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Introduction and Effectiveness of New Methods of Instruction Using Literature in a Japanese High School Setting

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ABSTRACT

This paper reports on findings from a classroom study on the introduction and effectiveness of new methods of instruction using English literature in a Japanese high school setting. It is based on data compiled during a two-year research project. In this paper, we will detail the investigation and findings from an analysis of student questionnaire responses about their perception of introducing literary texts and language learning activities after two years of instruction. To track students' perceptions and the effectiveness of the introduced method in the English class, a pre- and post-questionnaire were administered to 41 Japanese second-year high school students. The findings indicate that the project design was highly motivational and provided ample opportunities for the students to think about literature in language learning.

INTRODUCTION

Using literature as learning material in the foreign language classroom has gained interest in the past 10 years as it has become an innovative option for teachers to meet communicative language learning ideals (Hall, 2005, 2015; Paran, 2008; Teranishi, Saito, & Wales, 2015). According to Hall (2015), research into second language reading and the reading of literature has flourished in recent years especially in terms of new technologies. Equivalently, in Japan, numerous empirical studies into the development of foreign language reading and the potential use of literature in the Japanese English as a Foreign Language (EFL) context have been reported. However, most of this research is at the university level (Beglar & Hunt, 2014; Teranishi et al., 2015; Waring & Takaki, 2003). There is but little research focusing on the usage of literature in secondary settings (Ono, 2011; Richings, 2017; Richings & Nishimuro, 2016; Takada, 2006). Although students, regardless of the year they are in, encounter literary texts when taking a nationally recognized English test, such as the Global Test of English Communication (GTEC for Students)¹ (Benesse Corporation, 2014), such texts are rarely used during English instruction at high schools. The target learners (second year students) were not given the opportunity to experience reading literary texts in English class in their first year, and this is also the case for the

other years (second and third year). In other words, there are no opportunities for students to experience or interact with literature in English class.

There may be several possible reasons as to why literary texts are disregarded and unexplored. The main challenges are related to issues such as curriculum, class time, and material limitations. Furthermore, many Japanese teachers have no background in or experience of how to apply literature in their English class, therefore feeling reluctant to try. Not only pedagogical issues but also an assumed lack of interest and motivation from the students may add to the passivity towards literature. Despite these constraints, this project embraces the premise that literature, even with high-school students, can provide fundamental opportunities for language learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

As indicated above, there is a substantial amount of research into the use of literature in the Japanese EFL context, including surveys investigating student attitudes towards the use of literature and introduced methods. These studies cover a wide range of literary materials and methodology. It must be noted, however, that most of this research is conducted in university settings (Lazar, 2015; Kuze, 2015; Teranishi et al., 2015). On the contrary, only a limited number of studies investigate student attitudes towards the use of literature at the secondary level (Richings, 2017; Richings & Nishimuro, 2016; Takada, 2006). Most experimental and quasi-experimental studies with high school students examine the effectiveness of reading programs or the development of foreign language reading (Iwahori, 2008; Stein, 2014; Takase, 2007). Yet, these studies do not approach student attitudes towards the use of literature in their English class. For example, Stein (2014) reports on doing time-lining (mapping the story events onto a timeline) activities in class and student feedback. Takase (2007) reports on the implementation of a one-year extensive reading program for second-year high school students. The survey consists of statements focusing on reading in general and reading motivation but does not ask students for opinions about literature as a learning material. Likewise, Iwahori's (2008) study into the effectiveness of extensive reading (ER) on reading rates of second-year high school students does not include inquiry into the participants' perception of the used materials or instruction method.

To address this lack of empirical research, a two-year classroom study project was designed with the aim of making literature as a learning material more accessible to high school students and explore their perceptions towards literature in English class. This paper reports on the investigation and findings from an analysis of student questionnaire responses and language learning activities that were conducted throughout the two years of instruction. The study investigated the following research questions:

1. How do Japanese high school students feel about the use of literature in the English class?
2. What are Japanese high school students' perceptions of the instruction methods used?

METHODOLOGY

Participants and Background to the Course

This study was conducted in an English class at a large private high school in Japan. The participants were 41 Japanese second-year male high school students (16 to 17 years old). The

English course where the study was conducted is a team-taught class that is offered to second- and third-year low-intermediate to intermediate level students. The class met twice a week and lasted 45 minutes, with 13 to 20 classes per term. It was delivered over three terms for the first year (2014/2015) and two terms-there are no classes for the third year students in the third term-for the second year (2015/2016) of the project.

