 texts to gain fluency in their target language. Hence, extensive reading (ER), in which learners read large quantities of relatively easy L2 texts and consequently develop automatization of lower reading processes, is thought to play a pivotal role in successful L2 reading programs (Day & Bamford, 1998, 2002; Grabe, 2009; Nation, 2007).

Although not as widely recognized as ER, speed reading is another fluency instructional approach. The speed reading course conducted by Chung and Nation (2006) used lexically-controlled texts accompanied by 10 multiple-choice questions, and the participants kept records of their reading rates to monitor their progress. Such a speed reading course meets the requirements of fluency development proposed by Nation (2007): learners are encouraged to read fast while maintaining good comprehension of linguistically controlled materials. Furthermore, Macalister (2010) and Tran (2012) proved that the effect of speed reading courses was not restricted to the linguistically controlled materials but transferred to the reading of authentic texts as well.

The attention to fluency development is increasing slowly in the context of L2 Japanese reading pedagogy, although some pioneers are eagerly promoting ER (Harada et al., 2008; Japanese Extensive Reading Research Group, 2012). Therefore, studies that examine the efficacy of ER and speed reading are urgently needed.

The current study's goal was to investigate the implementation of fluency development approaches in L2 Japanese reading pedagogy. Specifically, the study examined how 34 upper-intermediate university learners of Japanese responded to pleasure reading, speed reading, and translation. These three approaches were chosen for comparison because the first two are fluency instructional approaches that the participants had not previously experienced, and the last is an intensive reading approach to which the participants had long been exposed. Therefore, the comparison was designed to explore learners' flexibility or a lack thereof in regard to novel fluency instructional approaches, as well as possible problems that these approaches might present to practitioners. Additionally, the study reports the outcomes of speed reading training.

Specifically, this study answers the following research questions:

1. Do L2 Japanese students respond differently to the three instructional approaches of pleasure reading, speed reading, and translation?
2. Can speed reading training be an effective fluency instruction approach for L2 Japanese learners?

Methods

Participants

The participants of this study were 34 native-English-speaking learners of Japanese in three Japanese language classes. All the participants were in their final year at an American public university. Their major was Japanese, and they had studied the language for six years on average. In terms of proficiency, 22.7% of them self-judged their level as advanced, 53% as upper-intermediate, 21.3% as lower-intermediate, and 3% as elementary. A questionnaire survey administered at the beginning of the courses contained questions that examined the participants' reading habits. The participants engaged in only light reading in Japanese: 72.7% of them read in Japanese outside of classes and 27.3% did not; of those who did, most of what they read was *manga* comic books (32%), followed by online articles, social networking chats, magazines, and song lyrics. The frequency of their L2 reading varied from daily to a few times a month. The participants were enrolled in three separate reading-only courses. The three classes met for 50 minutes thrice weekly for 15 weeks. The researcher was the course coordinator for the three courses. Table 1 shows some of the results of the survey, which also inquired into the participants' traits as L2 readers.

Table 1. *The participants' traits as L2 readers*

Questions to examine the participants' traits	Answers		
	1.SA* 2.A	3.NA/D	4.D 5.SD
"I think I should always look up the meaning of unknown words in a dictionary during reading in Japanese."	83% (28)**	11% (4)	6% (2)
"I believe that reading a lot of easy Japanese texts for pleasure will make me a fluent reader."	41% (14)	50% (17)	9% (3)
"I believe that I have to read original Japanese texts in order to become a fluent reader even if they are beyond my proficiency level."	83% (28)	14% (5)	3% (1)

Note. *Respondents rated the survey items on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 – Strongly agree (SA), 2 – Agree (A), 3 – Neither agree nor disagree (NA/D), 4 – Disagree (D), 5 – Strongly disagree (SD). ** Numbers in parentheses are the raw numbers of the participants.

As Table 1 shows (first and third questions), more than 80% of the participants seemed to have a pre-existing intensive-reading-oriented attitude: they believed in the importance of using a dictionary and reading difficult authentic texts. Answers to the second question also imply that the participants' faith on easy materials was somewhat weak. This response to the survey questions supports the paper's later interpretation of the obtained findings.

Procedures

The three courses in which the participants were enrolled were intensive reading oriented due to institutional expectations. However, the researcher strove to give the students fluency instruction. Her motivation for focusing on fluency instruction came from occasions on which she heard that some of her students had lost motivation to learn Japanese due to long-term exposure to the grammar-translation method in their previous courses. The following two participant comments are suggestive regarding students' past learning experiences:

• There are some professors who will throw any text at students and expect students to understand without modification or any concern to level. I didn't enjoy that type of

instruction because it took a lot of work & there was a lot that I didn't understand.
- I am thankful for the focus on reading and not only literal translation in this class because I feel many classes don't go beyond translation.

