An Approach to Repeated English Courses Using Learning Through Extensive Reading

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One issue that university English education in Japan needs to address is how unmotivated remedial students should be taught. According to Takase and Otsuki (2011), approximately 5-10% of Japanese students repeat required English courses every year because they failed to earn the credits the first time around due to poor performance and/or lack of attendance. However, approaches to these repeat students in the EFL classroom have not been adequately investigated. This presentation reports a case study in which extensive reading (ER) was employed as an approach in repeated English courses at a Japanese university. The participants were 34 non-English-major students from sophomore to senior levels. Given the nature of the repeated class, where students’ motivation is generally poorer and their interests vary greatly, the class employed ER instruction, a process by means of which implicit learning is expected. In the 15-week class, the students engaged in “guided” sustained silent reading (SSR), which enabled them to secure reading time and increase the complexity of their reading from simple, short stories to longer stories. The class requirement was to read at least 100 comprehensible books and 30,000 words during one semester. The students were required to keep a reading log in which they recorded every book they read, a process for which they were provided individual guidance by the instructor during SSR. In addition, two poster sessions were held where the students presented what they read to their classmates. The students’ learning achievement was examined using the Edinburgh Project on Extensive Reading (EPER) test on the first and the last day of class. Statistical analysis of the test results showed that the post-EPER test scores were significantly higher than the pre-EPER test scores, indicating that repeat students’ English reading proficiency improved as a result of ER learning.

Poetry as Autobiographical Writing: A Study of Japanese EFL Learners Ability to Communicate their English Learning Experiences in Poetic Forms

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Recent research has suggested that poetry written by second language (L2) learners can be used to explore personal, academic and professional life histories (Hanauer, 2010; Park, 2013). While previous studies of L2 poetry have been conducted in ESL contexts, there has been scant reporting on poetry writing and EFL learners. The current study addresses this issue by exploring the value of poetry writing in Japanese contexts. The research questions in this study are as follows: (1) What are the textual and literary characteristics of poems written by Japanese EFL students? (2) How do Japanese EFL students understand and express their English learning experiences in poetic forms? This study employed Hanauer’s (2010) methodological guidelines for poetry writing as a research method. Data collected came from 60 poems written by 12 college juniors registered in a teacher-training course. In this study, the participants were assigned to write five poems concerning their English learning experiences. Data analysis consisted of the two phases: statistical analysis of linguistic categories, lexical content, and expressed emotional content; and qualitative analysis of the writers’ subjective positions by observing poetic content and linguistic and literary choices. The results of this study showed that L2 poetry could best be characterized as short, simple, descriptive and personal. It also revealed that the task of poetry writing helped the participants to reflect on their English learning experiences in terms of their learning environments, learning tasks, learning activities and states of mind. In this sense, poetry writing was a meaningful literacy practice through which the participants were able to reflect on the learning process and explore more effective ways to learn English as life-long learners. In addition, they could benefit from these experiences in their roles as future language teachers.