CRITICAL THINKING SKILLS AND
JAPANESE AS A SECOND LANGUAGE READING TEXTBOOKS

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A Project
Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies
of the University of Lethbridge
in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree

MASTER OF EDUCATION

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

LETHBRIDGE, ALBERTA

December 2004

Abstract

This study examines aspects of teaching reading in Japanese as a Second Language (JSL) in Japan. The objective of the study is to draw implications for helping JSL students to acquire critical reading skills that are essential for university studies. Examined are selected characteristics of eight JSL reading textbooks commonly used in preliminary courses for Japanese universities. Two major findings emerge. First, the texts reveal a preference for exercises and questions that overwhelmingly address superficial aspects of both the content of the text and its linguistic elements. Second, elements of critical analysis are virtually absent in the texts. The study concludes that, to make progress in teaching critical reading skills in JSL classrooms, teachers will need to reflect deliberately on their reading style, making an effort to view texts critically. Beyond that, textbook authors will need to revise substantially their suggested exercises by downplaying rote comprehension and accenting analysis and interpretation.

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Chapter 1. Introduction

In the process of learning a second language, students may approach reading from different perspectives and with different attitudes. One important difference is that a Western perspective focuses on critical examination of text, while a Confucian orientation (common in East Asian cultures) emphasizes uncritical memorization. Second language (L2) teachers need to be aware of this when dealing with culturally diverse classrooms.

This becomes especially important when students are required to use outside sources in their writing. In a previous Independent Study on problems that students encounter in essay writing at a Japanese university, I found that students from Confucian heritage countries such as China and Korea had particular difficulty in using outside resources in their writing. This difficulty seems to come not only from insufficient reading ability and lack of referencing skills, but also students' lack of experience in critical reading. The resulting very passive attitude toward written texts shown by these students is discussed in the next section of this paper.

It should be noted that critical reading is a relatively new concept for Japanese as Second Language (JSL) teachers. In many JSL reading classrooms, teachers are mainly involved in teaching grammar and vocabulary and helping students understand the literal content of the text. Since the goal of reading classes is for students to acquire language abilities, JSL reading teachers neither require students to evaluate the text nor to utilize it in their own arguments. It is clear that a study of the theory and practices of teaching critical reading is important, particularly a consideration of how to incorporate critical reading theories into JSL reading classrooms.

The purpose of this chapter is threefold. The first purpose is to discuss the absence of critical reading in JSL classrooms in Japanese universities, where a majority of students are from Confucian heritage countries. Second, to review the literature on the theories and practices of critical reading and third, to draw lessons and implications for teaching critical reading in JSL classrooms.

Background

Reading forms the foundation for academic writing. Students cannot succeed in academic writing unless they learn critical reading skills as well as how to use information from outside sources in their own arguments. However, most JSL teachers are primarily concerned with the formal aspects of the text such as structure, accuracy of language, and appropriate use of vocabulary rather than the persuasiveness of the text supported with outside sources.

Carson and Leki (1993) and Spack (1988) insist that the most important skill that English teachers have to teach non-native speaking university students is how to write incorporating information from outside texts. In addition, Hirvela (2001) writes that, "The act of composing from sources starts with the reading of those texts. Difficulties in reading them impact significantly on writing about them, since students are writing in response to what they have read and how they have read it" (p. 330). To compose a text from source texts is a difficult but indispensable part of the process of writing in subject-area courses.

However, the skill of using outside sources in one's own writing is rarely taught in JSL writing classes or, in fact, subject-area courses in Japanese universities. As pointed out in my last Independent Study, there are serious problems concerning the lack of

referencing skills shown in student essays. Students are prone to copy information from the Internet and other texts directly into their essays without any reference to the original sources: using outside survey results without showing relevant information such as the date of the survey and the number and status of the subjects and using charts, and diagrams copied from outside sources without citation. In addition, students rarely incorporate direct quotations. Instead, many students obviously copy parts of outside texts into their essays with very minor changes. As a result, essays can have clearly inconsistent parts in the text, presumably the result of patch writing. Students not only display little skill in summarizing and paraphrasing when incorporating the writing of others, but also are apt to use those copied parts as determined facts without citation or comment even if those parts encompass the writers' personal views.

The Independent Study showed that most of my JSL students were solely concerned with the volume of writing required. The students paid little attention to the value or quality of the sources that they used, showing little concern with the background of the copied information; they rarely asked themselves about the identity of the author, the intended audience, and the original purpose of the text or survey. In other words, the authors of the outside sources are always 'invisible' for the students.

The above results are certainly unsurprising considering the students' lack of adequate vocabulary and knowledge about academic writing. Pennycook (1996) is sympathetic to these L2 students and explains: "[L2 undergraduate students] who, while constantly being told to be original and critical, and write things in their 'own words,' are nevertheless only too aware that they are at the same time required to acquire a fixed cannon of knowledge and a fixed canon of terminology to go with it" (p. 213). Thus, L2

students inherently face a greater risk of committing plagiarism when writing academic texts in a second language than when writing in their native language.

The Independent Study results point out the importance of teaching critical reading as well as other basic reading skills to L2 students. They should be made aware of the importance of the author's identity for every source incorporated into their essays. Also, students have to be taught about appropriate distance in regard to outside texts and how to integrate outside sources effectively into their own ideas and knowledge. The next section concerns this area by focusing on the Confucian perspective of reading in the classroom.

Reading in Confucian Perspectives

Although the many cultural and historical differences among Confucian heritage countries makes it difficult to discuss student learning styles based on a simple dichotomy of Western versus Confucian, my almost ten years of teaching JSL undergraduate students from China and Korea together with my own experiences as a learner in Japan and Canada have shown me that there is a distinct difference of attitude toward texts between Confucian heritage culture and Western culture. A discussion on the Confucian perspective towards reading and the text-reader relationship is presented in this section.

Text-Reader Relationship in Japanese Classrooms

The text-reader relationship required in Japanese classrooms can be put into perspective by comparing it to my experience as an English L2 speaker at the University of Lethbridge in Canada. During the first semester of my M.Ed. program, a supplementary course of study skills organized by the International Centre for Students

aiming to provide a wide variety of information, introduced study skills and strategies for achieving success in the university. Of particular interest were the strategies for effective reading in subject-area courses; the instructor emphasized the importance of both formulating questions about the text prior to intensive reading and seeking out the answers while reading the text. This contrasts sharply with the concept of reading instruction found in Japanese schools.

In my experience, it was always teachers who make questions about the texts in Japanese classrooms with students required to answer them. These distinct roles for the teacher and the student are basically unchanged from elementary school to high school, sometimes even at the undergraduate level of universities. Moreover, the very traditional and fundamental view that the text embodies authority and students are expected to merely receive content or ideas is still prevalent among Japanese people and Japanese teachers. In this context, students are never required to evaluate or critically examine the texts in the classroom.

The above suggests that Japanese students are so accustomed to fully accepting without question the content of texts in classrooms that they cannot or have difficulty distancing themselves from texts and becoming 'an independent reader' inside of them. This problem of the text-reader relationship is one of the primary themes of my teaching practice as a JSL teacher as well as my own ongoing personal challenge of becoming a better critical reader.

Reading with a Confucian perspective

Although I could find no comparative studies focusing on reading styles and text-reader relationships from Confucian and Western perspectives, I include several studies

concerning the teaching of academic literacy to students from Confucian heritage cultures conducted mainly by Western researchers and practitioners.

According to Chan (2001), it is a widely accepted proposition in Western education that "Learning involves knowledge construction rather than knowledge reception" (p. 181) with an emphasis on students actively engaged in their own knowledge construction. The teacher-centered classrooms of Confucian heritage cultures are thus regarded as traditional and conservative by Western educators.

On the other hand, the excellence shown by Japanese, Chinese and Korean students internationally in mathematics and science have drawn the attention of Western researchers and practitioners. Watkins and Biggs (2001) conducted a large scale of survey of educational practices in Confucian heritage countries (China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, Korea, and Japan) and concluded that their education is characterized by an association of memorization with understanding; an emphasis on effort; and motivation being extrinsic, relating to general patterns of socialization associated with collective orientation (Watkins and Biggs, 2001).