Project-Based Learning

To introduce students to readings of literature while promoting meaningful student engagement with language learning, a project-based instruction was adopted. As Stoller (2002) states, “By integrating project work into content-based classrooms, educators create vibrant learning environments that require active student involvement, stimulate higher-level thinking skills, and give students responsibility for their own learning” (p.107). Project-based learning is a form of situated learning allowing students to learn by engaging and applying ideas in an authentic, real-world context. When students actively construct their understanding by working with and using ideas, they can gain a deeper understanding of the content to be learned (Krajcik & Blumenfeld, 2006). Project-based learning was first advocated by John Dewey (1959). According to Dewey, students will only develop the ability to make personal contributions if they engage in real, meaningful tasks and problems that emulate real-world situations. Project work can be used with almost all levels, ages, and abilities of students and represents much more than just group work (Stoller, 2002). As such, the purpose of incorporating project-based learning into the study was to disconnect from a teacher-centered instruction and generate a student community involving authentic communication, cooperative learning, and collaboration with literature as main resource.

Project Design

Project-based learning can adopt various formats. The most appropriate format rests on diverse factors such as curricular objectives, course expectations, time constraints, availability of materials, students’ proficiency levels, and student interest (Stoller, 2002). For this study, we employed a *structured project* as proposed by Henry (1994) where topic, materials, methodology, and presentation are specified and organized by the teachers. Project work requires careful planning and it is essential that the students are informed of the whole process from the outset in order to be successful. First, we introduced literature as a learning material for the English class. Next, we explained about the project; its purpose, goals, and expected outcome. The content of the project, i.e. activities and materials, was demonstrated in detail. Finally, criteria for evaluation of the project were clarified. Using literature as main material for two years, it was imperative to create meaningful and motivating learning activities for the students to become immersed in the use of the target language while learning to work in groups. To fit this purpose, different activities were designed for each term and year. Figure 1 shows a complete overview of the two-year project.

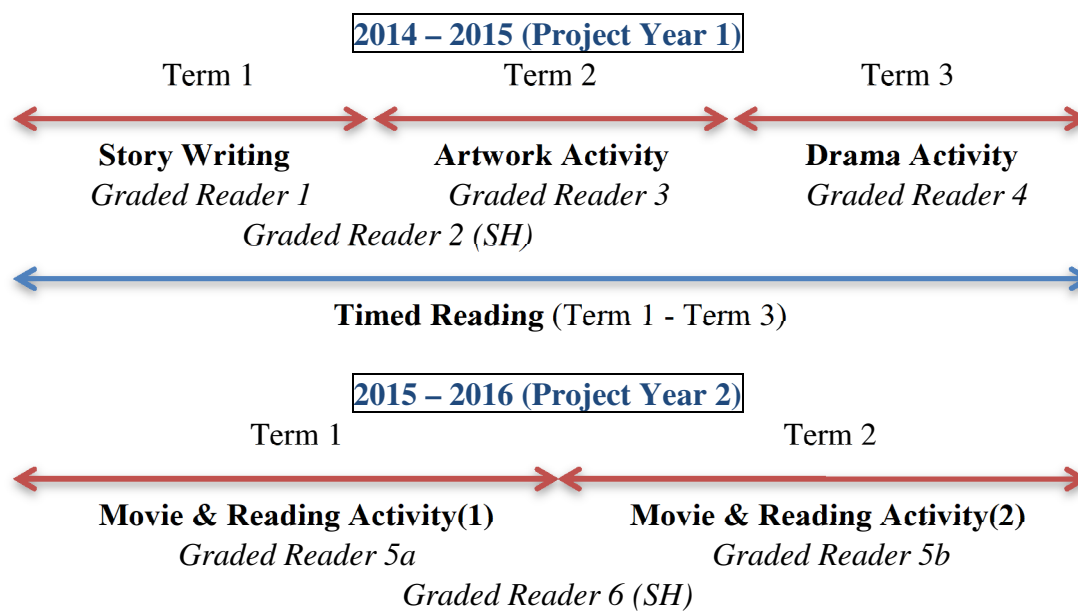


Figure 1. Project overview.