This phenomenon is similar to that experienced by the L2 learners of Japanese in Tabata-Sandom's (2015) study.

In the two courses in which 22 of the participants were enrolled, all 10 of the following instructional approaches were employed, while in the third course, in which the remaining 12 participants were enrolled, all except the 10th approach, speed reading, were employed. To assess the vocabulary size of the 22 participants who took part in speed reading training, the Japanese Vocabulary Size Test (Matsushita, 2012) was used. The core of the pleasure reading materials collection was the book collection used by Hitosugi and Day (2004) and Japanese graded readers (GRs) developed by the Japanese Extensive Reading Research Group.

Ten instructional approaches employed:

1. Translation of class readings
2. Regular vocabulary practice of unknown key words in class readings
3. Peer learning: Pair- or small-group discussion regarding the content of class readings
4. Guided preview tasks: Working on preview tasks provided by the researcher prior to classes as a pre-reading activity
5. Writing homework: A post-reading activity; writing essays in response to the texts read
6. Teacher's feedback: The researcher gave the participants feedback on their writing, vocabulary practice trials, guided preview tasks, reading logs, and presentation assignments.
7. Presentation assignments: Making presentations (twice per semester) about a Japanese article of their choice
8. Pleasure reading: In class and out of class
9. Strategy training: Every quarter of a semester
10. Speed reading: Ten sessions

A typical weekly practice for the classes was as follows, with the speed reading training conducted in one or two of the three classes.

- Class reading texts were given online.
- Students conducted guided preview tasks prior to classes.
- Students engaged in translation, regular vocabulary practice, and peer learning in classes. They then wrote response essays to the texts read in Japanese as homework.
- The researcher tried to offer speed reading training and pleasure reading at least once a week.

Speed reading training. The model of speed reading offered in the two courses was from Quinn, Nation and Millett (2007). The researcher constructed texts in which 98% of the running words were within the first 4000 words of J-LEX, an online lexical analyzer of Japanese texts (Suganaga & Matsushita, 2013). Four thousand words is the cut-off determined by the results of

the Japanese Vocabulary Size Test (Matsushita, 2012) conducted in the second class. Nation (2007) claimed speed reading materials should not contain any unknown words. However, the results of the Japanese Vocabulary Size Test also revealed that the participants knew loan words originating in English well, and therefore, loan words were not controlled in the materials, which rendered the vocabulary coverage of J-LEX's first 4000 words above 98% but not as much as 100%. Also, *furigana* reading support was added to all the *kanji*.[1] As for grammar control, any complex grammatical items which were designated as advanced level by the Learning Item Analysis System (Student Center at the University of Tsukuba, 2012) were rewritten in simpler structures. These lexical and syntactic controls rendered the average readability of the speed reading texts 6.02 on Shibazaki and Hara's (2010) readability measure, which is lower than that of the three randomly chosen reading passages contained in the textbook used in the participants' previous intensive reading courses (7.63). The word number of a text was restricted to between 445 and 455 words. It has to be noted that this 10-word margin may have affected the reported result to a certain extent. General topics were chosen, so that no expert knowledge would be required to understand the texts.

In classes, when the participants finished reading a speed reading text, they recorded their time using an online stopwatch projected on the whiteboard. Next, they rated the topic familiarity on a 3-point scale: 1 – Don't know at all, 2 – Know a little, and 3 – Know well. Finally, they answered 10 multiple-choice questions on the other side of the sheet without referring back to the text. Each session took about 10 minutes, and 10 sessions were conducted, beginning in the second week and taking place at least once a week unless the institutional course requirements interfered.

Pleasure reading sessions. The choice to use the term "pleasure reading" to describe the approach used in this study, rather than "ER" follows Waring and McLean's (2015) sounding of an alarm regarding the arbitrary and ambiguous use of "ER" by researchers. Large quantities of ER materials could not be provided due to a definite shortage of Japanese GRs. Therefore, the term "pleasure reading" is used instead.

Furthermore, time constraints required the participants to conduct their pleasure reading outside class. As Robb (2002) claimed, teachers cannot assume their learners will read as much as possible merely in the name of ER when their lives are occupied with extra-curricular activities. Hence, the current courses gave the participants extra credits toward their final grades as a reward for reading conducted outside class. That rewards enhance students' reading is supported by some studies (e.g., Hitosugi & Day, 2004, for the same L2 Japanese context).

A pleasure reading folder containing 25 texts was set up on the courses' online websites. The participants had to submit reading logs to prove that they actually read certain texts. The minimum weekly goal was two Japanese GRs or two children's books. This minimum amount could be rather small if participants read only two thin children's books. Even when participants read two appropriate-level GRs, i.e., Level 4 of the Japanese Extensive Reading Research Group's GRs, the amount of text they read could be only equivalent to 20 pages of typical Japanese paperbacks (approximately 10,000 letters[2]). While all the participants read at least two books per week, what and how much they read varied widely. Some participants chose to read only thin children's books, whereas two participants completed a whole paperback each.