Watkins and Biggs put special emphasis on the role of memorization in student learning, remarking that memorization in Confucian heritage cultures is not mere rote-learning but repetitive learning to achieve understanding through a long process of using memorization effectively. Undoubtedly, memorization is central to learning in many Confucian heritage countries where it has traditionally been accorded much importance. For example, the highly competitive entrance examination to Japanese higher education is primarily based on rote memorization of the content of various subjects where a critical

examination of text is not only regarded as having little value, but also sometimes

considered an obstacle to memorization.

Flowerdew and Miller (2003) conducted ethnographical research on the notion of

culture in L2 lectures at the City University of Hong Kong. Through interviews with both

students and native English-speaking lecturers, they point out the gap between academic

and disciplinary culture using Bloom's (1959) Taxonomy of Educational Objectives:

> The lecturers may be aiming at Level 4, 5 and 6 of the taxonomy: analysis,
>
> synthesis, and evaluation of information. Students, on the other hand, may be
>
> aiming at level 1, acquiring knowledge, defined by Bloom as the ability to
>
> remember and recall information and facts without error or alteration. (p. 365)

Pennycook (1996), considering the role of memorization from another viewpoint,

is critical of widely held Western views such as that "Teaching is conceived as

progressing from 'rote' to 'structured' to 'open,'" (Masemann, 1986, p. 18, quoted in

Pennycook, 1996, pp. 218-219). Criticizing the view that memorization is a traditional

and outmoded pedagogical practice, Pennycook asserts that there are different types or

levels of memorization; on one hand, repetition can be associated with mechanical rote

learning, whereas memorization through repetition can be used to deepen and develop

understanding. Unfortunately, Pennycook, while devoting much of his article to tracing

the development of the Western view concerning the association of knowledge and text,

did not present a clear discussion about the text-reader relationship of Confucian heritage

culture. However, Pennycook indicates that teachers should not "scorn memorization of

students from Confucian heritage cultures" (p. 218) but carefully re-examine the effect of

it. At the same time, as Leki (1991) discusses, teachers have to facilitate students viewing the text and interpreting its content from a wider perspective.

In other interesting research concerning the cultural bias of attitudes toward texts, Li Xiao Ming (1996), an American researcher with a Chinese background, evaluated the feedback that teachers are providing through their evaluation of student writing, Li compares the evaluations that four teachers, two Chinese and two American, give to their students' L1 compositions. Li found that "[Chinese teachers] act like a link between the past and students to form an unbroken chain that stretches as far back as three thousand years" and attempt to "offer clear guidance when students stray from the right track." (p. 96) On the other hand, the American teachers expect "change, novelty, and originality, viewing the free, uncontaminated, authentic 'self' to be students' treasured asset." (p. 96) Li points out that American teachers tell their students to "Be yourself. Be different, as long as you follow the ground rules of logic and truthfulness" (p. 96).

Li's use of terminology such as "right track" and "free, uncontaminated, authentic self" coincide with my first impression about differences in classroom received in the U of L study skill class. Western teachers emphasize the "Authentic self" in classrooms, while teachers with a Confucian background put importance on students accepting knowledge and wisdom given by authorities. While a very small study, Li's research clearly distinguishes differences in philosophy and practices in teaching literacy skills. However, my concern is not on tracing the characteristics of two educational cultures but on improving teaching by considering the students' own learning styles as well as cultural environment.

So far, I have examined cultural differences in teaching practices between Western and Confucian countries. However, 'inadequate thinking skills' is not limited to Confucian background students. Scott, Dias, Alves, and Pimenta (1988) indicate that very few people learn to read critically, even in Western countries. Teaching critical reading remains a serious concern for Western educators (Wallace, 2003). The problem is the fact that little has been done to teach critical reading and critical thinking in Confucian countries.

Chapter 2. Critical Reading: Theory and Practice

Critical Reading Defined

Critical thinking and critical reading, being very hot topics in teaching English,

whether as a first or second language, are open to some interpretation by each researcher

and practitioner. For example, Scott et al. (1988) define critical reading as "a decision-

making process accompanying reading, a process which involves rational assessment as

well as affective reaction" (p. 1). They emphasize that the main purpose is to heighten

student awareness about the texts. Knott (2001) asserts that "To read critically is to make

judgments about how a text is argued," further stating that critical reading is a highly

reflective skill requiring students to 'stand back' and gain some distance from the text.

Rather than simply reading for information, Knott says that the reader should ask how the

text is organized and how the evidence is used and interpreted.

Johns (1997) places more emphasis on the 'critical' aspect of reading such as the

importance of developing hypotheses about the author, time, place, and purpose of the

text and comparing texts from different contexts and cultures. Johns goes on to insist that

students should discover that "All texts are partial: information is sometimes omitted,

assertions are not supported, and particular views of the world prevail" (p. 99).

Wallace (2002) discusses critical reading in the framework of critical pedagogy,

that all texts used in teaching are "historically situated and embody the ideology of their

day" (p. 3), Wallace defines critical reading in a more political and social context by

encouraging students to critique the "ideological assumptions underpinning them [the

texts]" (p.13). Although emphasizing communal negotiation with the text in the

classroom rather than individual responses, Wallace does insist on readers having a critical view in their own stance towards the text.

Wallace further explains that critical reading encompasses three aspects. Firstly, the linguistic purpose is to facilitate student reflection on the effect of language choice. Secondly, the conceptual/critical purpose is to develop "epistemic literacy" (Wells, 1991, quoted in Wallace, 2002, p. 43), which means an ability to move beyond the literal text to develop a cogent argument involving the text. Thirdly, the cultural purpose is to "promote insights into cultural assumptions and practices, similarities, and differences across national boundaries." (Wallace, 2002, p. 43) Thus, Wallace attempts to have students analyze linguistic features in order to grasp the hidden meanings of texts as well as have them focus on the cultural aspects in the texts.

Theories of Teaching Critical Reading

Carrell (1988) expresses some concern about misconceptions held by ESL students about reading in ESL classrooms, referring to Spiro's (1970) research about native English-speaking children who fail to answer questions that need extra-textual knowledge. Carrell believes that many ESL readers suffer from the same misconception of reading, especially in classroom settings, because of an overemphasis on decoding skills: "Those who are overtly text-bounded in reading situations may tend to be stimulus-bound in general. Reader's reading style may be part of a general cognitive style of processing any incoming information" (p. 109). Carrell's solution is for ESL teachers to encourage students to move from a passive reading process to a more active and predictive top-down process and to operate both top-down and bottom-up strategies interactively.

Referring to many previous studies on teaching effective study skills in the context of English for academic purposes (EAP), Waters and Waters (2001) pointed out the importance of deep level information processing as against surface level processing, citing Perry's (1975) "absolutist" and "relativistic" attitudes to knowledge: the former viewing information as factual knowledge, while the later views it as "a moving target that needs constant reinterpretation." (Perry, 1975, quoted in Waters & Waters, 2001, p. 376) Waters and Waters also cite Benson (1991) who states that students have to be adept at not only absorbing facts but also linking them to their own existing framework of knowledge.

Based on those studies, Waters and Waters (2001) state that studying consists primarily of two levels, a study skills level consisting of techniques such as note-taking, skimming/scanning, and using a bibliography, and a competence level consisting of self-confidence, self-awareness, the ability to think critically, creativity, and independently, and so on (p. 377). They insist that increasing study competence has to be preceded by students acquiring effective study skills.

Teaching Practices of Critical Reading in the ESL Context

As techniques to have students abandon a word-by-word approach in their reading, English teachers have proposed various types of reading exercises such as timed reading, reading in meaningful 'chunks,' reading with greater or lesser attention to detail, skimming for the main idea, scanning for specific kinds of information, reading critically, and evaluating an author's argument. (Eskey & Grabe, 1998, p. 229). Knott (2001) adds that the reader should not give attention to isolated facts and examples but look for larger passages in the text that give purpose, order, and meaning to the facts and examples.

SQ3R (Survey, Question, Read, Recite, Review) is a commonly used reading procedure. In SQ3R, according to Eskey and Grabe (1998), the reader first 'surveys' the text to gain a general idea of its content and organization. After writing down his/her 'questions' about the text, the reader 'reads' the text seeking the necessary information. The reader then 'recites' all information obtained and, finally, 'reviews' what he/she has found.