As shown in Figure 1, for the first year of the study, we used story writing, artwork and drama activities, and timed reading activities as instruction method. For the second year, we combined movie and reading activities for the two terms. Through these different activities, it was hoped that evidence would be obtained to show how to improve students' English skills and appreciation of literary texts without relying solely on an intensive reading approach or extensive reading (ER) program. Japanese high school students read comparatively slowly and without a communicative purpose. This is said to be the result of a generalized intensive reading approach in EFL teaching within Japan (Conway, 2013; Tanaka & Stapleton, 2007). Although the ER approach is an effective way of introducing literature, it was only partially adopted for this project. We asked the students to read graded readers² to make sure they had a reasonable amount of contact with literary texts throughout the project, but this included only four (one graded reader per term and one as summer homework) readers³ for 2014 and two (one graded reader split over two terms and one as summer homework) readers⁴ for 2015. Graded readers were used instead of authentic texts to ensure a maximum meaning-focused input. Graded readers are often undervalued by applied linguistics and native-speaker teachers for being not-authentic, but as Hill (1997) states, the authenticity of graded readers is not relevant. Graded readers are said to provide "an authentic reading experience for learners, which will help prepare them for reading unsimplified texts" (Claridge, 2005, p.157). For this project, Level 1⁵ was chosen as a starting point to prevent the students' lack of vocabulary interfering with their comprehension from the outset. The texts were also selected with the intention of arousing students' curiosity and fostering their interest in the reading of literary texts.

ACTIVITIES

Timed Reading

The timed reading activity was an activity adapted for the first year of the project and was conducted throughout the year (Figure 1). The reading activities for timed reading included short authentic literary texts and were timed: 10-minute timed reading activities. The texts were chosen from *Timed Readings Plus in Literature* (Jamestown Education, 2008). For Term 1 and Term 2 we used *Book 1*, for Term 3 *Book 2*. The texts were all at the same level: Pre 2-level of the Eiken Test⁶. Each reading activity consisted of an approximately 200-word literary text the students had to read in 2 minutes (100 words per minute). The other 8 minutes were for answering multiple-choice questions: four per text that asked the students to recall facts, read for implicit meaning, confirm story events, and understand words in context. After the 10-minute reading activity, class time was dedicated to peer evaluation and discussion. There were only 15 timed readings throughout the year (1 text per week) to prevent the lessons from becoming literature saturated and to accustom the students to reading literary texts.

This method was introduced to improve students' reading speed, comprehension, and enjoyment of literary texts. As Nuttall (1996) states, "speed, enjoyment, and comprehension are closely linked with one another" (p. 127). Also, time limitations may promote concentration, enhancing reading comprehension (Walczyk, Kelly, Meche, & Braud, 1999).

Story Writing

Story Writing was an activity prepared for Term 1 of 2014. This was also the beginning of the project, therefore, the first week of the course was dedicated to conducting the Pre-Q and introducing the students to literature as a learning material and the project. For this activity, students had to finish one graded reader (*The Crown*, Penguin Readers, level 1) and complete a worksheet as summer homework which included multiple-choice questions, short answer questions, and the story writing task. As this was most students' first encounter with literature in the English class and they would have to read it for two years, it was necessary to assign readings at an initially slow pace in order to accustom students to the unfamiliar task. Accordingly, once a week one short story from *O. Henry Short Stories* (Penguin Readers, level 1) was read together in class followed by discussion about the content. By the end of Term 1, students had finished their first graded reader.

The last question on the worksheet was the story writing task: the students were asked to write a sequel to the story of at least 200 words from the viewpoint of the protagonist. The purpose of the story writing activity was to examine the students understanding of story elements such as characters, setting, and plot, which equally had been introduced in the timed reading activities. Finally, at the beginning of Term 2, some interesting and original stories written by the students were shared with the whole class.

This method was chosen as primary activity in the project alongside the timed reading activities to gradually accustom the students to literature by reading short fragments of their first graded reader together in class. The writing homework was deliberately extended until summer vacation giving the students enough time to engage themselves with the content of the story.