Instruments

Among the instruments used in the three courses, the following had direct relevance to the analysis process.

- The initial survey to ask about the participants' reading habits and pre-existing perceptions;
- three end-of-course questionnaire surveys to ask about the participants' attitudes toward the different teaching approaches used in the classes, their experience of pleasure reading, and their experience of speed reading;
- lexically and syntactically modified speed reading texts, which were accompanied by a 3-point Likert scale survey about topic familiarity.

In the questionnaire that asked about the participants' attitudes toward the different teaching approaches used in the classes, a 5-point Likert scale survey asked the participants to rate the 10 (or 9) instructional approaches used in their class to indicate how much they found each approach encouraging and facilitative. The scales are, 1= very, 2=somewhat, 3=neither, 4=not so much, and 5=not at all.

Three texts each were chosen from the authentic class reading texts, the speed reading texts, and the pleasure reading texts used in the current study, and also from reading passages contained in the textbook used in the participants' previous courses. Then they were analyzed with Shibazaki and Hara's (2010) online readability tool and Kawamura, Kitamura, and Hobara's (1997) Reading Tutorial Toolbox. The results showed that the authentic texts used for the intensive reading approach in the current study, and the three reading passages from the textbook were more demanding than the texts used for pleasure reading and speed reading in terms of all the linguistic features measured. They had longer sentences, higher information density, a higher proportion of *kanji* characters, and more difficult vocabulary.

Analyses

Quantitative analyses

In this section, the two groups that experienced the three approaches of pleasure reading, speed reading, and translation are called Group A ($n = 22$), and the group that experienced pleasure reading and translation but did not receive speed reading is called Group B ($n = 12$). Data for the following analyses were obtained from the 5-point Likert scale survey mentioned above. Pearson correlation was used to test the relationships between pleasure reading, speed reading, and translation.

Group A's responses to pleasure reading, speed reading, and translation. The means of Group A's ratings of the three approaches were all below 2, as can be seen in Table 2. That means that the participants felt all these three approaches were encouraging and facilitative. There was no significant correlation between pleasure reading and translation, $r = .198$, n = 22, $p = .378$, or between speed reading and translation, $r = .384$, n = 22, $p = .078$. However, there was a positive

correlation between pleasure reading and speed reading, $r = .928$, n = 22, $p < .001$. This means that when students found pleasure reading encouraging and facilitative, they also did so with speed reading.

Table 2. *Descriptive statistics of Group A's ratings*

	M	SD	N
Translation	1.82*	.958	22
Pleasure reading	1.59	1.098	22
Speed reading	1.77	1.307	22

Notes. *On the 5-point Likert scale, 1 = very and 5 = not at all; thus, the smaller the number, the higher the participants' rating of the approach as encouraging and facilitative.

The participants' responses to the other instructional approaches are presented in decreasing order (from the most encouraging and facilitative to the least encouraging and facilitative):

Teacher's feedback > Regular vocabulary practice > Pleasure reading > Homework > Speed reading=Strategy training > Translation=Presentation assignments > Guided preview tasks > Peer learning

Among the three approaches focused on in this study, pleasure reading was the most welcomed by the learners.

Group B's response to translation and pleasure reading. The means of Group B's ratings of translation and pleasure reading were the same as can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3. *Descriptive statistics of Group B's ratings*

	M	SD	N
Translation	1.42	.51	12
Pleasure reading	1.42	.90	12

There was no significant correlation between translation and pleasure reading for Group B, $r = -.016$, n = 12, $p = .960$.

Group B's ratings of the other approaches are presented here in decreasing order (from the most encouraging and facilitative to the least encouraging and facilitative):

Teacher's feedback=Regular vocabulary practice > Pleasure reading=Translation > Strategy training > Peer learning > Homework > Guided preview tasks > Presentation assignments

Analyses of reading rate gains. For analyzing reading rate gains, 21 participants' data was used because one participant did not complete all the 10 speed reading sessions. Three scoring methods used by Chung and Nation (2006) were adapted and employed in this study: the average scoring method, the 10th minus 1st scoring method (adapted from Chung and Nation's 'the 20th minus 1st scoring method'), and the extreme scoring method. The average scoring method compares the average speed of the first three readings to that of the last three readings. The 10th

minus 1ˢᵗ scoring method examines the change in speed by subtracting the time of the 1ˢᵗ reading from that of the 10ᵗʰ reading. The extreme scoring method uses the highest score minus the lowest score. Table 4 shows that the average scoring methods gave the most conservative result and the extreme scoring method gave the most overestimated result.