Fairbairn and Winch (1996) describe a reading procedure consisting of three levels: 'reorganizing,' 'inferring,' and 'evaluating' (p. 14). At the reorganizing level, students select what is important from more than one source and put this information into a structure that suits their purpose. In this process, students sometimes have to ignore information that is not strictly relevant to their purpose. Fairbairn and Winch emphasize that it is important that students not start the reorganizing process until they can correctly recall the important points. Students should attempt to "make a sympathetic appraisal" of what they are reading, reading critically and with the intention of understanding the texts when they read passages (p. 17).

Fairbairn and Winch's (1996) suggestion that students need to pursue an accurate understanding of facts in the texts as well as critically evaluating them seems to be based on a well-balanced view of critical reading in the L2 context. Without an accurate understanding of the texts, it is clear that students cannot critically consider the content or make an appropriate evaluation. For the L2 teacher, the problem is not merely how to teach critical reading but how to help students learn these complex tasks simultaneously. For accurate understanding of the text, students need L2 grammar, vocabulary, and an

understanding of text structure while trying to acquire the strategies and attitudes of critical thinking.

Badger and Thomas (1992) states that teachers have to promote critical reading in students by presenting open-ended questions that require complex thinking instead of ones that can be answered with simply memorized facts from he text. Badger and Thomas require teachers to change their role in the reading classroom from an instructor of reading skills to a facilitator of student's active and critical reading.

Johns (1997) points out that students commonly believe most published texts are autonomous, impartial, and truthful. Johns insists that teachers need to help students question the veracity of the texts of 'experts' as well as to help them question their own beliefs regarding these texts. In order to accomplish this, she demonstrated text partiality using entries on the same subject from encyclopedias published in different cultural contexts. Students were asked to examine these texts by answering questions such as: Are the texts organized in any particular way? Who are the writers and readers? Why would you or someone else read them? What is the context for writing these texts? What do these factors tell us about text biases or foci?

Besides indicating the importance of developing hypotheses about the context of the texts, Johns recommends comparing texts from different contexts and cultures in order to grasp fully the nature of social construction. Johnson's attempt to critically examine texts in the classroom provides a good example of a first step towards critical reading in the L2 classroom.

In order to help students read texts critically, many practitioners propose frameworks and lists of questions concerning the texts. Scott et al. (1988), university ESL

instructors in Sao Paulo, have developed a set of questions for use in teaching critical

reading in ESP (English for a Specific Purpose) classrooms. The set consists of 21

questions categorized into five groups: comprehension, readership, reader's appreciation,

applicability, and text or writer questions. Following are examples of each category (see

Appendix A for complete list):

> Comprehension: What is the main message?
>
> Readership: What is the intended readership for this text?
>
> Reader's Appreciation: What did you learn from the text?
>
> Applicability to Reader: Is the information or argument applicable here to us?
>
> Text or Writer Questions: Who benefits or loses by publication of the text? (Scott
>
> et al., 1988, p. 7)

The categories presented by Scott et al. (1988) cover important factors for

critically examining a text. However, since these questions are not always usable by all

language proficiency levels of L2 students, these authors (1988) propose an alternative

technique for teaching critical reading that is available for beginners and advanced

readers alike. It is an application of 'set theory,' originally a mathematical term. The

concept of 'set' in mathematics is related to lists that are "collections or groups of well

defined objects." (p. 11) Scott et al. apply set theory to reading in ESP classrooms by

having students group particular entities in the text, thus leading them to an awareness of

what is not mentioned. By postulating 'a universal set' that represents all existing

concepts in the text, they explain, the reader can become aware of what information is

omitted and on what the text is focused (p.17). This easy and meaningful procedure for

observing the text would be useful as a stepping-stone towards critical reading, especially for L1 beginners.

Knott (2001) also describes a process of critical reading that consists of the following steps:

1. Determine the central claims or purpose of the text

2. Make some judgments about context. For example, "What audience is the text written for?"

3. Distinguish the kinds of reasoning the text employs. For example, "What concepts are defined and used?"

4. Examine the evidence (supporting facts, examples, etc.). For example, "What counts as evidence in this argument?"

5. Evaluate the text. For example, "Could it be better or differently supported?

Wallace (2003) considers critical reading in the framework of 'critical pedagogy.' Wallace reports on her attempt to help non-native first year university students in a critical writing class understand the hidden messages and cultural meanings of texts by using a wide range of sources such as advertisements, newspaper texts, leaflets and forms, posters, textbooks, and magazines.

In an early phase, Wallace tries to raise students' consciousness by drawing their attention to the socio-cultural nature of the various genre by providing a wide range of texts and encouraging them to bring various kinds of texts, too. In the class, students are asked to classify the texts into categories such as requests from charities or causes, public information leaflets, professional materials, and reading for entertainment or leisure. Then students think about the material using the following framework:

- Who produced it?

- For whom was it produced?

- Why was the text produced?

- Is this type of text of interest or relevance to you?

- From each category, choose one text that particularly appeals to you, either because of its style or content and discuss it with other members of the group. (p. 108)

About halfway through the course, Wallace shifts attention to the genre of news reports and provides a different type of task to analyze the texts. In the final lessons of the course, students work regularly with the full framework consisting of three sections described in the following (see Appendix B for complete list):

- Field of discourse: How the writer describes what is going on in the text. For example, "How specifically are circumstances indicated, e.g. by adverbs or prepositional phrases?"

- Tenor of discourse: How the writer indicates his/her relationship with the reader, and what the writer's attitude is towards the subject matter of the text. For example, "What mood is most frequently selected—declarative, imperative or interrogative?"

- Mode of discourse: How the content of the text is organized. For example, "What information is selected for first position, at clause level and at the level of the whole text?" (Wallace, 2003, p.108)

Wallace's framework, by attempting to "get to the hidden grammar" (Halliday, 1987, p. 143, cited in Wallace, 2003, p. 33) through an analysis of texts, aims to help L2

students understand how the text persuades people to behave or think in particular ways. Wallace's framework was developed for advanced level L2 readers who are presumed to have sufficient grammatical knowledge in their first languages.

Benner's *Breakthroughs in Critical Reading* is a textbook for teaching critical reading to L2 readers as well as critical thinking skills, vocabulary, and study skills. The textbook covers the following five skills to develop critical reading and thinking abilities:

- Finding main ideas and details

- Recognizing organization of ideas

- Making inferences and predictions

- Determining fact and opinion

- Evaluating propaganda

In the textbook, commercial product and political advertisements are used to help readers identify the author's attitude about a subject by examining the words used, and comparing negative and positive words and euphemisms. Students also have to determine whether the author is stating a fact or an opinion, and whether something is a generalization. However, much of the textbook is devoted to introducing general reading skills and teaching about text structures, so the section on critical reading is limited.

Concluding Comments

The research literature reveals a variety of teaching practices facilitating critical reading in an ESL setting. Some practitioners regard critical reading as one of the reading skills, while others teach it as a practice of a critical pedagogy that requires students to read texts in social and political contexts. Although there are some differences of

philosophical background among practitioners, it is obvious that critical reading is regarded as one of the very important aspects of ESL education.

The literature on reading research clearly shows that problems associated with student reading style are not confined to the JSL context, but are also common in English L1 and L2 classes. In addition, as pointed out in an earlier section, there is a fundamental difference between teaching critical reading, whether L1 or L2, in a Western or a Confucian heritage cultural context.

Clearly, teaching critical reading is also inevitably related to a teacher's pedagogical philosophy. Language teachers are generally apt to devote themselves to teaching superficial skills of language; in JSL reading, teachers adhere to a grammar and a word-to-word based interpretation and espouse a belief in the authority of texts. In preparing this study, I have been asking myself why students need to learn critical reading in L2 classrooms in addition to their already heavy load of L2 learning. The answer is that I expect each of my students to become an independent person who can act on personal decisions in a democratic society. L2 teachers have a role in not only educating students to use the target language effectively, but also in helping them to have a logical and critical view to the world.