Artwork Activity

The artwork activity in Term 2 consisted of participating in a reading competition called “Oxford Big Read” (Oxford University Press, 2016). Oxford Big Read is a reading competition for junior-senior high, college, and university students throughout Japan, held every year in the fall. The Oxford Big Read competition involves the following rules: 1) students read one graded reader and create a 2-D item in the form of a poster, a postcard, or a book cover, 2) students include a review and a recommendation in English based on an interesting point about the story, and 3) the teacher registers the participating class and submits the three best items. We decided to enter the Oxford Big Read competition as it was hoped that with a specific goal in mind (i.e., creating individual postcards⁷), the students would keep their motivation to read through a literary text in class and at home and be ready to work on their artwork in groups throughout the term. Also, participating in the Oxford Big Read competition was conveniently timed because the students had read and practiced writing a narrative text in Term 1.

First, for this activity, the students were asked to choose one book from a list provided by the instructors who had selected four books⁸ for this term, based on level and total amount of chapters. It was necessary to select books with a similar amount of chapters so that the students would have a similar reading load. However, for this activity and Term 2, the students were free to select either a level 1 or level 2 book with the view to give those who were not ready yet to challenge a higher level some more time to get accustomed. Every week, students read two chapters and completed a worksheet in class using the book. After reading the whole book, students who had read the same story sat in groups of four or five to complete a second worksheet which consisted of writing a summary of the story, a recommendation of the book, and one quote or catchy sentence according to the Oxford Big Read rules. Following the completion of these worksheet based activities, the students could then begin their artwork and two classes were dedicated to drawing and coloring.

Drama Activity

In the third term of the school year 2014, students were asked to produce their own narrative story in groups and perform it in front of the class in the form of a play. Every student had to read the same level 2 graded reader (*Sherlock Holmes Short Stories*, Oxford Bookworms Library) as homework but this time the story was not directly reflected in their play. In other words, the students were not required to use the appointed graded reader to fill in a worksheet as in the artwork activity where they had to use the story to complete the drawing task. The purpose of the graded reader was to keep the students interacting with literary texts while creating their own story. First, the instructors performed a sample play and explained the content of this activity. In the next class, the students were divided in groups of four to five students. The goal for each group was to make an original story by choosing genre, setting, characters, plot, and also their individual role in the play. The play had to last longer than five minutes and each performer including the narrator had to speak at least 10 lines. In the third class, the students brought together their ideas in their groups, discussed the story line (i.e., prologue, event, turn and change, conclusion) and completed one worksheet. The next three to four classes were allotted to writing the script in English, preparing and practicing their performance in class. Finally, three classes were dedicated to the actual performances and discussion. During the performances, the students were also required to evaluate each other based on the four storyline elements: prologue, event, turn and change, conclusion, as well as energy and memorization. This activity was introduced with the purpose of promoting

meaningful student engagement with language learning in the form of reading and speaking tasks. By creating a dynamic learning environment that requires active student group work, it was hoped students would continuously be motivated to read narratives.

Movie and Reading Activity

For the second year of the study, we used authentic reading material in the form of a novel as instruction method for both Term 1 and 2. According to Tsai (2012), “Authentic book-length novels, however, despite their popularity in the recommended material list for pleasure reading, are rarely used to supplement textbooks, much less being central to the regular EFL curriculum” (p. 103). Furthermore, book-length novels may be troublesome to teachers in terms of insufficient curricular guidance at hand and the large amounts of vocabulary can be intimidating to students who are used to reading shorter texts (Gareis et al., 2009). Moreover, in order to obtain language skills and enjoyment from the reading experience, novels are generally regarded as appropriate for high-intermediate to advanced level readers. However, as Tsou (2007) mentions, using novels in the EFL class can be beneficial even to lower level students.

This method was introduced for two reasons. First, to avoid the students growing feelings of boredom at doing timed reading activities for a consecutive year and losing their motivation to continue reading literature. Second, to improve students’ comprehension of longer authentic literary texts. The central aim of this second year of the project was to challenge longer texts in the form of a whole book, in addition to the development of a basic understanding of literary texts which was practiced in the first year of the project through timed reading and graded readers. To ease students into this reading process of longer texts, the instruction for this year also included the introduction of a visual counterpart of the novel. Watching the film version of the novel is said to help moderate students’ anxiety and difficulty of the reading process (Gareis et al., 2009). Based on this notion, at the beginning of school year 2015, students were informed that they would read one novel per term and watch the visual version of the story in class, in addition to one level 3 graded reader (*The Picture of Dorian Gray*, Oxford Bookworms Library) as homework spread throughout the year. The two novels were *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* (Dahl, 2007) for Term 1 and *Big Hero 6* (Trimble, 2014) for Term 2, equivalent to the Pre-2 and 2 level of the Eiken Test. Both books were selected after thorough analysis of the film adaptations through which it was confirmed that these respectively contained identical dialogues to the novels. Although the former novel may be a little more challenging for the students and difficult to finish reading in one term, it was chosen as first book for the reason that they had already read some episodes as timed reading activities in the previous year, and secondly because many students had mentioned they had enjoyed reading these *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* episodes.