Table 4. *Means and standard deviations of the three scoring methods*

Measure	*M/SD*	Scores
Average method	Mean	3.41*
	SD	38.13
10ᵗʰ minus 1ˢᵗ	Mean	13.21
	SD	52.4
Extreme	Mean	64.43
	SD	37.65

Note. *words per minute

A paired *t* test was used for the first two scoring methods. No statistically significant reading rate gain was detected (average scoring method, $t = -.469$, $p = .644$, df = 20; 10ᵗʰ minus 1ˢᵗ scoring method, $t = -1.156$, $p = .261$, df = 20), although later reading was faster than earlier reading in both scoring methods. The detailed statistical results of the 10ᵗʰ minus 1ˢᵗ scoring method, which provided results midway between the other two methods, are presented in Tables 5 and 6.

Table 5. *Paired samples statistics of the first and tenth eeadings*

		M	*N*	*SD*	*SE Mean*
Pair 1	First reading	169.45*	21	86.67	18.91
	Tenth reading	182.67	21	58.89	12.85

Notes. *The participants' reading speed was calculated by words read per minute. The number of words contained in a text was obtained using J-LEX (Suganaga & Matsushita, 2013).

Table 6. *Paired samples test of the first and tenth readings*

		Paired Differences						
		SD	*SE Mean*	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		*t*	*df*	*Sig.* (2-tailed)
				Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	First reading - Tenth reading	52.40	11.43	37.067	10.64	-1.16	20	.26

Whereas the extreme scoring method demonstrated a seemingly significant gain, it does not show a chronological development. That is, the current participants did not necessarily experience their slowest speed earlier, or their fastest speed later in the training, as can be seen in Table 7. This finding is different from what Tran (2012) found.

Table 7. *Proportion of participants' fastest and slowest readings at three stages*

	1st to 3rd readings	4th to 7th readings	8th to 10th readings
Fastest	23.80(%)	71.42	47.62*
Slowest	80.95	23.8	28.57
Average of each stage	177.16**	189.47	181.04

Note. *These numbers do not add up to 100% because some participants marked the same reading rates multiple times.
** words read per minute

Although no statistically significant reading rate gain was detected overall, some participants did show a pattern of 'improvement.' Modifying Chung and Nation's (2006) categorization, a changing pattern in which the average of the last three readings was larger than that of the first three readings as well as of all 10 readings was designated as an 'improvement pattern' in this study. Ten participants showed an improvement pattern (dividing the participants into three groups by speed of reading, three of these 10 participants were in the fastest group, three in the second fastest group, and four in the third fastest group). The proportion of the participants who showed an improvement pattern was 47.6%, which is much smaller than the 93% recorded by Tran (ibid.). An example of an improvement pattern is presented below (Figure 1). In Figure 1, the vertical numbers are words read per minute and the horizontal numbers are the 10 readings.
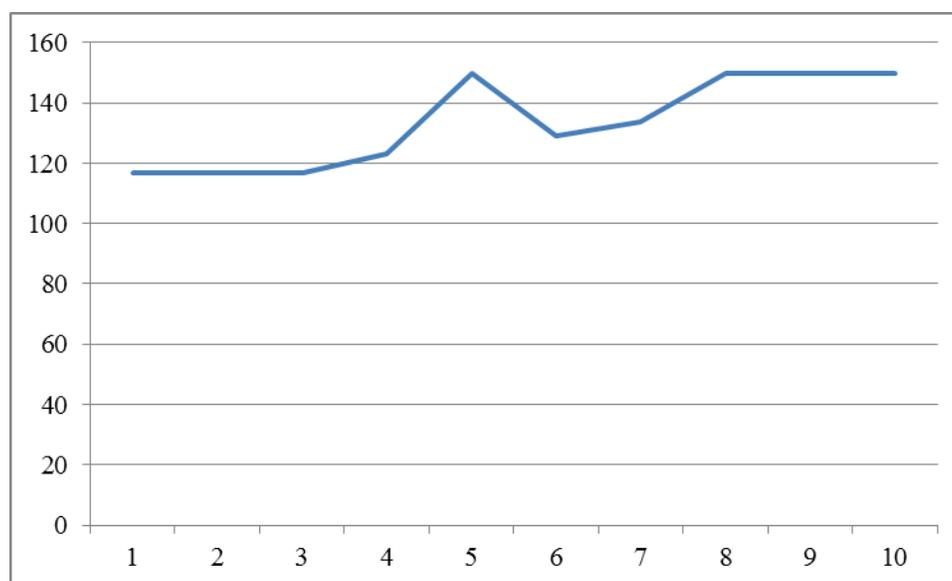
Figure 1. Improvement pattern shown by the fifth slowest participant

Analyses of comprehension scores and topic familiarity. Pearson correlation was used to test correlation between comprehension scores and topic familiarity. Comprehension scores were closely positively correlated with topic familiarity, $r = 0.429$, n = 21, $p = 0.053$. This means that the more familiar a topic was to the participants, the better the participants' comprehension scores were. It is noteworthy that familiarity of topics still affected these learners' comprehension scores to some extent, even though the lexical and syntactic levels of materials

were below their proficiency levels.