The following is a summary of the important conditions and problems associated with teaching critical reading in an ESL context. Firstly, teachers have to encourage students to change their reading style from teacher-oriented to student-oriented, by showing them how to raise questions about a text as well as find their own answers. Secondly, students can be helped to transition from word-to-word reading to gasp the overall meaning of a text by, for example, having students read more than one text about

the same topic while selecting similarities and differences and classifying them. Thirdly, the biggest problem for both JSL teachers and ESL teachers, as Fairbairn and Winch (1996) point out, is that L2 students need to pursue both an accurate understanding of facts in texts as well as a critical evaluation of them. Of course, the problem lies in trying to accomplish both tasks simultaneously since without an accurate understanding of the text, students cannot critically examine its content.

Although I have tried many of the above activities in my JSL classrooms, it was very difficult to change student beliefs and reading and learning styles. It is for this reason that I want to re-examine available JSL reading textbooks and currently practiced class activities in the following chapters.

Chapter 3. Methodology

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study is to examine the reading skills and grammatical knowledge that are developed in JSL reading textbooks that are widely used in Japanese language schools and/or JSL classes in Japanese universities. The ultimate objective of this study is to draft recommendations for improvement of reading materials and class activities in order to encourage the use of critical reading skills in conjunction with traditional JSL reading methods, which focus upon language and comprehension of the text.

Many Japanese as a Second Language (JSL) students from Confucian heritage countries such as China and Korea are today entering Japanese universities. For JSL students, acquiring the skill of critical thinking as a component of academic literacy is indispensable for their studies in Japanese universities. However, there is a considerable gap between literacy skills that are required in subject-area courses and the skills JSL students from Confucian heritage countries possess. One of the major problems with these JSL students' study skills is, as I discussed in 'Introduction', their lack of a critical attitude in reading academic texts. It is difficult for many of these students to read texts with any meaningful degree of skepticism, or to ask critical and analytical questions about the text.

The theoretical explanation found in the research literature is that JSL students' inclination toward excessive adherence to rote memorization and uncritically reading texts is a result of the school cultures of their home countries. These put emphases on respect and obedience for existent texts, as textbooks are deemed to be written by experts

and the knowledge therein to be sanctioned by authority. Compounding this, the traditional teaching style of JSL reading classrooms also seems to be strengthening this passive and non-critical attitude of students toward their texts. Furthermore, the majority of JSL teachers have been educated in a school culture similar to that of other Confucian heritage countries. This inevitably affects JSL teaching practices in Japan. It is therefore very important for JSL teachers to reflect upon what they are teaching and consider what readings they assign to their students.

These considerations motivate me to examine JSL reading textbooks to determine what skills and knowledge they are developing in students. Although textbooks are not the same as actual teaching practices, which can and do vary, they nevertheless influence JSL teachers. An analysis of textbooks provides considerable clues to revealing what is a 'hidden curriculum' embedded in the teaching of JSL. It also provides avenues to discuss the improvement of JSL reading classrooms through identifying reading materials and pedagogical strategies that facilitate critical reading skills.

Research Questions

Following are the research questions concerning relevant JSL reading textbooks:

- What are the characteristics of the texts provided in JSL reading textbooks?

- What aspects of language learning are emphasized in JSL reading textbooks?

- What are the aims of the questions and exercises in the textbooks?

- How is critical reading taught in JSL reading textbooks?

- How can critical reading be introduced in JSL reading classrooms?

Samples of Reading Textbooks Selected for Review

The following eight textbooks for academic purposes were selected for examination.

1. Abe, Y. (1994). *Joukyu de manabu Nihongo* [Advanced Japanese]. Tokyo: Kenkyusha.

2. Arai, R. et al. (2003). *Chukyu kara manabu Nihongo* [Learning Japanese: Intermediate and Above]. Tokyo: Kenkyusha.

3. Tomioka, J., & Takaoka, S. (1997). *Nihongo chukyu dokkai* [Intensive Intermediate Japanese Reading Skills Builder: New edition]. Tokyo: ALC.

4. Ikeda. S. (1990). *Chukyu kara no Nihongo: Dokkai chushin* [Reading Japanese: Intermediate and Above]. Tokyo: Shintensha.

5. Hasatani, M., & Tsuda, A. (1995). *Nihon o kangaeru itsutsu no wadai* [Five topics on Japan]. Tokyo: 3A Corporation.

6. Yamamoto, F., & Kudo, K. (2001). *Bunkakei ryugausei no tameno chu-joukyu gakujutu Nihongo: Kokkyo o koete* [High Intermediate to Advanced Academic Japanese for International Humanities Students: Crossing National Boundaries]. Tokyo: Shinyosha.

7. Ohno, J. (2003). *Daigaku "Kyoyo no Nihongo."* [University: Japanese in Cultural Studies]. Tokyo: Kodansha Shuppan Service Center.

8. Academic Japanese Kenkyukai (2001). *Daigaku daigakuin ryugakusei no Nihongo 1: Dokkaihen* [Japanese for International College/Graduate Students: Reading Comprehension]. Tokyo: ALC.

According to the 'Guide to Japanese Language Teaching Materials' (Bonjinsha, 2004), there are 32 JSL reading textbooks on the market at present: one for children, six at the beginner level, three at the beginner to low intermediate level, and 22 at the intermediate to advanced level. Among the latter 22 books, six are limited to reading newspapers and seven to Japanese culture, history, or literature. From the remaining nine books, three (Textbooks 3, 4, and 5, or B3, B4, and B5) were selected for examination in this study because they are the most commonly used, targeting international students who are learning Japanese for academic purposes. In addition to the above strictly JSL reading textbooks, three books were selected from the category of 'Textbooks for multiple skills' (B1, B2, and B6) and two from 'Technical Japanese textbooks for international students' (B7 and B8). Although these five textbooks are not specifically categorized as reading textbooks in the Guide, reading is the central focus of the books and serves as a base of all other activities. The following is a brief explanation of each textbook.

Textbooks B1 to B3 are intermediate level reading and multiple skills textbooks most commonly used in Japanese language schools. The content is focused on the syntax, grammar, vocabulary, and reading ability corresponding to the advanced level of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test, required for entering Japanese universities. The textbooks are intended for international students and adult learners, including business people. In fact, they are used by a majority of international students, especially from China and Korea, in Japanese language schools before entering Japanese universities. These textbooks, therefore, have considerable influence on many international students by shaping their reading style and strategies for Japanese texts.

Textbook B4 is an upper-intermediate level reading textbook used by a comparatively wide range of Japanese learners, including international students in university. Since the aim of the textbook is learning general reading skills and studying about Japanese society and culture through reading materials, it does not directly focus on the requirements of the Japanese Language Proficiency Test.

Textbook B5 is an advanced level reading textbook that was developed for international students in university majoring in the Humanities. Primarily, the aim is to strengthen understanding of Japanese society and culture through reading materials and the use of various activities such as surveys, debates, discussions, and oral presentations.

Textbook B6 is an advanced level academic reading and listening textbook for international students in university majoring in the Humanities and students preparing to enter Japanese universities. In addition, the textbook can also be used in classes composed of Japanese and international students to foster cooperative learning. The aim of the textbook is not only to strengthen Japanese language skills and introduce general knowledge of Japanese society, but also to cultivate cross-cultural understanding and logical thinking needed for university.

Textbook B7 is an upper-advanced level academic reading textbook for undergraduate and graduate international students. The textbook aims to help students understand the content of reading materials and discuss the topic in their own words as well as to introduce the basics of the liberal arts such as history, sociology, and geography, including cultural studies.

Textbook B8 is an academic reading textbook mainly targeting the need of international graduate students to read and write academic texts in order to conduct

research in university. The textbook aims to teach academic reading skills by especially focusing on the logical structure of the text.

Framework and Checklist for Analysis

The JSL reading textbooks were analyzed using a framework and checklist method derived from one used in analyzing materials and exercises in L2 reading classrooms: see Grellet (1981), Nunan (1988), Littlejohn (1998), although their usage was confined to general reading skills with little attention to critical reading.

The analysis framework is given in Table 1. The definitions for each item of the framework and the checklist are provided following Tables 2, 3, and 4.

