

Some Possibilities of the Use of Literary Texts in EFL Classrooms in Japan

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要旨

外国語教育における文学教材は、1980年代に英米で文学と語学の統合への関心などからその価値が再評価され、その後も文学の持つ役割や効果的な利用方法について議論が重ねられてきた。この復活の動きの中で特徴的であったのは、対象学習者のレベル・教材としての文学・用いられる教授法の範囲が、いずれもそれまでの伝統な概念におけるものから大きく広がったという点である。

一方、明治時代より英米の外国語教育の理論と実践から多くを学んできた日本の英語教育において、この文学教材復活の影響は本格化していない。上級学習者用には教育的文体論などを取り入れた文学テキストの利用がしばしば試みられてはいるものの、初・中級学習者向け授業についてはほとんど研究されていないのが現状である。

本稿では、英米での文学教材復活の動きの中でRonald Carterらが提示した language-based approaches を分析した上で、同アプローチの日本の大学初級授業への応用を議論し、具体的な活動内容や学習者の実際の反応を示すことによって、日本の英語教育における文学教材利用の新たな可能性を探る。

Key words: literary texts, language-based approaches, EFL classrooms in Japan, student perceptions

1. Introduction

Literature in second or foreign language teaching, which had been relatively neglected and marginalized for a certain period, resurged in the 1980s and 1990s mainly in the UK with a focus on integration of literature and language (Maley, 1989; Carter and Long, 1991; Brumfit and Benton, 1993) and also in the USA with more attention to authenticity as a cultural artifact (Nostrand, 1989; Kramsch and Kramsch, 2000). Researchers and practitioners have been making assertions and counter-assertions from various points of view, regarding the role of literature and the way to use it in a language curriculum.

Among the many theories of what instigated the return of literature in language education,

Gilroy and Parkinson (1997) convincingly state, “The reason of its [literature’s] return seems to be the convergence of ideas from two main sources: first, literary criticism, including the debate on the nature of literary language and reader response theory; second, communicative language learning” (p.213). The elements in literary criticism which fostered the resurgence of literature seem to derive from a challenge to F. R. Leavis’ traditional view¹⁾ of literature study, in which he sees literature as “the supremely civilizing pursuit” (Leavis, 1943; Gilroy and Parkinson, 1997). These elements include reconsideration of the concept of literariness, reader response criticism, and pedagogical stylistics.

The developments in literary studies have prompted general awareness of differences in readers and their interests, and resulted in offering more room for Communicative Language Teaching (“CLT”), which has been dominant in foreign language teaching since 1970s. As Hirvela (1996) points out, “Their [teachers and materials designers] search for more communicatively-oriented materials and learning conditions led, almost inevitably, to literature” (p.127), literary texts are now seen as authentic material that can produce communicative activities.

In the context of EFL classrooms in Japan, where literary materials have been gradually marginalized since the end of World War II until present times (Erikawa, 1998; Saito, 2004), we have had only limited interest in a resurgence of literary texts, despite the fact that English education in Japan has been much influenced by theories and practices in second/foreign language pedagogy in the UK and the USA. Moreover, as quite a large number of people regard using literary texts as a synonym of conducting the class in Grammar-Translation Method, which has been criticized as being ineffective and obsolete, this widely held fallacy in methodology possibly facilitates avoidance of literature in English education.

This paper primarily aims to explore some possibilities of the use of literary texts in English classrooms in Japan with a focus on methodological concepts. Language-based approaches (Carter and Long, 1991; Carter, 1996b) by Ronald Carter will be examined as a starting point, and then classroom practices in which the approaches are incorporated and modified in consideration for actual contexts will be introduced. Finally the student perceptions in the classrooms will be analyzed and the role of literature for these students will be discussed.

2. Language-based Approaches for the EFL context in Japan

2.1 The Emergence of Language-based Approaches in the UK

Theoretical development of language-based approaches is attributed to the conception of stylistic analysis of literary texts and its application to pedagogy. Stylistics, which deals with the interface between language and literature, gathered strength in the late 1970s in two promising

directions, the first of which is pedagogical stylistics. Many stylisticians, then, developed what they called 'pre-literary' language-based activities (Weber, 1996, p.3) in the 1980s. These activities included standard EFL procedures such as cloze, unscrambling, intertextual comparison, creative writing, etc. and were considered as "important preliminary activities to reading literature" (Carter, 1996b, p.148). It was hoped that the activities would be useful not only in improving the learners' reading and writing skills but also in awakening their awareness of language usage and growing their sensitivity to it.