Qualitative analyses

The participants' comments in response to questions included in the survey questionnaires are presented in the following session.

The most and least encouraging and facilitative instructional approaches. The participants chose the most and least encouraging and facilitative instructional approaches besides rating all the approaches on the 5-point Likert scale.

Most participants (19%) chose speed reading as the most encouraging and facilitative approach. Pleasure reading gained the second largest support (16.2%). Only a small proportion of the participants rated pleasure reading and speed reading as the least encouraging and facilitative (4.54% each). The trend was the opposite for translation. Whereas only 5.4% of the participants chose translation as the most encouraging and facilitative approach, 13.6% of them voted it as the least encouraging and facilitative approach, which was the second after peer learning and guided preview tasks. The participants' reasons for their choice of pleasure reading and speed reading as the most encouraging and facilitative approaches are not provided here because the succeeding sections reveal why the participants welcomed the two approaches. Here, examples of the participants' comments that explained why they found translation the least encouraging and facilitative are presented:

- Translation was the least encouraging because I prefer to try and understand a text in its original language.
- Translation is the least effective method because I think it doesn't help your comprehension in Japanese and thinking ability in Japanese will be weak.
- Reading in Japanese gives more detail and understanding than a simple translation.

Separate surveys regarding pleasure reading and speed reading were conducted. Each asked six questions, some of which were open-ended, whereas others were closed. For each question, the participants were asked to give reasons for their answers. The researcher categorized the answers to the open-ended questions twice. A colleague who had an MA in Japanese linguistics was consulted on the categorization of ambiguous comments. Unfortunately, only 23 participants returned these surveys (15 from Group A and 8 from Group B), as they were administered at a time when the students were occupied with numerous institutionally-required assessments. The results of the surveys are reported in the next subsections. Numbers in parentheses given below are the raw numbers.

Pleasure reading. The majority of the participants had positive perceptions of the pleasure reading sessions, as the answers to Question 1 show.

Question 1: How do you find pleasure reading sessions in general?
Positive comments – 91.3% (21)
Negative comments – 8.7% (2)

Examples of positive comments:

- Enjoyable. Think that it is an excellent way to expose oneself to Japanese language and add to one's vocabulary.
- I had fun reading books in Japanese because other classes did not give us to do that.
- Most of the stories are really interesting, so it's easier to learn than from a story I have no interest in.
- I enjoyed the peace of reading and learning of genuine Japanese stories.

Words such as "enjoyable," "relaxing," and "interesting" appeared often in the participants' positive comments. Many of them also mentioned that pleasure reading increased their language abilities (vocabulary, speed, and comprehension).

Examples of negative comments:

- Too free? Assigned texts may make it easier.
- I feel like it really isn't that extensive. Most of our texts are very short.

As explained above, the books to which the participants had access tended to be rather short and thus perhaps not very engaging as suggested by the second negative comment above.

The answers to Question 2 demonstrate that over three-quarters of the participants wished that pleasure reading had been integrated into their previous language courses.

Question 2: Did you want to have pleasure reading in your previous Japanese courses?
Yes – 77% (17)
No – 23% (5)
One person did not answer.

Examples of "yes" answers:

- It would've been nice to take a break from grammar translating, and difficult texts.
- So that we could have the opportunity to see our language skills come alive.
- If we are allowed to choose our own texts, learning becomes more enjoyable.

The participants who answered "yes" to this question mentioned that pleasure reading enhanced their language abilities as well as motivation to read in Japanese; assigned texts in their lower level courses were both boring and too difficult. The text analysis showed that the three reading passages taken from their previous course's textbook were more demanding than the pleasure reading texts in all the linguistic aspects measured.

Examples of "no" answers:

- I don't like reading.
- It makes vocabulary at the end of the semester terrifying.

The participant who gave the second comment did not understand that the participants would not be tested on the pleasure reading.

Two open-ended questions, "What are good things of pleasure reading experience?" and "What are bad things about it?" were asked in the questionnaire. Examples of good things mentioned by the participants were:

- I can read faster now.
- You can read what you like.
- I feel more confident. I was surprised at how much my reading ability improved.
- Allows you to read for fun, which I haven't really done extensively since 8th grade.