Table 1. Framework for Analysis

1. Characteristics of texts in JSL reading textbooks

Source of the text:

    Academic text

    Newspaper or Magazine articles

    Essays

    Novels and stories

    Texts in daily life

Type of the text:

    Narrative text

    Descriptive text

    Expository text

    Argumentative text

2. Aims of questions and exercises for each text (What is the learner expected to do?)

    Learning language knowledge

    Comprehending meaning of the text

    Understanding organization of the text

    Interaction with text content

    Organization of text

    Critical examination of the text

Table 2. Checklist for Reading Textbooks: Source of the Text

Source	T1*	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
1. Academic texts						
2. Newspaper and magazine articles						
3. Essays						
4. Novels and stories						
5. Texts in daily life						
6. Others						

*T1 indicates Text 1

   1. Academic text from subject-area textbooks or academic articles

   3. Essays concerning the writer's feelings and/or opinion on various topics

   5. Texts in daily life, such as manuals, explanation of products, and advertisements

Table 3. Checklist for Reading Textbooks: Type of the Text

Type	T1*	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
1. Narrative text						
2. Descriptive text						
3. Expository text						
4. Argumentative text						
5. Others						

   1. Text about events, usually written in chronological order

   2. Text which describes the state or situation of some thing, event, or organization

3. Text which gives a logical and detailed explanation of some thing (e.g., explanation through rhetorical modes such as comparison and contrast, classification, or cause and effect)

4. Text which argues for or against some topic

Table 4. Aim of Questions and Exercises: What is the Learner Expected to Do?

Expectation	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6
Learning language knowledge:						
1. Understand syntax and grammar						
2. Comprehend meaning of words						
3. Identify cohesive devices of a text						
Comprehending meaning of the text:						
4. Answer questions about explicitly stated information in a text						
5. Answer questions using inference						
6. Synthesize a text non-textually						
7. Trans-code information to a diagrammatic display						
8. Categorize selected information						
9. Infer author's implication						
10. Summarize a text						
Understanding organization of a text:						
11. Identify rhetorical mode of a text						
12. Identify logical connectors of a text						

Expectation	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6

13. Identify organization of a text

14. Distinguish main ideas from supporting information

15. Distinguish facts from opinions

Interaction with content of a text:

16. Form your own questions about the text

17. Relate to your own experience or knowledge to the text

   content

18. Give other examples

19. Express your own thoughts concerning the topic

20. Express your own opinion about the text argument

Critical evaluation of a text:

21. Examine consistency of an argument

22. Determine if main points are fully sustained

23. Infer readership of a text

24. Identifying source of information

25. Examine cultural or ideological assumptions of the

   author

26. Infer effect of a text

Others

1. Understanding meaning and usage of syntactic and grammatical elements in a text

2. Understanding meaning and usage of words and phrases in a text

3. Understanding cohesion among the parts of a text through lexical or grammatical

cohesive devices

4. Answering questions by selecting explicitly stated information from a text

5. Answering questions about the text with own words by inferring from the lines.

6. Reading a text and then synthesizing it with non-textual information such as pictures, tables, and charts

7. Trans-coding information to a diagrammatic display such as mapping, drawing pictures, or making charts or diagrams

8. Categorize selected information to understand the content of a text

9. Make an inference about an author's implication

10. Extracting main points and summarizing a text

11. Identifying rhetorical mode of a text (e.g., narrative, argumentative)

12. Identifying logical connectors in a text and understanding structure of the text through those connectors

13. Identifying organization of a text

14. Distinguishing main ideas, supporting ideas, and details

15. Distinguishing facts from author's opinions

16. Forming reader's own questions about a text

17. Relating reader's own experience or knowledge the text content

18. Giving other examples concerning the text content

19. Express reader's own thoughts concerning the topic of the text

20. Expressing reader's own opinion about text argument

21. Examining consistency of the argument in the text

22. Examining whether main points are fully sustained in a text

23. Inferring about expected readers of a text

24. Identifying source of information and examining reliability of it

25. Inferring the author's intention and purpose of the text

26. Examining author's cultural or ideological assumptions expressed in the text

27. Inferring effect of a text

Procedure of Examination

The procedure for analysis is the following. Using the Checklist, I examine characteristics of a text and aim of questions and exercises of each text in all selected textbooks. The applicable items of each text are marked. The marks are summed up for each item of the list for both each textbook as well as all textbooks. On the result of the checking of all selected textbooks, I will discuss overall principles and characteristics of the textbooks.

Based on the results of this examination of the textbooks, the following aspects have been identified: the characteristics and actual purposes of the JSL textbooks; the skills and strategies that students are expected to acquire in the textbooks; and the extent to which critical reading is emphasized in the textbooks.

Chapter 4. Results of Examination of JSL Reading Textbooks

The characteristics of the reading materials and the aim of questions and exercises contained in eight selected textbooks were examined; six textbooks included only one (reading) text in each lesson while the other two had two. All the texts from the six textbooks and the first text in every lesson from the later two textbooks were selected for examination, making a total of 130 texts shown in Table 5. Almost all texts are one or two pages long except for those in Textbook 7 (B7), which are six or seven pages long and consist of several chapters.

Table 5. Number of Texts in Selected Textbooks

Textbook	B1*	B 2	B 3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	total
Number of texts	25	22	15	20	15	14	5	14	130

* B1 indicates Textbook 1.

Characteristics of Texts

Table 6 shows the source of the texts; the darkest shading indicates that more than 80 percent of the texts in the textbook are classified as that type of source, the next darkest indicates between 80 and 50 percent, and the lightest indicates between 50 and 20 percent.

Table 6. Source of Texts

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	total	rate%
1. Academic texts	0	0	0	4	0	12 (10)	5 (5)	14 (3)	35	26.9
2. Newspaper and magazine articles	0	6	0	1	11	1	0	0	19	14.6
3. Essays	(23)	(14)	(15)	6	0	0	0	0	58	44.6
4. Excerpts from novels and short stories	0	0	0	4	0	0	0	0	4	3.0
5. Texts in daily life	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0.0
6. Others[2]	(1)	(2)	0	5	4	1	0	0	14	10.8
Total	25	22	15	20	15	14	5	14	130	100.0

[1] Numbers in parentheses indicate original texts written by the textbook author.

[2] Letters or written scripts of discussions or interviews.

Among the 130 texts, essays are the most prevalent source (44.6 percent), most being texts newly written by JSL teachers for B1, B2, and B3. The second most common are academic texts (26.9 percent), half of which are texts newly written by JSL teachers for B6, B7, and B8. Table 6 clearly shows that the source of the texts contained in a textbook is considerably focused on the perceived aims of the target learners; B1, B2, and B3 contain mostly original essays while B6, B7, and B8 are focused on academic texts.

In general, the essays in B1, B2, and B3 are written solely for language learning and have no actual communicative intent. As detailed later in the Discussion section, the authors pay little attention to logical structure or the reader's interest and motivation. On the other hand, the purpose of B6, B7, and B8, is to teach the logical structure and

language elements of academic texts. In contrast, B4 uses a variety of texts such as

academic texts, a newspaper article, essays, and short stories, while B5 mainly uses

newspaper and magazine articles; both textbooks aim to teach general reading

proficiency and skills. It should be noted that texts of 'excerpts from novels and short

stories' and 'texts in daily life' are rarely found in the textbooks.

Table 7 shows the distribution of texts by type. The darkest shading indicates that,

more than 80 percent of the texts are classified as that type of text, the next darkest

indicates between 80 and 50 percent, and the lightest indicates between 50 and 20

percent. It should be noted that, even in ESL settings, terms such as 'Narrative' and

'Expository' contain some ambiguity (Connors 2003, Kinneavy 2003, Kubota 1997). As

discussed in a later section, it is not an easy task to classify Japanese texts by type using

criteria established for English texts. In addition, as texts written by Japanese teachers for

their textbooks are apt to focus on language elements, the type and structure of those texts

may not be readily discernable. As a result, the classifications presented in Table 7 are

based on my own judgment and, thus, rather subjective. Nevertheless, Table 7 provides a

rough idea of the types of texts provided in JSL reading textbooks.

