

'Authors' or 'Animators': Encouraging Critique in Japanese English for Academic Purpose Classes

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Abstract

This article discusses approaches to teaching critical reading for academic purposes. Based on findings of a survey done in class, it argues for the fact that reading critically is an important aspect of academic reading. The context is an EAP Reading course taught to first year liberal arts students in a tertiary institution in Japan. The curriculum in this bachelors' program is multidisciplinary, providing a selection of courses in the liberal arts, including sociology, anthropology and international relations. The program is taught in English and in the first year, students do a course in English for Academic Purposes. The synopsis for the Reading component of the EAP course notes that critical reading strategies will be taught so that students are alerted to issues relating to language, power and discourse as well as the construction, portrayal and representation of different ideas, identities and subjectivities.

Keywords: Critical Pedagogy, Language, Power and Representation

Introduction

Contextualizing the Teaching of EAP in Japan

English is taught in schools and tertiary institutions in Japan. However, in terms of methodology, Japan has had a history of the grammar-translation approach even though in recent years, attempts have been made to introduce communicative language teaching (Sergeant, 2009). Notably absent are approaches that view language (and meaning making through language) as discourse and social practice rather than as atomized structure.

In contemporary Japan, prevalent discussions around the English language and ELT have been centred round the belief that Japanese people need to learn it as a means for them to communicate with the outside world (Oda, 2007). Oda (2007) terms it the "English is essential for everyone" discourse, something which "has been constructed and reinforced over the years" in the official releases to the media (p. 123). In addition, even as the country faces the twin problem of an aging population and declining birthrates, Japanese universities facing seriously declining enrolments are increasingly offering programs taught in English. This is done for two principal reasons: (1) as a way to attract more students from overseas, who may not be able to sit through lectures in Japanese, and (2) as an approach to marketing and image creation – part of a belief in how a collocation of 'English' with images of 'modernity' and 'progressiveness' can be capitalized on to bring in more students and more money – but illustrative of how commodification and instrumentalism fast encroaches on education (Fairclough, 1992). With this trend has come the need for support programs in service English, some of which come in the form of EAP programs which would necessarily entail some attempt at change from grammar-

translation and other approaches that view language as form and structure, to approaches that encourage deeper reflection and critique.

Approaches to EAP

Discussions on the role and nature of EAP, nonetheless, have taken different angles. Lea and Street (1998) have these summarised as three possible ways of looking at English teaching for the academy. One notion of EAP is that it is a support program that concentrates on teaching surface skills like grammar, vocabulary, paragraphing and punctuation, looking upon the lack of these as “deficit” that needs to be solved through teacher-directed instruction. Johns (1997) describes how in such classes, mastery and memory of correct grammatical forms is emphasized, where “language is form(al)” and “all other “linguistic, psychological, and social factors are secondary, or in some cases, ignored” (1997, p. 7). Turner (1999) notes that such a notion of academic literacy relegates EAP to a “remedial” role. A second notion of EAP is that of having students acculturated into academic discourse, which means acquisition of the discourses, practices and genres of academia. With this approach, students are viewed as having to be enculturated into an ‘academic’ way of speaking and doing, while teaching would involve having students acquire ‘generic’ ways of speaking, doing and writing. A third, the notion of academic literacies, is one where EAP takes on a more reflexive turn. Students are taught to look at issues of language, epistemology, and culture as ones which are essentially imbued with the influence of ideology and power. In an academic literacies approach, students are given the opportunity to look critically at language, knowledge and access to meaning making as imbrications of each other and of ideology, power discourses and social action. Specifically relating to the teaching of reading, critical reading implies reading beyond the explicit to incorporate matters of identity, epistemologies and power differences, what Turner calls a “reading in”, which includes, for example, “locating omissions as much as understanding what is explicitly located in the text” (1999, p. 158). Turner argues that the teaching of reading in EAP “should play a critical, rather than a remedial role in higher education” (1999, p. 158) bearing in mind the benefits to be reaped from deeper empowerment of students.