Both terms followed the same procedure. The first class of each week was dedicated to reading the appointed pages in the book and answering one worksheet. In the second class of the week, the first 15 minutes were devoted to evaluation of the worksheet of the previous class, the next 15 minutes to viewing of the corresponding movie episode, and the remaining 15 minutes to completion of another worksheet. This worksheet was then evaluated in the next class, before the reading session. Both book and movie worksheets contained questions to recall facts, confirm story events, and understand words in context. Taking into account that the book and movie content was nearly similar, care was taken to compose different questions for each.

In the following section, due to the complexity of the project, first the results for each individual activity will be presented, followed by the results for the Pre-Q administered at the very beginning of the project and the Post-Q administered at the very end of the project.

RESULTS

Timed Reading Activity

After one year of doing timed reading activities, we asked the students for their opinions about the employed method in the Post-Q. As Figure 2 (item 1, enjoyment) illustrates, 31 students (75.6%) agreed positively to doing timed reading activities. No one responded negatively. For item 2 (comprehension), *I think my reading skills have improved through timed reading*, received high affirmative responses with 30 students (73.2%) agreeing. For item 3 (speed), only 20 students (48.8%) thought their reading speed had improved through timed reading. In spite of their belief that doing timed reading activities helped them, some students reported that they did not like doing timed reading. They provided the following reasons: “I didn’t really understand the texts in the timed reading activities,” and “I would have liked a little more in-depth reading of the literary texts rather than just brief explanations about content and grammar.” Some positive opinions were: “I think my reading comprehension skills have improved,” and “I think the texts were appropriately difficult.”

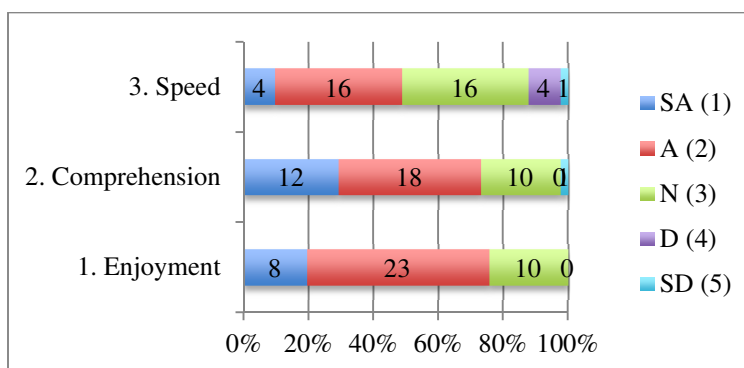


Figure 2. Student perceptions of timed reading.

Story Writing

The questionnaire for the story writing activity consisted of only two dichotomous questions instead of three (Table 1). There was no question asking, *Did you enjoy working on your story writing in class?* (item 2, in-class work) because this was a task students had to complete as summer homework. For most of the students the story writing experience was highly enjoyable with 35 students (85.4%) agreeing (item 1, enjoyment). When asked, *Do you think this activity helped you improve your English reading and writing skills?*, only 29 students (69.5%) agreed (item 3, skills). Some students doubted their English reading and writing skills had improved stating: “It is too soon to know,” and “We have only just started reading literature.” Other opinions received for the open-ended question *Freely write your opinion about this activity* included positive and negative comments. Some students mentioned: “This activity was nice but doing it as homework was difficult,” and “I would have liked doing story writing in class first and then a second time as homework.” Some students affirmed they had enjoyed this first term activity as an introduction to reading literature, and that after reading the story, story writing was an interesting and challenging way to help them reflect on the content and their comprehension of the story.