Table 7. Type of Text

	B1	B2	B2	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	total	rate
1. Narrative text	12	5	3	9	0	0	0	1	30	23.1
2. Descriptive text	13	15	4	4	2	5	0	4	47	36.1
3. Expository text	0	0	2	3	3	3	5	6	22	16.9
4. Argumentative text	0	0	6	1	8	6	0	0	21	16.2
5. Other	0	2	0	3	0	0	0	3	10	7.7

Total	25	22	15	20	15	14	5	14	130	100.0

B1 and B2 are basically restricted to 'Narrative' and 'Descriptive' texts. In contrast, B4 features the largest variety of text types. 'Narrative' texts are essentially absent from B5, B6, B7, and B8; B5 and B6 have 'Descriptive,' 'Expository,' and 'Argumentative' texts. B7 focuses solely on academic 'Expository' texts, whereas B8 excludes only 'Argumentative' texts.

Aspects of Reading Emphasized in JSL Reading Textbooks

The questions and/or exercises associated with all 130 of the texts contained in the eight textbooks were examined according to a checklist of skills and strategies in the areas of language knowledge, meaning comprehension, text interaction, and critical evaluation of the text. An example is shown in Table 8. The checkmarks only show the presence of relevant questions and/or exercises, not any differences of weight among the marked items. For example, in the first text (T1) of B1, there are seven exercises concerning syntax and grammar (checklist item1), eight questions about explicitly stated information in a text (item 4), two questions concerning the reader's own experience or knowledge of the text content (item 12), and one question requiring the reader's own thoughts concerning the topic (item 14); however, those four checklist items (1, 4, 17, and 19) are each represented by only one mark.

Table 8. Example of Checklist for Aim of Questions and Exercises in *Chukyu-kara Manabu Nihongo* Textbook

Skills and Strategies	T1[*]	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7
Learning language knowledge:							
1. Understand syntax and grammar	x	x	x	x	x	x	x

Skills and Strategies	T1[*]	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7
2. Comprehend meaning of words							
3. Identify cohesive devices of a text							
Comprehending meaning of the text:							
4. Answer questions about explicitly stated information in a text	x	x	x	x	x	x	x
5. Answer questions using inference							
Interaction with text content:							
11. Form your own questions about the text							
12. Relate your own experience or knowledge to text content	x	x	x	x	x		
13. Give other examples							
14. Express your own thoughts concerning the topic		x		x		x	
15. Express your own opinion about the text argument	x		x	x	x	x	x

* T1 indicates text 1 in the textbook.

Table 9 summarizes the results of examining the questions and exercises in the selected textbooks; the data indicate the number of texts with questions and exercises relevant to each particular skill and/or strategy. For example, B1 has questions and/or exercises about explicitly stated information (item 1) in all 25 texts but none concerning the meaning of words (item 2). In addition, the frequency of relevant questions and/or exercises is expressed by the different levels of shading. The darkest shading indicates

that the items are present for more than 80 percent of the texts in that textbook, the

second darkest indicates a presence between 80 and 50 percent, and the lightest indicates

between 50 and 20 percent.

Table 9. Distribution of Questions and/or Exercises

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	total	Rate %
Number of texts	25	22	15	20	15	14	5	14	130	100

Learning language knowledge:

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	total	Rate %
1. Understand syntax and grammar	25	22	14	16	4	14	0	9	104	80.0
2. Comprehend meaning of words	0	22	0	19	1	14	1	0	57	43.8
3. Identify cohesive devices of a text	0	0	0	1	4	0	0	1	20	17.2

Comprehending meaning of the text:

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	total	Rate %
4. Answer questions about explicitly stated information in a text	25	24	14	14	12	11	5	11	113	86.9
5. Answer questions using inference	0	3	1	17	2	1	3	6	33	25.4
6. Synthesize a text non-textually	0	0	0	1	5	2	0	0	8	6.2
7. Trans-code information to a diagram	0	0	0	5	0	7	0	4	16	12.3
8. Categorize selected information	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	1	3	2.3

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	total	Rate %
9. Infer author's implication	0	1	1	7	6	3	2	0	20	15.4
10. Summarize a text	0	0	3	4	3	6	0	3	19	14.6

Interaction with text content:

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	total	Rate %
11. Form your own questions about the text	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
12. Relate your own experience or knowledge to the text content	22[1]	12[1]	7[1]	6	2	1	5	0	55	42.3
13. Give other examples	0	1	0	1	1	0	2	0	5	3.8
14. Express your own thoughts concerning the topic	25[1]	15[1]	3[1]	10	7	1	4	1	66	50.8
15. Express your own opinion about the text argument	0	1[1]	1[1]	0	1	3	2	0	8	6.1

Organization of text:

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	total	Rate %
16. Identify rhetorical mode of text	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
17. Identify logical connectors of text	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1.5
18. Identify organization of text	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	14	14	10.8

	B1	B2	B3	B4	B5	B6	B7	B8	total	Rate %
								▓ 4		
19. Distinguish main ideas from supporting information	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2	1.5
20. Distinguish facts from opinions	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	2	2	1.5
Critical evaluation of text:										
21. Examine consistency of an argument	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
22. Determine if main points are fully sustained	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
23. Infer readership of text	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
24. Identifying source of information	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
25. Examine cultural or ideological assumptions of the author	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
26. Infer effect of text	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
27. Others[2]	0	0	0	0	0	3	0	0	3	2.3

[1] There are very few questions concerning items 12, 14, and 15 in B1, B2, and B3

[2] "Others" are tasks for reorganizing passages using key words.

After examining the selected textbooks, four characteristics clearly stand out. Firstly, there are no questions and/or exercises requiring critical evaluation of a text. Although B6, B7, and B8 are explicitly aiming to teach reading for academic purposes, critical thinking and critical evaluation of texts are not taught. Secondly, only one textbook addresses the organization of a text. From these two points, it is clear that these textbook authors have little concern for teaching critical evaluation of the text; they also put little importance on objectively observing the organization of texts. I will consider these points more thoroughly in a later section.

Thirdly, the most frequent questions and/or exercises are those concerning explicitly stated information contained in a text: 86.9% of the texts. The second most typical are the questions and/or exercises about syntax and grammar. Since the questions and/or exercises appearing in these textbooks mainly involve only the surface of the texts, the actual reading skills taught are considerably limited. In fact, only a small number of the skill-items in the checklist are present in the textbooks. For example, in B1, B2, and B3, questions about explicitly stated information (item 4) predominate among the reading tasks. Although questions about syntax and grammar (item 1) appear in 77 percent of the textbooks, the rate of appearance differs widely: 80 percent of the texts of B1, B2, B3, and B4; seldom in B6; and never in B7. This fact seems to reflect different aims among the textbooks.

Fourthly, because the survey above has shown that the aims of the textbooks seem to differ considerably, the textbooks were examined more closely by dividing them into four groups: Group 1 for B1, B2, and B3; Group 2 for B4 and B5; Group 3 for B6 and B7; and Group 4 for B8.

Group 1 textbooks focus on aspects of language, including vocabulary, as well as understanding surface meaning. Each lesson is very simple, consisting of grammar exercises and questions to confirm learners' understanding of the text. Most of the comprehension questions only require students to pick out appropriate words or phrases from the passage. It is clear that the aim of the questions in the textbooks is only to make learners aware of the surface meaning of the texts. As a result, since grammatical knowledge and vocabulary are considered the most essential factors, learners can easily answer questions about the text content by merely seeking a relevant sentence in the text, without having to contemplate the meaning of phrases or sentences contextually. Learners are asked occasionally about their own thoughts concerning the topic but never about the writer's intention nor for a critical consideration.

Group 2 textbooks focus on teaching basic reading skills such as how to inference, synthesize and trans-code text non-textually, categorize information, and summarize a text as well as those listed for Group 1. The texts in B4 feature a wide range of real life reading material, including academic reading not found in B5 or Group 1 books. In addition, the books in Group 2 have readers interacting more with the texts using their own experience, knowledge or ideas than the books in Group 1. The books in Group 2 had been used by high-intermediate to advanced level international students until a few years ago when a new type of textbook explicitly focused on reading for academic purposes such as the books in Groups 3 and 4 were issued. In spite of the differences of aim and target between the books in Group 2 and the ones in Groups 3 and 4, however, their questions and exercises do not considerably differ except for the focus on text organization in B8. The primary difference is in the selection of reading materials; Group

2 books use authentic texts that feature a wide variety of source, type, and topic in order to expand the understanding of Japanese society and culture.