Theoretical Foundations for a Critical Approach to EAP Reading

The Socio-Situatedness of Text. With regards to theoretical underpinnings for critical reading, the literature on social theory of text, discourse and power and also academic literacies is useful. A common strand in such writing is the notion of text as being a socially and historically situated construct. Kress’ work on the social theory of text views text as a product of the “social semiotic action of representation” (p. 84). Hence, more than “getting meaning from...written text”, he looks at reading as part of the work of “making sense of the world around” (p. 140). As part of this, he considers reading to be the work of understanding social action and social activity, and the work of reading as deciphering and understanding social relations as well as social action and interaction.

Blanton (1998) adds to this, stressing an individualized perspective on reading. She notes the importance of fostering the behavior of “talking” to texts and being aware that students “can and should bring their own thoughts and experience to bear” when they are reading, “in order to create a reading of their own” (p. 227-228). Students should be

encouraged to “interpret texts in the light of their own experience and their own experience in the light of texts” and to “agree or disagree with texts in the light of” their life experience (p. 226). The point to be noted here is that “texts do not constitute the sole authority on any subject” because students can also claim authority over texts as they read critically (p. 232). This ties in with Kress’ notion of the “socially-located” reader (2003, p. 140), who comes into reading with a socio-historical background that s/he brings into interpretation of the text, rather than one who merely decodes ‘meaning’ from page to page and considers reading to be over and done with after the last page has been decoded (Blanton, 1998).

Concurring, Wallace notes that “reading is social: social in the sense that readers and writers enact their roles as members of communities; social in that it unfolds in a social context, both an immediate and wider social context” (2003, p. 9). For Wallace, “reading is a three way interaction between the writer, the text and the reader, each of which...is socially constrained and directed if not socially constructed” (2003, p. 9). She further adds the element of power amidst such an interaction when she says that reading involves a “shifting and dynamic relationship between text producers, text receivers and the text itself. Any one of the participants in this interaction may assert greater power, depending on a number of variables in the reading situation” (2003, p. 9). In relation to the exercise of power, Wallace (2003, p. 165) makes the distinction between readers who ‘animate’ and readers who ‘author’ texts. She describes how text ‘animators’ simply comprehend and paraphrase texts for meaning “unproblematically”, while text ‘authors’ are more analytical when they take it upon themselves to ‘create’ or ‘author’ texts through resistance and critique.

Hence, Kress, Blanton and Wallace all furnish classroom practitioners with vital notions of the constructedness of meaning and the situatedness of text as well as the dialogic element in reading that is crucial to critical approaches. Wallace, furthermore, includes the element of power and the assertion of power centred in text producers, text receivers and even the text itself.

Texts, Values, Belief Systems and Background Knowledge. Wallace (2003) notes that ‘community’ texts – those that are circulated in everyday life – are amenable for the critical reading classroom as these tend to be ones that exert influence in the community, and being familiar, would readily draw out responses based on students’ background knowledge, values and beliefs. Tying in with Kress’ concept of the socially-located reader, students are encouraged to be “aware of the placing and meaning of texts in a range of settings beyond the classroom” (Wallace, 2002, p 112) and of texts as “objects or artefacts...that...embody the values and belief systems of the societies and communities from which they arise” (p 113). Indeed, vital to critical reading is the fundamental premise that textual content is never monolithic or monologic, but dialogic and socially-situated.

This is where students’ background and extra-textual knowledge becomes useful. Spellmeyer (1998) argues for having students “bring their extra-textual knowledge to bear upon every text we give them and to provide them with strategies for using this knowledge to undertake a conversation” (p. 121) with the text and the agencies of power and control that lie behind them. By way of illustrating the importance of reader participation and commitment, Spellmeyer (1998) tells of a student who engages with Emile Durkheim’s *Suicide: A Study in Sociology* in a systematic, impersonal, academic way with nothing of his own to say, noting that there is a “pervasive absence of commitment” in the student’s reading of the work. For Spellmeyer (1998), it is important that students “venture...into the

realm of implication, through assent, disagreement” (p 116); students who are trained simply to “filter, absorb and digest” show a lack in “any sense of inquiry” (p 115). He describes the student’s response to child suicide as:

Perfectly generic...Rather than exploring solutions...he abandons the problem...he forestalls any consideration of Durkheim’s personality and motives, although the reconstruction of Durkheim’s situation might have started him on the way to a more engaged reading. In *Suicide* Durkheim makes any number of assertions which readily invite dispute but the text dominates the student...so completely that his response could not be more deferential or more perfunctory...Durkheim’s prose is densely furnished with supporting illustrations which allow him to examine related forms of behavior in order to identify...cultural institutions that promote these forms. (Spellmeyer, 1998, p 117)