Artwork Activity

Table 1 (item 1, enjoyment) shows that 40 students (97.6%) liked this activity. Only one student (2.4%) did not, saying that he did not like drawing. For item 2 (in-class work), *Did you enjoy working on your artwork in class?*, 25 students (61.0%) agreed. Some negative opinions were, “I don’t like drawing” and “I’m not good at drawing.” For item 3 (skills), *Do you think this activity helped you improve your English reading and writing skills?*, received high affirmative responses with 37 students (90.2%) agreeing. The four students disagreeing provided the following reason to explain why they thought so: “I didn’t really feel I learned a lot.” Other opinions received for the open-ended question included positive and negative comments. Some students mentioned: “This felt more like an art class,” and “There was too much time for drawing.” On the other hand, some students wrote, “Very exciting lessons,” and “Short stories are fine, but this time I thought that reading one long story was challenging and interesting.”

Drama Activity

At the end of Term 3, when the students were asked if they liked the drama activity, 38 students (92.7%) agreed (Table 1, item 1 enjoyment). For item 2 (in-class work), *Did you enjoy working on your play in class?*, 31 students (75.6%) said yes, and 10 students (24.4%) said no. Some reasons for their negative opinion were, “We used too much class time” and “Some students didn’t prepare.” For item 3 (skills), *Do you think this activity helped you improve your English reading and speaking skills?*, 39 students (95.1%) agreed. As for other opinions about this activity, one student thought that there was too much to memorize, and some students thought performing in front of the class was too embarrassing. Also, one student indicated that it would have been nice if they could have watched the video of the plays afterwards. Other positive comments were, “I was really nervous but the result was satisfying,” and “Working on the script really helped me improve my English skills.”

Movie and Reading Activity

Students’ perceptions of reading authentic stories in the form of a novel, as displayed in Table 1 (item 1, enjoyment), were generally positive with 29 students (70.7%) agreeing. Some students stated: “Reading a novel originally written for native readers was a big but rewarding challenge,” “I think the chosen novels were of interesting content and easy to familiarize with,” and “I enjoyed watching the movie after hard work trying to understand the book.” For item 2 (in-class work), *Did you enjoy reading chapters of the book in class?*, 25 students (61.0%) answered yes. Although the number of students agreeing is higher than 50%, reading chapters in class was “boring” and “tiring” for some students. However, some students wrote that the idea of watching the visual counterpart of the story in the next class motivated them to do their homework and read in class. For item 3 (skills), *Do you think this activity helped you improve your English reading and listening skills?*, 23 students (56.1%) agreed. Some students mentioned they thought their comprehension of the story was enhanced through watching the movie and their listening skills had improved through reading the story and watching the film version afterwards.

In all, many students commented that they had enjoyed reading the book and then watching the movie, that they enjoyed trying to find the differences and similarities in the storyline of the

book and movie, and that watching the movie after having read the story helped deepen their comprehension of what they had read.

Table 1. Student Perceptions of the Individual Activities ($n=41$)

	Story Writing		Artwork		Drama		Movie and Reading	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Item 1 (enjoyment)	35	6	40	1	38	3	29	12
Item 2 (in-class work)			25	16	31	10	25	16
Item 3 (skills)	29	12	37	4	39	2	23	18

Graded Reading

After two years of doing graded reading, the post-Q revealed that for most of the students, graded reading was not so enjoyable. As Figure 3 (item 1, enjoyment) illustrates, only six students (14.6%) responded positively to graded readers. For item 2 (comprehension), *I think my reading skills have improved through graded reading*, received high affirmative responses with 28 students (68.3%) students agreeing. When students were asked if they would like to be able to read a higher level of Graded Reader (item 3, higher level), only 22 students (53.7%) agreed. Opinions received for the open ended question can be divided into statements about the introduced methodology and the provided levels. Students gave the following reasons to explain why they disliked graded reading: “I would have liked prints with translations of the text and more information on grammar,” and “I would have preferred to have some class time to discuss personal interpretations of the text.” The following opinions relate to the level of the graded readers: “Level 3 was really difficult,” “For me, all levels were difficult,” “I wanted to read more of level 2,” “I wanted to challenge a higher level,” and “Levels should have been chosen by the students.” Finally, there were also some comments about the content of the stories. Some students mentioned that they didn’t like the stories. These opinions highlight the negative results of item 1, *I enjoyed doing graded reading*. Still, many students approved of the graded reading activities. Some positive opinions were: “The provided levels were all appropriate,” “Starting with level 1 helped us to getting used to reading longer texts,” “With this method, we could read at our own pace and it also obliged us to control our motivation.”