Group 3 textbooks are issued to international students in Japanese universities to teach reading for academic purposes. This group of textbooks presents mainly academic texts that are written by the authors about academic topics and features more explicit structures than the textbooks of Groups 1 and 2. They put emphasis on comprehending text content. The skills and strategies that are required are similar with those in the textbooks of Group 2 but without exercises involving syntax, grammar, or vocabulary. One difference from the textbooks in the other groups, except B4, is that B6 contains exercises for trans-coding information to a table or a flowchart. Group 3 textbooks also mainly follow a traditional approach to reading instruction, i.e., lacking critical analyses of the texts.

B8 in Group 4 is an academic reading textbook written mainly for graduate level JSL learners. The central aim of this textbook is to make students aware of the organization and logical structure as well as the vocabulary associated with the logical structure of academic texts. Issued as one in a series of academic writing and reading textbooks, B8 ultimately aims to make students apply this knowledge of text organization and relevant expressions to academic writing. As in all the previous groups, B8 has no exercises for critical analyses of the texts.

In summary, the examination of JSL reading textbooks highlighted two characteristics: a preference for exercises and/or questions concerning the more superficial aspects of the text while ignoring critical analyses. These characteristics probably stem from JSL teachers' and textbook authors' fundamental views on reading

instruction that influence the selection of reading materials. In the following Discussion,

the background underlying the results is considered further.

Chapter 5. Discussion and Implications of the Study

This study was structured around a five component framework for the analysis of reading tasks: learning language knowledge; comprehending the meaning of the text; interacting with text content; recognizing text organization; and reading texts critically. A list of the aims of the reading tasks relevant to each component of the framework was compiled, with reference to the theories and teaching practices of critical reading and other academic reading skills in ESL settings.

Examination of the JSL reading textbooks indicated that authors mainly focused on linguistic elements and comprehension of text content, while placing little emphasis on active and critical reading. All checklist items in the 'Critical evaluation of the text' section of Table 7 are indispensable in academic reading situations, especially when students refer to outside sources for their research. These include, for example, examining the consistency of an argument, determining if main points are fully sustained, inferring readership of the text, and identifying the source of the text. However, none of the examined textbooks, even those that explicitly aim to teach academic reading, contain any questions or exercises that promote a learner's critical evaluation of the text. In addition to this lack of critical evaluation of the text, almost all of the textbooks show little, if any, concern for the items listed in the 'Organization of the text' section of Table 7, such as distinguishing main ideas from supporting information and facts from opinions, skills that are also necessary for effective reading and critical examination of academic texts.

Furthermore, even among the relatively large number of texts with relevant questions and/or exercises in the 'Comprehending meaning of the text' section of Table

7, questions and exercises requiring active reading skills are extremely limited. In addition, the questions and/or exercises found in the 'Interaction with text content' section focus mainly on a more passive and affective attitude toward the texts, such as relating the learner's own experience or knowledge and expressing his or her own thoughts concerning the topic. This approach requires few active or logical considerations on the part of the learner, such as composing his or her own questions or expressing a personal opinion about the text.

As discussed in the Introduction, JSL students need to change from a text-bounded, passive reading style to a more active and critical style by developing an appropriate distance from the text. However, the JSL reading textbooks clearly reinforce JSL students' passive reading style and attach excessive importance to decoding skills. In other words, these textbooks can provide little in the way of solutions for JSL student reading problems.

The results indicate that critical reading is quite a rare concept in JSL reading instruction. The difficulty of introducing critical thinking into JSL classes results from many complex factors involving the environment that surrounds reading instruction in a JSL setting. In order to discuss needed improvements in the teaching of critical reading in JSL classrooms, we need to understand more fully the reader's expected role in Japanese language, the characteristics of Japanese text, the teacher's view of reading instruction in JSL classrooms, and the traditional learning style currently found in Japanese education, described earlier. Within these overall factors, the following three points are discussed in this section, using the results obtained from examination of the selected textbooks: the

traditional text-reader relationship in the Japanese language, characteristics and role of

reading materials, and the aim of questions in the textbooks.

Text-Reader Relationship in Japanese

In a comparison of ESL and JSL reading environments, of primary importance in

the text-reader relationship are any fundamental differences that exist between English

and Japanese text. Comparative linguistic scholars argue from a Western point of view

that these differences can be summarized as follows: while English texts typically have

linear, direct, deductive, and logical structure, Japanese texts have non-linear, inductive,

indirect, and non-logical structure. Furthermore, while writers for English readers are

presumed to have a responsibility for making their statements clear and precise, Japanese

writers often use indirect strategies, leaving interpretation largely to readers (Kubota &

Lehner, 2004). Recent studies criticize this type of analysis, which uses a simplistic

dichotomy between Japanese and Western texts, arguing that it overemphasizes cultural

differences in the texts, is based on only a limited survey of Japanese texts, and ignores

variations between Japanese texts. Nevertheless, it is clear that the high level of

responsibility placed on the reader in Japanese texts is deeply rooted in a Japanese

cultural belief that explicit expressions have little merit. This attitude toward writing is

still commonly held in Japanese society and, unfortunately, propagated through the

reading instruction of Japanese schools.

In contrast to the high level of reader responsibility in Japanese culture, the results

of this study have shown that this 'reader responsibility' is actually very limited in JSL

textbooks. While it is true that the textbooks examined require readers to assume a large

amount of responsibility for comprehension of the text, they do not expect readers to take

an active role when reading the text. As mentioned above, learners are often asked about their own experience, knowledge, and thoughts concerning the topic and content of the text, but they are never required to form their own questions concerning a text. In some textbooks, for example, especially those at the intermediate level such as Group 1, the most frequent questions relate explicitly to content information in order to confirm the learner's understanding of superficial information using 5W1H (who, when, where, what, why, how) questions. The sequence of questions is apparently meant to be a kind of guide for reading, given from the teacher's perspective. In consequence, students using these textbooks may come to the conclusion that the purpose of reading is simply to answer questions about specific aspects of a text without having to make any critical judgments about the content. Thus, the learner's role in these JSL reading textbooks is limited to responding to given questions. Students are not required to take responsibility for probing deeper with their own reading. This reinforces the Japanese cultural bias of the reader faithfully accepting the content of the text. The reader, who is in a very passive position, is rarely expected to confront the text as an independent reader.

As a result, the learners in most JSL reading classrooms are generally required to make an enormous effort to comprehend the content of texts that do not always have an explicit structure, as well as to understand the writer's intention without the benefit of critical text analysis. For better or worse, JSL students from countries with a Confucian background feel little discomfort in this situation because they already have a similar reading style, as discussed earlier. On the other hand, it is predictable that JSL students with a Western educational background, which emphasizes more reader responsibility, experience greater discomfort and difficulty in JSL reading classes. Given this situation,

JSL students will inevitably face difficulty in reading academic texts once they enter

subject-area courses where they are required to be independent and active readers who

critically view texts and outside sources.

Characteristics of Reading Materials

One of the significant characteristics of the reading material examined in this

study is the relatively high proportion of non-authentic texts, an authentic text being one

"which was produced for purposes other than to teach language" (Nunan, 1988, p. 99). Of

the 130 textbooks reviewed in this study, 56.9% are non-authentic. In Group 1 (B1, B2,

and B3) particularly, 90.3% of the texts are non-authentic. Furthermore, 94.6% of the

original texts of Group 1 are non-academic essays that describe the author's thoughts

concerning various topics from everyday life to social problems. Thus, in Group 1

textbooks, little value is placed on text authenticity or on having varied sources and types

of texts. It should be noted that 54.5% of texts are non-authentic, even in Group 3 and 4

textbooks, which aim explicitly to teach academic reading.

There are, of course, difficulties associated with using authentic texts in second

language classrooms. Authentic text, in particular academic text, is generally too difficult

because of excessive length, more complex content, and larger vocabulary, especially

specialized academic terms. However, JSL students need to face authentic texts in order

to learn the appropriate reading strategies and skills required to cope with 'real life' texts.

McGrath (2002) explains that the authenticity of texts "gives learners a taste of the real

world, an opportunity to 'rehearse' in a sheltered environment, hence the less authentic

the materials we use, the less well prepared learners will be for that real world" (p. 105).