While the student suggests that institutions like the home, group, club, church or community could reduce child suicide, he fails to look further and “ask why they currently fail to discourage suicide...to ask that question, he would need to adopt a critical attitude toward his own family, group, church and community” (p 117). Spellmeyer notes that the student’s “unwillingness to...intrude upon what he perceives as the objectivity of academic discourse finally prevents him from coming to understand such discourse” (p 118). The opportunity for the student to engage critically with ideas is not taken to full potential.

Typical Japanese Reading Lessons – Concern for Conformity and Correctness

The above understandings of critical reading need to be contrasted with Low and Woodburn’s (1999) observation of Japanese learners’ deep attention to what is right, wrong, conventional, definite or exact, and low tolerance for variation, difference, uncertainty or change. For learners conditioned to the importance of exactitude, situatedness, dialogization and critique become a challenge. Japanese learners who show anxiety when it comes to change and uncertainty are often not forthcoming when asked to offer personal and/or critical viewpoints. Indeed, a typical Japanese reading class is said to be characterized by activities related to promoting surface comprehension. These would include: (1) pre-reading activities covering prediction and framing of content; (2) checking meaning of unfamiliar words; (3) post-reading exercises such as comprehension questions and cloze exercises on the contents.

Such activities are to be viewed alongside a culture in education where students have traditionally been conditioned to comply and conform rather than voice their thoughts and feelings and where only the teacher is accorded authority over what is considered right, wrong or legitimate. In this instance, teacher authority would be reinforced by the sorts of surface comprehension questions that require right-wrong answers to true-false items, cloze exercises or such items that do not require any degree of critical response. Such practices may emanate from a belief that discrete or one-word answers are an accurate measure of comprehension. The role of the teacher then becomes that of someone who affirms or confirms a right or wrong answer.

Sato (2004) also describes teacher authority in this way:

Without their physical presence, teachers enjoy invisible authority – referring to the authority, respect, and control teachers secure...The explicit hierarchical organization of schools and classrooms bestow teachers with structural authority. (Sato, 2004, p. 189)

An outcome of this is that students coming into university may not be familiar with the type of critical insight that would hopefully be expected of them, even as Sato observes how “day-to-day classroom life is colorless, and students’ perspectives largely remain off the canvas altogether” (Sato, 2004, p. 14).

Nevertheless, Sato (1999) sees the opposite as also being possible: “the cultural veneer of homogeneity is fabricated by standardized practices, and conceals...actual diversity and individuality” (1999, p. 120). She argues that conformity for the Japanese is often just an outward veneer, part of a Japanese concern for a harmonious surface, where uniform procedures and forms of behavior reflect outward appearance, not necessarily homogeneity or uniformity...within students’ hearts and minds...Students may practice identical skills...but once learned, these basic skills actually enable them to become more adventuresome (Sato, 2004, p. 202-203).

Bearing this in mind, both students and teachers can work towards some assurance and agreement that opinion and critique are vital for learning.

Aims – What the Study Sought to Determine

A study was conducted with a view to obtaining data on students’ learning experiences in reading classes, prompted also by the hypothesis that activities relating to understanding factual or literal content predominate over activities that involved critical reading. The study sought specifically to find out (1) the sorts of activities students were familiar with in reading classes (2) whether students had been exposed to activities that carried a critical dimension, including activities that facilitated an ‘authoring’ of text rather than simple text ‘animation’.

Method

Survey Questionnaire and Attention to Ethics

Students were given a questionnaire in English together with Japanese translation. This follows other studies among Japanese learners of English where, for the purposes of data reliability, data gathering was conducted in Japanese (Kubota, 2011; Kubota and McKay, 2009). The questionnaire took about 15 minutes of a 100-minute lesson to complete. Students were given information explaining the aims of the survey, confidentiality of information, appropriation of findings (i. e. in course planning and in professional discussions regarding curriculum and methodology), participant anonymity and volition.