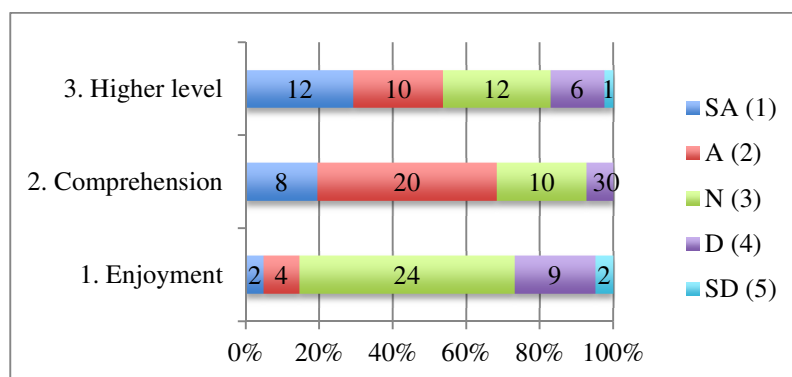


Figure 3. Student perceptions of graded reading.**Student Responses to Pre- and Post-Q Questions**

Analysis of the Likert items in the Pre-Q and Post-Q indicates that there were significantly positive changes in students' overall perceptions of literature in the English class after two years of instruction. At the beginning of the study, student responses to *I enjoy reading in English* (Table 2, Item 1) indicated that students might value this new activity: 15 students (36.6%) agreed and 18 students (43.9%) selected the neutral option. In the Post-Q, an additional 12% students said they enjoyed reading in English. This increase in student enjoyment of reading in English is significant as measured by a paired t-test (two-tailed) ($t(40) = 2.88$ $p = .006$). Similarly, student enjoyment of reading literature in English improved significantly following the intervention ($t(40) = 5.00$ $p < .001$), with eight more students (19.5%) selecting "Strongly Agree" and "Agree" (Table 2, Item 2). Only four students (9.8%) disagreed which is 43.9% less than before the study. Next, all students thought that reading literary texts helped improve their reading skills at the beginning of the study (Table 2, Item 3). This number dropped to 35 students (85.4%) agreeing, and 2 students (4.9%) disagreeing by the end of the study. This change in student perception was significant ($t(40) = 2.51$ $p = .016$). Finally, Item 4 (Table 2) shows that student agreement with *I think that reading literary texts can help improve my English skills in general* did not change significantly ($t(40) = 0.15$ $p = .875$) from the beginning to the end of the project. Before the project, 80.5% of the students thought that reading literature could help improve their English skills in general and 73.2% of students thought so at the end of the project. When we asked the students for their opinions about the usage of literary text in the Post-Q, some students stated: "Reading a lot of literature helped me improve my English skills in terms of comprehending longer sentences," and "I'm stronger at reading now." These opinions reflect the positive effect that the introduction of literature had on students' perceptions of literature as a learning material. After a two-year long literature-reading project, we asked the students one additional question: *I think it is important to include literature as a learning material in the English class*, in the Post-Q. 26 students (63.4%) thought literature should be included in English education and 12 students (29.3%) selected the neutral opinion. Only three students (7.3%) disagreed.

Table 2. Changes in Student perceptions ($n=41$)

	Item 1		Item 2		Item 3		Item 4	
	Pre-Q	Post-Q	Pre-Q	Post-Q	Pre-Q	Post-Q	Pre-Q	Post-Q
Strongly Agree	1	4	0	4	23	15	10	14
Agree	14	16	4	8	18	20	23	16
Neutral	18	21	15	25	0	4	6	9
Disagree	7	0	19	4	0	2	2	2
Strongly Disagree	1	0	3	0	0	0	0	0

DISCUSSION

The majority of the students responded affirmatively to doing timed reading activities and most of the students acknowledged that their reading skills had improved with this method. On the other hand, although many students thought they could benefit from graded readers in terms of reading skills, many of them responded negatively to graded reading in terms of enjoyment. The reasons they provided to explain why they disliked graded reading could imply how students are used to a more intensive reading method and how students expect teachers to apply an intensive reading approach in the reading class. Obviously, students feel uncertain about their reading skills without this intensive method they are used to. Also, apparently many students prefer to focus on one level they think is their level and do not feel like challenging a higher level. Another factor that may have contributed to this result is the choice of reading materials. Some students thought there was not enough genre variation. This could be said for the second year of the project; both graded readers were mystery stories. In short, insufficient attention to these issues from the instructors may have added to students' frustration about the graded readers. Nevertheless, as positive opinions about this method enlighten, students did not experience difficulty becoming accustomed to reading literary texts.