Many participants pointed out factors such as having the chance to read in Japanese, being able to choose the books they wanted to read, and boosting their language abilities as benefits of pleasure reading.

In contrast, a smaller proportion of the participants raised the following as bad things:

- Too open and the readings were a bit too easy.
- It may be a better idea to assign a certain amount of reading as homework instead.
- Can be unfocused, lacks emphasis on accuracy.

These comments demonstrate that a minority of the participants preferred more structured reading activities, and did not fully understand the efficacy of pleasure reading.
However, the answers to Question 3 show that most participants felt that time spent on pleasure reading during class hours was justified.

Question 3: Do you think that reading in actual class time is beneficial?
Positive comments – 91.3% (21)
Negative comments – 8.7% (2)

Examples of positive comments:

- Because sometimes I cannot read a book in my private time due to other homework.
- If I have a hard time, the teacher is available. No distractions—everyone is reading.

Many of the reasons given by participants who welcomed actual reading time incorporated into classes suggested that they could not or would not read in Japanese otherwise.

Examples of negative comments:

- It is good, but maybe we could do it as homework instead.
- Because class time should be used for things that I cannot do on my own time. I can do pleasure reading on my own outside of classes.

These participants' views of classroom learning seemed to be inflexible and correspondent

with what Macalister (2014) claimed: The participants were dismissive of individual silent reading in class.

The answers to Question 4 indicate that the novel approach of pleasure reading in class, albeit limited in terms of time and frequency, may serve to kick-start participants' pleasure and extensive reading on their own in the future.

Question 4: Do you think you will do pleasure reading in your free time in the future?
Yes – 86.3% (19)
No – 13.7% (3)
One person did not answer.

Examples of "yes" answers:

- I like reading, so I want to read other Japanese books.
- I want to develop my vocabulary more and the best way to do that is probably by simply reading.
- It's an easy & fun way to practice & improve on my Japanese.

Examples of "no" answers:

- I'm busy.
- I think in my personal time, intensive reading is more beneficial.

One participant wrote, "I maybe try but I don't have the resources and materials but if I had I would to pass time." This comment points to the issue of the availability of materials, which is essential to promote pleasure reading and ER.

Speed reading. Most participants found speed reading beneficial, as shown by the answers to Question 1.

Question 1: Did you find speed reading training beneficial?
Yes – 87.5% (14)
No – 12.5% (2)
One person chose both Yes and No answers.

Examples of "yes" answers:

- It trains me to read faster and read the text as a whole and not word for word.
- Because before this class my teachers taught translation only. Speed reading and learning to understand a passage even when I don't know some *kanji* is helpful.
- It develops comprehension skills that require speed and accuracy.
- Good to recognize how fast you can read while still understanding.

Many participants felt that their reading became faster. Some participants mentioned that they were moving beyond a word-for-word process and literal translation during reading, in contrast

to other participants who maintained their orientation to complete accuracy in their understanding of their reading, exemplified below.

Examples of "no" answers:

- I don't like glossing (*furigana*) over texts. I'd rather read and be able to understand all that the author is saying.
- I'm not sure if my speed increased, but I didn't feel like it was helping with my Japanese.

In general, the speed reading materials, which were created for these classes by the researcher, were welcomed by about 80% of the participants in terms of their difficulty, as shown by the answers to Question 2. However, about one in five participants wanted more challenging materials, although the researcher had thoroughly explained why the speed reading texts needed to be below their current proficiency level. Their comments demonstrated that they had internalized a "no pain, no gain" stance, a supposition that is exemplified by one such comment: "I prefer more difficult passages. The content was too easy."

Question 2: What did you think about speed reading materials?
Interesting, good, fun – 62.5% (15)
Easy to read – 16.7% (4)
Too easy – 20.8% (5)
Some students gave multiple answers.

The answers to Question 3 show that fewer participants said that they would try speed reading training on their own, compared to those who would try pleasure reading.

Question 3: Do you think that you will do speed reading on your own in the future if there is a speed reading textbook or an online speed reading course available?
Yes – 64% (11)
No – 36% (6)
Two participants gave both Yes and No answers.

Examples of "yes" answers:

- It allows exposure to more Japanese text in addition to building skills for yourself.
- Working at a faster pace forces me to think harder.

Examples of "no" answers:

- I don't feel it's (speed) my biggest concern, compared to vocab and new phrases.
- I like to take my time reading.

The participants were all Japanese majors and enthusiastic about learning Japanese. However, one in five of them failed to detect the efficacy of speed reading, and one in three would not conduct speed reading on their own in the future even if resources were available, despite the strong encouragement and many reasons to do so given by the researcher throughout the

semester. Those who did not want to do speed reading on their own could not see that speed reading would increase the skills they wanted to develop to become a native-level fluent reader.