Design of the Questionnaire

In designing the questionnaire, the following factors were considered: (1) conciseness; (2) items that elicit information on the reading activities respondents had been exposed to; (3) a spread and balance of both critique oriented items as well as items focusing on surface comprehension; so as to (4) facilitate differentiation between teaching styles focusing on surface comprehension versus teaching styles that view language as a tool for articulating critical opinions and creating meaning. The resultant questionnaire (Appendix A) comprised of 14 items: 7 items on content-focussed reading activities (1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12 and 13) and 7 items on activities that required student critique (2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 11 and 14). Hence, checking a dictionary for new words (item 1) would be an example of the former, while discussing social issues related to the contents (item 2) would be an example of the latter. In keeping with sound data collection measures, instructions in both English and Japanese were carefully crafted (Mackey & Gass, 2005) for clarity and conciseness.

Participants

There were 19 participants turning in 19 responses. All the participants were members of a first year academic reading class of 22 people. This particular class was chosen because of students' substantial exposure to English through previous study in high school, study-abroad programs as well as in private schools evidenced in their having TOEIC test scores between 410 and 450. There were two absentees on the day the survey was conducted. One student did not turn in the questionnaire.

Findings and Analysis

Percentages on 'traditional' content-focussed reading activities (items 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12 and 13) reveal that such activities featured prominently in the students' experience (Appendix B). This is to be contrasted with the percentages on activities requiring critique (2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 11 and 14), which reveal a relative dearth or paucity of such activities. For ease of reference, the figures are summarised here.

	Common	Not Common	Never
Average of Percentages from items 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12 and 13 on content-focussed reading activities	60.1%	37.6%	2.3%
Average of Percentages from items 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 11 and 14 on critique-focussed reading activities	20.3%	65.4%	14.3%

Percentages on 'traditional' content-focussed reading activities versus Percentages on reading activities requiring critique

In terms of extremities, 16 of the 19 students reported that content summary (item 8) was common. The same number circled 'Not common' for questioning authors' motives (item 9). This suggests a strong tendency towards literal or factual content as opposed to

critique. However, items 5 and 7 draw attention because the figures run counter to the general trend, while also refuting the original hypothesis. Items 5 and 7 (Retelling contents to friends, True-False questions) are actually items promoting surface comprehension but are reported as being relatively uncommon. From the standpoint that reading and critique should be encouraged, the findings for both items 5 and 7 can be deemed positive. Retelling activities collocate with communicative language teaching (CLT) and are consanguine with jigsaw or information gap activities. The relative rarity of retelling could be because CLT is often not integrated into reading class given regimes of practice that advocate partitioning of reading, writing, speaking and listening. It could also mean that CLT, while popular in ELT literature, may not be so in practice in Japanese classrooms. True-false items on their part epitomize a non-critical and picayune (Stanlaw, 2004) approach to checking surface comprehension, better dissociated from of academic reading.

Pedagogical Implications

With findings suggesting a need for more opportunities for critique, the remainder of the discussion will examine pedagogical strategies that may prove useful.

Encouraging Socially Located Critique

To begin with, with Wallace's (2003) point about familiar topics in mind, students can be given materials they can relate to: a seventeen-year-old sumo wrestler who suffered severe bullying, eventually losing his life (Japan Times, 20 March 2008); the matter of how a famous transsexual queen found it hard to rent an apartment, suffering repeated rejections (Japan Times, 5 December 2009); the *gomiyashiki* phenomenon, the presence of 'trash' houses in the neighborhood, where people accumulate an excessive amount of trash, attracting stray animals and other vermin (Japan Times, 12 September 2009). Illustrations in this discussion are taken from these articles.

With the article on trash houses, students considered matters from the viewpoint of those people who have been accumulating trash, as well as from the viewpoint of their neighbors. Some tried to think about why owners of trash houses tend to be older people living alone, evidence of what Turner (1999) has called the "reading in" process or what Wallace (2003) describes as attempts at attaching further and deeper meanings to text. One student showed first-hand knowledge of the matter, saying that town councils have not been able to do much about the trash and how stray cats roam around these houses. Yet another student went further when she associated the problem of trash houses with forms of anti-social behavior like drink-driving or disturbing the peace. Such responses attest to Kress' notion of the socially located reader.

Students can be encouraged to draw on what they have seen, read or learnt previously. They bring along unique experiences from different encounters in school, community and internet. These can prove to be valuable sources to draw on in the "reading in" process.