Language-based approaches were almost indistinguishable from stylistics in the early 1980s, and they became more distinctive and definitive in their own right from the mid 1980s. While stylistics views the text as a product and tends to be comparatively teacher-centered, "the language-based approaches are student-centred, activity-based and process-oriented" (Carter, 1996a, p. 3). In other words, these approaches are concerned with the process of reading, and aim at bringing students a meaningful experience through a direct contact with the text. The teacher ideally becomes an enabler in authentic and meaningful communication in the classroom. At this point, language-based approaches seemingly share basic assumptions with CLT. The emergence of language-based activities therefore owes a great deal to the interface of two different study fields: stylistics and CLT.

2.2 The Features of Language-based Approaches

In accordance with a transformation in the methodological views in the use of literature in language teaching, both the range of the students' ability and the kinds of texts have widened dramatically. Language-based approaches can be applied to students even at the beginning or lower intermediate levels by offering learner-centered activities and emphasizing the process of reading, while stylistic analysis tends to be valuable for relatively advanced students. And usually no clear distinction was drawn between literary texts and non-literary ones. "One of the trends since the 1960s in literature teaching in FLT [Foreign Language Teaching] has been away from exclusivity, not only in the choice of literary texts, but in the level of students being given access to literature" (Gilroy and Parkinson, 1997, p.217). Carter (1996a) also states that language-based approaches offer approaches to literary texts which are accessible not just to more advanced students but to a wider range of students from lower to upper intermediate levels (p.2).

In the meantime, language-based approaches were not intended to mechanically use literary texts as an instrument. Carter and Long (1991) even warn us of this danger by stating, "It is initially important that language-based approaches should service literary goals" (p.8). This means that these approaches should not originally aim at learners' fundamental language

development such as vocabulary acquisition, mastery of specific structures, and progress in reading skills, but at having students “in touch with some of the more subtle and varied creative uses of the language” (Carter and Long, 1991, p.2).

However, assertions on how and for what purpose literary texts should be used in language teaching vary even among advocates of using literature. Duff and Maley (1990), who seek the integration of communicative approaches into literature teaching, demonstrate an interest in having the students generate language in interaction with the text, fellow students, and the teacher through task performance on literary texts. Hirvela (1996) emphasizes the importance of learners’ production of original discourse by expressing personal responses to literary texts, while Lazar (1993) explores the ways of using literature for language improvement.

In the USA, as we see in the proficiency movement²⁾ in the 1980s, many educators have regarded literature as “the opportunity for vocabulary acquisition, the development of reading strategies, and the training of critical thinking, that is, reasoning skills” (Kramersch and Kramersch, 2000). McKay (2001), in seeking benefits for learners, affirms that literature is an ideal resource for integrating the four skills (p.319). Much influenced by these arguments, we have lately seen some articles with similar objectives in professional journals such as *The Language Teacher* in Japan. Green (2006) describes the management of grammar units with the text of *The Pearl* by Steinbeck with the aim of improving learners’ grammatical accuracy, and Makarova (2006) shows that poetry listening/reading practice has a positive effect on the English pronunciation of Japanese university students of English.

2.3 Application of Language-based Approaches to EFL Classrooms in Japan

As language-based approaches involve numerous techniques and procedures for standard ESL teaching, they can be basically applied to EFL classrooms in Japan even though such activities with a literary text may have been quite unfamiliar in these classrooms. In this section, issues which we should take into account in case of application will be discussed.

The first thing we should consider in applying these approaches to Japanese contexts of EFL is language difficulties in reading literature for EFL students. Teachers and researchers tend to be less concerned about students’ comprehension of the texts especially in these kinds of non-traditional teaching methods, and basic language issues are sometimes undervalued. Teachers, however, should ensure comprehension at a more linguistic and semantic level before taking students to a higher stage where they are expected to interpret texts elaborately or enjoy playfulness and creativity of language.