Students' story writing not only revealed that they had a clear vision of the content of the story, but also that they were able to distinguish basic elements of a literary text such as context, events, and characters. Most students incorporated all these elements in their original story. However, after only one term of reading a literary text and one practice of story writing, it is difficult to attribute any positive effects of this method other than the fact that it was enjoyable for most students and that some students thought their reading skills and writing skills had improved.

Unfortunately, there was no winning prize for the students for the Oxford Big Read activity but the students were enthusiastic about this idea of reading a story and expressing their interpretation of the story in the form of artwork. For the drama activity, although some students were nervous, all groups performed their play with confidence and displayed surprising energy. As is noticeable from the results, the students did not only enjoy the artwork and drama activities but also thought their reading, writing, and speaking skills had improved through these practices. One point to consider, however, is that some students felt frustration during the drawing portions of the artwork activity and the preparation and performance part of the drama activity in class.

Next, reading longer authentic material was a new but rewarding challenge for many students. On the other hand, some students had doubts about improvement of their English skills. This was perhaps due to the fact that when reading the book and watching the movie they felt the need to rely on their dictionary and help from the teachers. Overall, this method received positive reaction especially in terms of motivation.

After viewing the results of the Pre-Q and Post-Q, it can be said that many of the students enjoy reading English and English literary texts more than they did before the study. In contrary, the Post-Q data show that student perceptions of their English reading skills and English skills in general did not improve significantly between the beginning and end of the project even though in the individual questionnaires most students indicated a belief that reading literature helped improve their writing skills (story writing, artwork activity), speaking skills (drama activity), and listening skills (movie and reading activity).

CONCLUSION

At the end of this project, we can conclude that students were able to familiarize themselves with literature constructively. Also, the general impression gained from this study is that high school students are open to different kinds of activities all focusing on one main resource; in this case literature. What emerges from this study, however, is a concern for how to keep more able students motivated and less able students confident in challenging more difficult texts in a class with mixed levels of students. In short, this project allowed for a learning environment, where motivation was induced through interaction and mediation between teachers, students, materials, and activities. Hopefully, this paper provides a rationale for project-based instruction and demonstrates how literature as a learning material can be integrated into the foreign language classroom.

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NOTES

1. A paper-based certification test of English skills that has three parts: Reading, Listening and Writing, for group examinations in combined junior high/high schools and high schools.
2. Oxford Bookworms Library: <https://elt.oup.com/?cc=jp&selLanguage=ja> , Penguin Readers: <http://www.pearson.co.jp/catalog/pearsons-graded-readers.php?lang=ja> . , Cambridge Experience Readers: <http://www.cambridge.org/us/cambridgeenglish/catalog/readers/cambridge-experience-readers>
According to Nation (2009), although the levels in different grader readers' series are not identical with each other in the number of levels, or the amount of vocabulary at each level, this difference is not considered a serious problem.
3. *O. Henry Short Stories* (Term 1, Penguin Readers), *The Crown* (summer homework, Penguin Readers), one book from the following titles for Term 2: *White Death*, *Love or Money*, *The*

Canterville Ghost, Dracula, and Sherlock Holmes Short Stories (Term 3, Oxford Bookworms Library).

4. *Tales of Terror* (Term 1 and 2, Cambridge Experience Readers), *The Picture of Dorian Gray* (summer homework, Oxford Bookworms Library)

5. Level 1 of the graded readers corresponds to level A1 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR)

6. The Eiken Test is a test in English Proficiency and Japan's most widely recognized English language assessment (Eiken Foundation of Japan, 2014). Pre 2-level of the Eiken Test corresponds to level A2 of the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

7. For this class, postcards were chosen as 2-D item for reason of size.

8. Two Level 1 books: *White Death, Love or Money*, and two Level 2 books: *The Canterville Ghost, Dracula*.

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