Giving Students Guidelines and Metalanguage for Critique

By way of practical guidelines, students can think about:

- (1) "the participants involved in the social action as it takes place"
- (2) "their social relations with each other" (Kress, 2003, p. 84).

They can also be asked to consider:

- (3) the sort of actions participants perform on each other
- (4) how and why participants behave the way they do in relation to others
- (5) authors' attitudes towards their subject matter

Allowing students to be familiar with basic metalanguage can prove useful. Teaching a "metalanguage, or a language about language" means that students get to learn "a language about their strategies for completing tasks, thus enabling them to discuss, critique, and reflect upon what they have done and how they have done it" (Johns, 1997, p. 128). Metalanguage such as (1) Perspectives (2) Identities (3) Power Relations can be introduced. The discussion below begins with what the metalinguistic 'tool' can be used for, some supporting literature and how it has been applied.

Perspectives

'Perspectives' refers to how certain ways of viewing things can be foregrounded as being natural, obvious and conventional while others seem to be less natural or common. It is used here to signal the fact that scrutinizing matters from multiple viewpoints is vital for effective reading. Differences in perspective are, of course, the result of (social or ideological) conditioning, resulting in naturalized or standardized ways of apprehending different phenomena, as well as the coercive power of text. Yahya (1994) notes how texts can bind a reader "in a moment of collusion and coercion" (p.70) to cause the reader to assume the perspectives offered in the text and be led to accept the descriptions of life as being 'truth' and 'reality'. She calls this reader interpellation. The interpellated reader accepts certain dominant perspectives as being natural.

Critical reading thus involves looking at other perspectives, like how Yahya (1994) examines matters from the perspective of a marginalized native woman in a short story by W. Somerset Maugham. In the story, Guy, a colonial administrator in Malaysia marries Doris while on furlough in England, without telling her about his relationship with a native woman. Yahya (1994) points out that native characters are not given long, in-depth conversations like the white characters to whom rationality and assertiveness are attributed. The natives communicate through non-verbal signals, wild gesticulations or stylized posturings.

In critical reading, students are encouraged to consider matters from the silent or marginalized character's viewpoint. This concurs with Apple and Christian-Smith's call to (1991, p.17) examine "the treatment and invisibility of oppressed groups in...texts", through considering "other voices to counter the lack of serious attention to, say, the vibrant cultures of people of color" and with Kress' (2003) question about the importance of examining the nature of social relations in text. Wallace (2002) similarly notes that critical language study encourages reading texts "in different ways, to subject everyday texts to other than everyday readings" (p. 112-113).

In the article about trash houses, students were encouraged to look at the issue from different perspectives. Typically, students tapped on their knowledge of suburban neighborhoods, where beneath a facade of regularized Japanese serenity, there can be deep undercurrents of unsettledness. Points raised by the students included why there were

trash houses in Japan, looking from the perspective of the people who hoarded things – ‘Maybe they are poor’; ‘I think they were poor a long time ago and now they don’t want to throw out the things’. There were also reactions of empathy – ‘Maybe the old people are very lonely’; ‘I think the old people may be invalid and they cannot remove the rubbish themselves’; ‘The trash is a way to remember the past for the old people’. Some students turned to the long-suffering neighbors and discussed their feelings of helplessness – ‘I think the neighbors find it very difficult to live beside *gomiyashiki* but they cannot do anything’; ‘It is not fair on the neighbors and the government should do something’. Others felt that the government could not solve the problem. They said that camera crew from television stations have visited trash houses with volunteers who helped clean up, but when the same crew visited the houses several months after, the houses were again filled with trash. With the sumo article, students looked at matters from the perspective of the dead boy – ‘I think Takashi Saito is pitiful. Maybe he had a dream for the future’; ‘Saito’s life was wasted, he was only very young’. Blame was put on the stable master for instigating the beatings and bullying that resulted in injury and death – ‘I think the stable master and three wrestlers arrested must repent of his death’. The wrestlers who administered the beatings and cigarette burnings were blamed, but others said that they were used by the stable master. Others looked at matters from the stable master’s perspective. They reasoned that with sumo’s waning popularity, stables were facing falling enrolments. Fewer enrolments meant less money and the stable master became angry because the boy wanted to quit training. Students criticized the sumo federation with incisive comments about their secrecy – ‘this kind of incident has been secret on the bad side until now’; ‘Japan sumo association must want to hide problem’; ‘I would completely lose the trust of association of sumo by this case’ and commented that television broadcasters would stand to lose money from bad publicity for the sport. Students tried their hand at ‘authoring’ the text from different viewpoints (Wallace, 2003).