Discussion

The 5-point Likert scale survey showed that both pleasure reading and speed reading were more welcomed than translation by the participants of Group A. Although those of Group B rated pleasure reading and translation equally, in both groups' overall choice of the most and least encouraging and facilitative approaches, their lower valuing of translation was obvious. In contrast, speed reading was chosen as the most encouraging and facilitative approach and pleasure reading was second. The obtained findings could not explain the main difference in the two groups' responses: Group A rated translation less favorably than pleasure reading whereas Group B rated translation and pleasure reading equally. Future studies need to examine learners' affective responses to different fluency instructional approaches more deeply.

Explanations for why some participants found translation the least encouraging and facilitative are theoretically supported. Translation, defined by House (2009) as "the process of replacing a text in one language by a text in another language" (p. 4), is an ineffective, laborious strategy (Cook, 2010; O'Malley, Chamot, Stewner-Manzanares, Kupper, & Russo, 1985).

The positive aspects of pleasure reading pointed out by the participants coincide with the positive effects demonstrated by many ER studies: vocabulary learning opportunities (e.g., Cho & Krashen, 1994; Horst, 2005); motivation enhancement (e.g., Asraf & Ahmad, 2003; Cho & Kim, 2004; Elley & Mangubhai, 1983; Hitosugi & Day, 2004; Mason & Krashen, 1997); and increased reading speed (Beglar, Hunt & Kite, 2012; Bell, 2001). The fact that many participants praised actual reading time during classes corresponds with what Green (2005) and Macalister (2008) claimed. The present study's participants also enjoyed the freedom to choose what they read, as did the participants of studies by Park (2015) and Tabata-Sandom and Macalister (2009).

Some participants did not conduct much reading outside class. Therefore, the average reading quantity was not *extensive*, as explained above. However, Waring and McLean (2015) claimed that "whether the subjects are reading extensively or not, is a matter of how text is processed, i.e., smoothly and with high, fluent comprehension … we should separate fast, fluent comprehension from volume" (p. 162). The majority of the participants' favorable comments regarding pleasure reading suggest that they experienced reading for joy with the target texts, which were much easier than the demanding reading passages in their previous course textbook. Moreover, numerous episodes that occurred during the pleasure reading in class provide anecdotal evidence that supports its meaningfulness for the learners. For instance, one student of Japanese descent loudly uttered, "Now I know!" at one point. He told the researcher that the children's book he was reading at the time had explained superstition that his fourth-generation Japanese mother often expressed, which had always mystified him. This student read children's stories throughout the course, and the researcher had wondered if he was truly engaged in the reading. At the end of the course, he remarked that he had learnt so much about his ancestors' culture. This student may have opted for children's books as the easy choice initially, but he ended up being engrossed by some of them that illuminated aspects of his own identity. This is an illustrative example of

reading for pleasure and reading for meaning.

Comments regarding speed reading were equally positive. It is noteworthy that many participants not only perceived that their fluency increased (e.g., faster reading rates and departure from word-for-word reading), but also felt that their comprehension and accuracy increased as well. Despite this perception, their actual reading rate did not increase to a statistically significant degree. There are three possible explanations for why their reading rates did not increase.

First, the participants' reading rates may have been already at their optimal level. The L2 Japanese learners in Nishigoori's (1991) study read 250 and 262 letters per minute on average in pre-tests and posttests, respectively. The current participants' average reading rate was 312 and 319 letters per minute for the first and tenth reading respectively. Unfortunately, the two studies' data are not entirely comparable because the participants' learning experiences differed. It is still possible, however, to speculate that some of the current participants were more experienced than those of Nishigoori's study and thus may have reached their optimal reading speed. However, there was a large discrepancy among the current participants, and those in the slow-speed band did not seem to have reached their optimal speed yet. Furthermore, the average of the current participants' reading rates was less than 30% of that presented by the native readers who conducted reading in Nishigoori's (ibid.) study (pre-test: 1177 letters, posttest: 1248 letters) . From this fact, the current participants' reading rates can be thought to be still developing. In contrast to the current study, Tran's (2012) study presented a large reading rate gain. The fact that the participants in his study were first year university students, who thus had more room for development, could be a possible reason for their larger gain.

Second, insufficiently frequent speed reading training in this study may be the culprit behind the lack of speed gain. In Macalister's (2010) study in which the participants gained reading speed, their speed reading sessions were more frequent than those of the current study. Millett (2008) also suggested that speed reading practice has to be conducted frequently—at least three times a week—to create satisfactory speed gain. This second interpretation indicates a limitation of the current study; future studies should conduct speed reading training more frequently.