By way of at least a partial solution, Wallace (2003), Knott (2001), and Scott et al. (1988)

provide many suggestions about teaching practices that can help JSL teachers devise ways of using authentic texts.

In addition, the high proportion of non-authentic texts is related to the lack of critical examination discussed earlier. This omission limits opportunities for readers to examine the source or readership of the texts. Information about the source of the reading materials is very important for critical reading, since texts in real life are generally written for specific readers and specific purposes. According to Wallace (2003) and Johns (1997), each text is historically situated, having a particular social and cultural context. As a result, information concerning a text's writer, audience, purpose and time of publication is important for critical examination of the text. Students need to learn how to evaluate the value and reliability of texts in order to use outside sources effectively in subject-area courses.

Aim of Questions

As mentioned earlier, many of the reading textbooks examined contain a series of elementary questions about superficial aspects of the texts. Grellet (1981) warns against treating a text in this manner, that is, as reading a series of independent units. This approach may result in students depending unnecessarily on understanding every sentence in a text and being reluctant to infer the meaning of passages from what comes before and after (p. 6).

In addition to the flow of superficial questions about the texts, a more serious problem involves mixing facts with the writer's thoughts in the questions included in many textbooks. The following portion of a text represents a typical example of this problem:

A few years ago, a TV program broadcast news about a violent incident that the

program's producer had actually planned in advance. Moreover, he intentionally

used a faked photo, presenting it as an actual news photograph. Needless to say,

people who work in the news media should not commit such unethical acts.

However, it was interesting that people reacted with little indignation. *This is*

because viewers as well as those in the news media already believed that the news

stories and photos broadcast by TV programs were not always presented fully in

context or fully factually.

- What incident occurred concerning TV programs?

- What other problem was brought up?

- Why was the audience relatively unconcerned with those problems?

(Arai, et al., 2003, pp.110-112, italics added)

The first two questions concern facts; the third is about the writer's opinion (in italics).

Applying typical JSL reading practices, the presumed answer to the last question would

be, "It is because people as well as those in the news media already believed that the

news stories and photos broadcast by TV programs were not always presented fully in

context or fully factually." Students are not required to think through the issues presented

in the text; they merely have to pick up passages without any consideration about whether

these represent fact or opinion. Many similar illustrations of this important point are

found in other textbooks in this study, such as the following from textbook B7:

Onomatopoeia expressions, spontaneously appearing from the life of Japanese

people, are not loan words. *The fact that the Japanese language has a large*

number of onomatopoeia must have resulted from an originally insufficient

vocabulary.

- Why does the Japanese language have a large number of onomatopoeia

  expressions? (Ono, 2003, p. 61, 79, italics added)

Although there may be other hypotheses about the reason for the richness of

onomatopoeia in the Japanese language, to answer the question, students are simply

expected to follow the writer's view, presented above in italics. Students are not required

to present their own opinion, or even to consider the validity of the author's. In spite of

B7's aim to teach reading for academic purposes, almost all the questions in it are of this

type: questions that students can answer just by finding and picking up the appropriate

passage. Since JSL instruction traditionally focuses on making students comprehend the

content of the text, students are regarded to have understood the content when answers to

questions 'correctly' agree with what is written in the text. Since textbook authors'

expectations coincide with the reading style that many JSL students bring to the class, it

is not surprising that this type of instruction has resulted in a serious problem for

students.

My teaching experience has shown that many JSL students accustom themselves

to this type of 'reading' and are satisfied to answer questions by appropriating relevant

sections from texts without much, or any, consideration about the text. This situation is

found not only in JSL reading classes, but also in many typical Japanese schools, where

both teachers and students find it difficult to read texts from any other than the writer's

position. Compounding this, under the presumption that teaching the knowledge and

skills of the target language is the purpose of language classes, JSL teachers are apt to

avoid an active and interpretive consideration of the text content.

Critical reading gives students the ability to go beyond the surface of texts by critiquing what they read. Unfortunately, it is clear that JSL reading textbooks reflect the traditional reading style still prevalent in Japan, as discussed earlier.

Conclusion

Over the last two decades, theories developed in ESL and approaches to teaching second language reading have been imported into JSL. However, Japanese texts and reading styles still retain traditional characteristics; teachers and textbook authors have yet to become fully aware of the differences between newer approaches and their customary ones. In order to apply newer reading theories and approaches, teachers have to observe their circumstances carefully in order to incorporate new concepts in ways that avoid societal conflicts. They will not be able to supplant completely traditional practices quickly, but it is possible to modify traditional methods.

As an example of the changes that are occurring, Japanese academic texts are experiencing a transition from relying excessively on reader responsibility to requiring more writer responsibility. In addition, Western-style paragraph writing has begun to be taught not only in English classes but also in writing classes for Japanese students in university freshman courses. According to a study by the Japanese Ministry of Education, 64.4 percent of Japanese universities included courses involving writing instruction in their liberal arts curriculum in 2002. Although the content of academic writing instruction to Japanese students has not been firmly established, acquiring logical writing skills has become a social demand. Explicit and linear text is increasingly becoming a necessity in daily life, for example, in product manuals and in announcements and documents from

public institutions. At the same time, critical thinking is also becoming an important topic in media literacy education.

Under these circumstances, JSL teachers and textbook authors have to begin their transition by reflecting deliberately on their own reading style and making an effort to view texts critically. As stated above, this does not necessarily require that teachers and JSL students completely abandon their original reading style and skills, which are integral parts of their own culture. These traditionally respected skills are still indispensable factors for reading. JSL students with a Confucian background have already sufficiently acquired the ability to understand the meaning of texts, a very important aspect that should not be under evaluated. Teaching critical reading to JSL students serves to increase their reading ability, in order to enable reading in academic courses. To develop a more specific plan for applying critical reading to JSL reading

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Appendix A. Questions for Critical Reading

Comprehension:

1. What is the main message?

2. What effect do the illustrations have?

3. What relation is there between title and illustration, or title and text?

Readership:

4. What is the intended READERSHIP for this text?

5. What kinds of people are likely to be influenced by the text?

6. Does the author presuppose some previous knowledge of the subject?

Reader's Appreciation:

7. What did you LEARN from the text?

8. Does the text arouse any feelings in you (e.g. INTEREST)?

9. Is the presentation ELEGANT here to us?

10. Would you choose to read this text?

11. Do you agree with the author's opinion?

12. Which side do you agree with?

Applicability to the reader:

13. Is the information or argument APPLICABLE here to us?

14. Did you have the previous knowledge you needed for the text?

15. How do people benefit from reading the text?

Text or Writer Questions:

16. Who BENEFITS or LOSES by the publication of the text?

17. Who or What was NOT mentioned?

18. What implications do the omissions have?

19. Do the FACTS support the ARGUMENT?

20. Does the writer prove his points?

21. Do the people and facts mentioned really support the author's ideas?

(Scott et al., 1988, p.7)

Appendix B. The Hallidayan Framework

FIELD OF DISCOURSE: IDEATIONAL MEANING

Participants	What/who is talked about?
	Who are the participants?
Processes	What verbs describe what kind of processes?
Circumstances	How specifically are circumstances indicated, e.g. by adverbs or prepositional phrases?
Causation	How is causation attributed?

TENOR OF DISCOURSE: INTERPERSONAL MEANING

Person	What personal pronouns are selected?
	How does the writer refer to self, subject and reader?
Mood	What mood is most frequently selected: declarative, imperative or interrogative?
Modality	What role does modality play in, for example, expressing a degree of certainty or authority?
Writer's attitude	Are there adverbs, adjectives or nouns that indicate the writer's attitude to his/her subject matter?

MODE OF DISCOURSE: TEXTUAL MEANING

Semantic structure	Is the text narrative, expository or descriptive, as indicated, for example, by the use of past or present tense?
Overall organization	What larger structures does the text have, e.g. in terms of beginnings and endings?
	In what form is information represented?
Theme	What information is selected for first position, at clause level and at the level of the whole text?
Cohesion	How does the text hang together as a text, for example what kinds of connectors are used (related to the semantic structure of the text)?

(Wallace, 2002, p.33)