Identities

Identities refer to the way students view or position themselves vis-a-vis what is discussed in the text. Students discover that their identity or positioning or the way they (choose to) see themselves can affect the way they respond to text. McKinney (2003) links the ability to approach an issue critically with a reader’s consciousness of self and sense of identity. For McKinney knowing, learning and critique are matters relating the self to the social. Hence questions like “How am I implicated in the social world” and “How am I implicated in social inequality” become questions that invite critical evaluation (McKinney, 2003, p. 196). In the present case, students focussed on how their socio-cultural identities came to bear on their responses to the issues they encountered.

Students drew on their Japanese identities when they spoke about sumo being a Japanese sport. There were expressions of anger at the sumo association as well as the stable responsible for the boy’s death. There was disappointment at the bad publicity for a Japanese sport which meant bad publicity for Japan. Students pointed out that the ultimate loser was Japanese culture itself – ‘Can you say the sumo wrestling is sports of the Japanese culture proudly from now on?’; ‘Sumo is Japanese traditional sport...I’m sad to hear this news’; ‘I was very ashamed because sumo is Japanese traditional culture. I do not believe that people who inherit Japanese tradition should pollute it’; ‘I was sad because I felt Japanese culture is broken, we Japanese are breaking our own culture’.

For (many) Japanese students growing up in a conceptually monocultural society and used to being part of the dominant majority, looking at matters from a minority positioning can be enlightening. Hence with the transsexual who found it hard to rent an apartment despite being a celebrity, students were forced to dig deep into their own positionings – resulting in responses like ‘I think Ai Haruna is very brave’; ‘Transsexual people are not easily admitted into Japanese society; Japan is not like Thailand, the Philippines or Australia’; ‘The landlords are afraid of complaints from neighbors, I think Japan must change’. The question of conformism also came up in a society which does not take kindly to diversity, deviation or difference: ‘I think in Japan, everybody must be the same and behave the same’.

With the article on trash houses, there were different responses between students who noticed the fact that the author was not Japanese but American, and those who did not. Once students picked up on this with hints from the teacher, they were able to follow up on matters to do with the author’s allusions to the Ainu and the way they have been treated, the sluggish economy, Japanese frugality and their addiction to *pachinko* (slot machines). In doing so, they discovered that the article was not just about trash houses per se but also about Japan through foreign eyes. Students discovered that whereas it would have been unusual for people of a Japanese majority to allude to the Ainu, this was not the case with foreign commentators who would pick on such matters out of an overall concern for ethnic minorities or human rights, for example. One student said that ‘foreign writers would create an imagined problem about Japan’. Other reactions included: ‘the Ainu people are part of the Japanese people and we don’t see any problem’ and that ‘I am not sure if there are any Ainu people left but I know that their culture remains in Hokkaido’. Whether one agrees with these (critically motivated) perceptions, the point is that students were able to engage with ideas vis-a-vis conceptualizations and assertions of their own identity positionings.

Power Relations

‘Power relations’ refer to how power differences are located in text which readers can uncover and resist. Students discover how people or agencies wield or exercise power. Students also examine how sources of power and influence set off outcomes which naturalize unequal power relations. Examinations of power relations can be found in text analyses like Baik (1994) who examines how North and South Korea are portrayed, analyses concerned with power inequalities such as Bigelow (1997) which studies how Native Americans are portrayed, as well as Hughes (1996) which studies a similar theme in relation to Papua New Guinea.

With the article on the dead wrestler, students were able to rethink what actually happened after the boy’s death – saying that if the boy’s father had not pursued the matter, the case would have been ‘let go as dying by heart attack’, as was claimed by the police: ‘Police wanted to burn his body and cover the truth and said he died because of heart disease. This was not true’. In so doing, they came upon the fact that the police held a certain amount of power. Other students responded to the power wielded through bullying and harassment: ‘He is victim of bullying. He suffered torments because of bullying’; ‘In fact, Japan has many kinds of bullying. I hope bullying will end’. Some students also raised the point that broadcasting networks also had a stake on power because of their

earnings from broadcasting sumo. Students said that such networks would not favour bad publicity for sumo.