The empirical findings we have gathered until now repeatedly point out that vocabulary is a primary obstacle for many readers (Shulz, 1981; Hoffstaedter-Kohn, 1991). With relation to

these findings, Watts (1991) reports on problems in an advanced foreign language class, caused by non-standard forms in canonical literary texts. Hoffstaedter-Kohn (1991) impressively indicates that the playfulness or creativity of literary texts (e.g. irony, comedy, point of view, speech and thought representation, and puns) can be a challenge as much as a stimulus (Hall, 2005, p.114). Through these arguments, we may naturally acquiesce to the suggestion in Shulz (1981), which is, "Language issues should be more directly addressed in literature reading, certainly in earlier stages if not always" (Hall, 2005, p.116). Lazar (1994) introduces teachers' concern about using "deviant" language with students when these students have not yet even fully acquired the basic rules of English grammar, syntax, and word formation (p.115).

While the language difficulties are of much note in EFL classrooms which use literary texts, teachers are required to strike a balance between language issues and literary goals. If we use literary texts only as an instrument for vocabulary acquisition and a mastery of structure, it may cause a detrimental effect of spoiling the pleasure the story or poem gives us, and as a result reading literature may not be pleasurable and motivating any more. In addition, without aiming at literary goals, literary texts would become the same as any other text and it would be difficult to justify the use of literature in ESL/EFL curriculums.

What matters is how the language class with literary texts can service literary goals, specifically in a Japanese context. Servicing literary goals mean offering something more than simply facilitating learners' language acquisition or merely providing an opportunity of improvement in reading and writing skills. The goals possibly include, according to British scholars, interpreting the texts in their own right, generating original discourse, engaging imaginatively with literary texts, and so on. Some activities, represented by personal response, creative writing, evaluating metaphors, and language play, would work effectively for comparatively advanced learners even in an EFL setting. Meanwhile, we need to demonstrate materials and activities for elementary or lower intermediate learners.

One of the suggestions is translation activity, in which students use their first language in imaginative engagement to interpret the situations and personality of a character. Translation can be used in CLT when students need or benefit from it, while it is forbidden at early levels in Audiolingual methods (Richards and Rogers, 2001, p.156). Moreover, some educators have lately advocated the effectiveness of using students' first language (Cook, 2001; Yoshida and Yanase, 2003; Oi, 2004), though the setting is limited to classes with a bilingual teacher.

Paragraph writing is another possibility. When students are asked to write about something controversial in a novel or a short story, they have to present their own interpretation and generate original discourse. Questions can also promote students' deep involvement. Teachers need to effectively choose the questions, from factual ones to more elaborate ones which foster

students' inferencing and imagination, as introduced in 4.2.

Drawing pictures is another idea. When students draw characters in a story, they need to be involved in the texts, not only in terms of close attention to language but also in developing interpretation abilities, and their imagination is stimulated. Students may draw a scene from the story, where they are required to imagine the relationship between characters.

As to the teaching method, some practices in traditional approaches can be incorporated into language-based approaches in the context of EFL in Japan. We could reevaluate some of procedures in Grammar-Translation Method, which has been criticized as outworn, as long as they appear effective. They may include asking questions to check learners' comprehension and offering vocabulary drills and grammatical exercises, as discussed in Section 4.

By taking account of the uniqueness of the learning environment, the significant differences between the target language and the native language, and required skills at school and in the society, teachers in Japan need to present specific language-based approaches for EFL classrooms. For that purpose, we should first learn the theory and procedures of language-based approaches developed in the UK and adapt them to suit the Japanese style. Eventually, we may be able to design a syllabus and offer classroom practices which are effective and pleasurable, with a focus on both literary goals and linguistic issues.

3. Texts and Materials

3.1 Criteria for Choosing Texts and Materials

Nuttall (1996) demonstrates, in her research on reading in a foreign language, three main criteria which influence the choice of texts: suitability of content, exploitability, and readability (p.170). In addition to these criteria, I would also propose publicity as another factor to take into consideration. Students, even at lower-levels, tend to be motivated to read stories known to everyone or about topics currently garnering attention in the media. They are thus exposed to additional information about the story and they are likely to have conversations about the story with friends and family members. All this assistance encourages students to read on. Moreover, even knowing a little bit about the plot or characters helps students overcome the difficulties in reading, and as a result, readability increases for these students.