A third interpretation is equally convincing, and it is the focus of the current argument: The reading instruction that the participants had received previously, that is, grammar-translation method, trained them to avoid reading faster in order to get the gist of a text, and to instead always read as slowly as necessary to gain complete understanding. Over two decades ago, Nishigoori (1991) lamented that "in current L2 Japanese pedagogy, thorough reading and intensive reading are the main types of instruction, and learners develop reading habits based on the notion that 100% understanding of the content is what reading means…it is no easy task to get rid of such thorough reading and intensive reading habits nurtured during the elementary stage" (p. 1; my translation). The problem persists. The researcher often encouraged the participants to read faster as long as they could score about 70% (as recommended by Nation, 2005) on the comprehension questions. While their speed did not increase, their comprehension scores remained high—90.62% on average—which means they strove to gain complete understanding of the given texts at the expense of fluency. They were learners who could not "pick the right balance between speed and accuracy" (Torgesen & Hudson, 2006, p. 139) due to the influence of their former instruction.

As the quantitative analyses revealed, when the participants valued pleasure reading, they also valued speed reading. In general, the majority of the current participants (about 80%) held flexible attitudes toward novel instructional approaches. They enjoyed the "break from grammar translating and difficult texts" which they had had to deal with previously. And they discovered that "learning to understand a passage even when [they didn't] know some *kanji* is helpful."

To recapitulate, however, a small proportion of the participants (about 20%) preferred an intensive reading, grammar-translation stance, probably due to previous instruction. A strong influence of instruction on L2 Japanese learners is reported by Tabata-Sandom (2015). In the current participants' previous four-skill language courses, the participants had had to translate and completely understand given texts, which were often beyond their capability in terms of the content and linguistic features. Many of the negative comments about pleasure reading and speed reading reflect influences coming from those courses: "pleasure reading is too free, too easy, too open," "(pleasure reading) lacks emphasis on accuracy," "(speed reading materials) can be more challenging," and so forth. Some of the participants (22.8%) did not wish that their previous courses had pleasure reading, and some of them found speed reading materials too easy (20.8%). From this fact, we can extrapolate that about one in five of the participants had developed a predominantly intensive reading oriented stance due to their previous learning history. They had joined the "cult of authenticity" (Day & Bamford, 1998, p. 53), believing that only difficult, authentic texts were worthy of their study time.

The current study also endorses the positive influence of topic familiarity on text comprehension, even if the texts read are lexically and syntactically modified. Numerous scholars assert that topic familiarity invigorates learner-readers' inference capability, which facilitates comprehension (e.g., Alderson, 2000; Horiba & Fukaya, 2015; Shapiro, 2004). Thus, topic familiarity is an important factor in constructing comprehensible materials for use in fluency development.

This study presents a pedagogical implication for speed reading practice. The researcher noticed that the speed reading procedure employed in the current study made it obvious who were the fast readers and who the slow readers in the class. Therefore, some of the learners may have felt stigmatized. Timed repeated reading can be a more learner friendly way to promote speed reading (Richard Day, personal communication, September 21, 2015).

Conclusions

The study's findings are only suggestive due to methodological limitations such as the low frequency of both types of fluency instruction sessions. Nevertheless, the author believes that some of the current findings vividly illustrate how learners of Japanese respond when they experience novel fluency approaches. Specifically, the study has demonstrated that the majority of the participants welcomed such approaches when they first experienced them. However, influences of their former instruction limited the extent to which a minority of them appreciated such alternative approaches. Moreover, the participants in general failed to fully engage in speed reading training because they tried to maintain complete comprehension at the expense of speed.

When 80% of them believed that they should always look up unknown words in a dictionary during reading, the researcher's explicit explanation of the efficacy of fluency development fell short of gaining their maximum understanding of novel fluency approaches. Hence, the study concludes that an earlier start is key to the success of fluency development. That is, fluency development has to be incorporated in reading programs beginning at the lower levels, so that learners do not grow biased reading perceptions. Tabata-Sandom (2013) claimed that explicit guidance is necessary to maximize the benefits of ER. Similarly in a context such as the current one, i.e., advanced learners' courses, explicit guidance with the introduction of research findings regarding the efficacy of fluency development is a prerequisite for learners to fully understand the benefits of such alternative instruction (Tabata-Sandom, 2016). These two factors, an early start and explicit guidance, are essential to render fluency "a curricular and instructional goal for reading development" (Grabe, 2009, p. 290).

Notes

1. Japanese is written with two types of syllabaries (*hiragana* and *katakana*) and *kanji* logographs. Content words are mainly written in *kanji*. *Furigana* is a type of reading support. Written in the *hiragana* syllabary, *furigana* is attached to *kanji* in a smaller font, and provides the reading of the *kanji*. To be able to read *kanji* depends on readers' knowledge, and thus it poses a great difficulty to L2 Japanese readers.

2. In this article, the term "letter" includes both syllabaries and *kanji* logographs.

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