As for the trash houses, some students discovered that the American author of the article was exercising authorial power over her subject matter. More than about trash houses, the article commented on Japanese society and what foreigners might see as quaint or unusual – Japanese frugality, addiction to *pachinko* or the apparent non-recognition of ethnic minorities. This attracted countering responses such as ‘As you know, casinos are not allowed in Japan and the people want a place to gamble’ or ‘I think the old people were poor before and so they want to save everything they have’; ‘Foreigners think a lot about human rights’. Students discover that texts are not neutral, but are sites where power is staked out. As readers, they can tease out such relations of power and in response, offer dialogical viewpoints.

Conclusion

Reading critically enables students to scrutinize and respond to different ways knowledge is constructed and represented. Johns (1997) warns about the “danger of teaching assimilation to academic cultures and their texts rather than critique” and promoting students’ “acceptance of the status quo” (p. 18). Through critical reading, students co-author and co-construct knowledge and discover the complexities of meaning making and construction. In relation to EAP, students learn to robustly engage with knowledge from different disciplines as critically conditioned readers. This would only help engender a richer dialog that all academia would welcome.

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Appendix A

Questionnaire on Reading Lessons (Reading クラスのアンケート)

Important Note to Students (学生への重要な注意事項)

This questionnaire is part of on-going attempts to improve the EAP Reading course. Please note that your participation is strictly voluntary. Please do not write your name on the questionnaire. The answers you provide will be used in professional discussions related to the planning of better EAP Reading programs, but will be otherwise kept totally confidential. This questionnaire will take about 15 minutes to complete.

このアンケートEAP授業の改善に役立てる為のものです。

参加者は自由参加で強制するものではありません。

アンケートに名前を記載する必要はありません。アンケートの回答は、EAPリーディングプログラムの改善に役立てる目的に使用されるもので、回答を公表されることはありません。このアンケートは、約15分かかります。

Instructions

Please respond to the following items by marking ‘O’ beside the most appropriate answer.

回答は、「頻繁」「あまりない」「ほとんどない」の3つのうち1つに○をつけてください。

Activities in Reading Class

How common were these activities in your Reading classes?

リーディングクラスでの頻度について

1. Checking dictionary for new words 授業中に習う新しい単語は辞書で調べる
 - a. Common 頻繁
 - b. Not Common あまりない
 - c. Never ほとんどない
2. Talking about social issues related to the contents
授業中に講師と社会問題について話し合う
 - a. Common 頻繁
 - b. Not Common あまりない
 - c. Never ほとんどない
3. Debating social issues related to the contents
授業中に講師と社会問題について批評する
 - a. Common 頻繁
 - b. Not Common あまりない
 - c. Never ほとんどない
4. Reading Aloud to aid comprehension 授業中声に出して読む講習

Cont. Appendix A

- a. Common 頻繁 b. Not Common あまりない c. Never ほとんどない
5. Retelling contents to a friend 授業中にリーディング内容を友達に伝える講
 a. Common 頻繁 b. Not Common あまりない c. Never ほとんどない
6. Questioning a character's motives 文献の主人公の動機について話し合う講習
 a. Common 頻繁 b. Not Common あまりない c. Never ほとんどない
7. True and false exercises 正しいものと間違っているものを見つける講習
 a. Common 頻繁 b. Not Common あまりない c. Never ほとんどない
8. Summarising contents 内容をまとめる
 a. Common 頻繁 b. Not Common あまりない c. Never ほとんどない
9. Questioning author's motives 作者の動機を批評する
 a. Common 頻繁 b. Not Common あまりない c. Never ほとんどない
10. Discussing students' opinions on the content リーディング内容から出た学生の意見を論議する
 a. Common 頻繁 b. Not Common あまりない c. Never ほとんどない

Questions 11-14 are related to the following paragraph

下記の英文を読んでください。回答は、「頻繁」「あまりない」「ほとんどない」の3つのうち1つに○をつけてください。

Takashi Saito was a 17-year-old boy who trained in a sumo stable. His father wanted him to become a sumo wrestler. One day, he was found dead in the sumo stable. His father was told by the stable master, Junichiro Yamamoto that Saito died of heart failure. However, Yamamoto did not allow Saito's father to see his son's body. So Saito's father went to the police. After looking into the matter, the police also said that Saito died of heart failure. Later, the sumo federation came out in support of Yamamoto. However, after going to a lawyer, Saito's father found out that his son died from beatings suffered in the stable.

Cont. Appendix A.

From your past experience in Reading classes, how often were the following types of questions asked about such a paragraph?

講師はどれくらいの頻度で以下のような質問は授業中にしますか？

11. What opinions do you have of the sumo federation?

相撲団体についてあなたの意見について聞かれることはどれくらいあると思いますか？

a. Common 頻繁 b. Not Common あまりない c. Never ほとんどない

12. What did Yamamoto tell Saito's father?

山本氏は斉藤さんの父に何を伝えたか？このような質問はどれくらいあると思いますか？

a. Common 頻繁 b. Not Common あまりない c. Never ほとんどない

13. What did Saito actually die of?

実際に斉藤さんの死はなんでしたか？このような質問はどれくらい聞かれると思いますか？

a. Common 頻繁 b. Not Common あまりない c. Never ほとんどない

14. What do you think were Yamamoto's motives?

山本氏の動機は何でしたか？このような質問はどれくらい聞かれると思いますか？

a. Common 頻繁 b. Not Common あまりない c. Never ほとんどない

End of Questionnaire

Thank you

Appendix B

Data from Study on Students' Experiences of Reading Class

A total of 19 students participated in the study. Figures in italics represent the absolute number of responses while figures in bold represent the percentages.

Items on Class Activity Types

	Activity	Common	Not Common	Never
1	Checking dictionary for new words	<i>13</i> 68.4%	<i>6</i> 31.6%	<i>0</i> 0%
2	Talking about social issues related to the contents	<i>2</i> 10.5%	<i>15</i> 79.0%	<i>2</i> 10.5%
3	Debating social issues related to the contents	<i>1</i> 5.3%	<i>14</i> 73.7%	<i>4</i> 21.0%
4	Reading Aloud to aid comprehension	<i>12</i> 63.2%	<i>7</i> 36.8%	<i>0</i> 0%
5	Retelling contents to a friend	<i>5</i> 26.3%	<i>13</i> 68.4%	<i>1</i> 5.3%
6	Questioning a character's motives	<i>7</i> 36.8%	<i>10</i> 52.6%	<i>2</i> 10.5%
7	True False exercises	<i>8</i> 42.1%	<i>11</i> 57.9%	<i>0</i> 0%
8	Summarising contents	<i>16</i> 84.2%	<i>3</i> 15.8%	<i>0</i> 0%
9	Questioning author's motives	<i>0</i> 0%	<i>16</i> 84.2%	<i>3</i> 15.8%
10	Discussing students' opinions on the content	<i>4</i> 21.1%	<i>15</i> 78.9%	<i>0</i> 0%

Items on Question Types

	Question	Common	Not Common	Never
11	What opinions do you have of the sumo federation?	<i>6</i> 31.6%	<i>5</i> 26.3%	<i>8</i> 42.1%
12	What did Yamamoto tell Saito's father?	<i>11</i> 57.9%	<i>7</i> 36.8%	<i>1</i> 5.3%
13	What did Saito actually die of?	<i>15</i> 78.9%	<i>3</i> 15.8%	<i>1</i> 5.3%
14	What do you think were Yamamoto's motives?	<i>7</i> 36.8%	<i>12</i> 63.2%	<i>0</i> 0%

*Cont. Appendix B***Percentages on 'traditional' content-focussed reading activities (items 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12 and 13)**

	Common	Not Common	Never
Average of Percentages from items 1, 4, 5, 7, 8, 12 and 13 on content-focussed reading activities	60.1%	37.6%	2.3%

Percentages on reading activities requiring critique (2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 11 and 14)

	Common	Not Common	Never
Average of Percentages from items 2, 3, 6, 9, 10, 11 and 14 on critique-focussed reading activities	20.3%	65.4%	14.3%