Similar to publicity, availability of a film of the work is sometimes important. Films can be used not only to foster comprehension of content especially for second language learners but also to generate various activities including oral practice and film study. Ross (1991) looks at teaching modern literature with the use of film versions of the works studied, and concludes that when a film version is available, the contrast between the two versions can be very thought-provoking (p.154). Moreover, if the film has recently shown, students would be familiar with the

title and characters, and that usually inspires students to read the literary work.

3.2 Original vs. Simplified

The subject of simplification of literary texts is often called into question when we use them in a second language classroom. Only a few researchers, especially in the field of stylistics, which aims at the integration of language and literature, seem to recognize the value of simplified texts. Davies and Widdowson (1974) demonstrate how much is lost when a classic text of *Oliver Twist* is simplified (Hall, 2005, p.138), and Carter and Long (1991) indicate the difference between the original and the simplified in *Adam Bede*. They are in accord with each other and unequivocally claim, “Literature cannot be taught from simplified text” (Carter and Long, 1991, p.151). Nuttall (1996) explains, in her research on reading skills in a foreign language, “We need texts which exhibit the characteristics of true discourse: having something to say, being coherent and clearly organized. Composed (ie specially written) or simplified texts do not always have these qualities” (p.177). It is also true that rhetorical devices, such as simile and metaphor, and some richness in lexical choice are largely removed (Carter and Long, 1991, pp.148-51) in the simplified versions.

In addition, conversation parts may be one of the first things to be removed there, despite the fact that the lines in a film greatly adopt language from conversation in the original. This is a reason why an experienced teacher might have noticed that the drastic abridgement in the simplified versions, contrary to expectations, often cause difficulties, especially when a film version of the work is used in class alongside.

The following is an example from Chapter IV in Jane Austin’s *Sense and Sensibility*, and is intended to show the wide divergence of the simplified text (Text B) from the original (Text A), which was caused by abridgement of conversation, and the similarity between the screenplay (Text C) and the original (Text A):

Text A She tried to explain the real state of the case to her sister.

“I do not attempt to deny,” said she, “that I think very highly of him – that I greatly esteem, that I like him.”

(*Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austin, Penguin classics 1995)

Text B Marianne, indeed, was quite horrified when her sister cautiously described her feelings for Edward as liking and respect, rather than love.

(Oxford Bookworms Library 5, 2002 retold by Clare West)

Text C Marianne : Do you love him?

Elinor: I do not attempt to deny...that I think very highly of him...
that I greatly esteem him..., that I like him.

(The screenplay of the 1995 motion picture written by Emma Thompson)

On the other hand, some researchers and educators present more deliberate opinions in exposing linguistically premature foreign language students to the original texts. Schulz (1981) states, "We cannot advocate that foreign language learners should be exposed to so-called 'authentic' texts in unedited form, indiscriminately chosen without regard to linguistic difficulty, before they can approximate the level of linguistic and emotional maturity of the group of native speakers for whom the original prose was written" (p.44).

Whether a simplified text can be properly used or not surely depends upon the purpose of the class. In the context of EFL in Japan, the simplified texts can be effectively used in high schools where students are expected to improve reading skills and to be motivated with a pleasurable story line, while the original texts would be more suitable for university class where students are expected to be aware of richness in literary language. If students have difficulties in reading the original syntactically and lexically, the class can read only a part of the novel, or teachers may use "literature for young adults" where linguistic difficulties are usually reduced.

3.3 Use of Literature for Children, Juveniles, and Young Adults

As suggested in 3.2 above, "literature for young adults" has a great possibility for learners who have difficulties in reading classic literature or the original novels. Though it does not always mean literature for children, juveniles, and young adults is the best media for elementary- and low-intermediate-leveled readers at any age, it should be more highly valued in foreign language teaching upon consideration of suitability of content. Not only its reduction of linguistic difficulties but also the authenticity of the text with no abridgement in richness of the language would make it an attractive choice. Anyone who is aware of danger in mechanical simplification may face the dilemma of either using a simplified text for their students or abandoning it for the lack of authenticity of the text, but using literature for young adults is one way to evade the issue.

Rönnqvist and Sell, educators for English language and literature in Finland, suggest that it is better to use real teenage books for young teenage learners instead of the simplified literary texts of canonical classics. (1994, p. 125). They present the list of suggested titles with summary, which might be very helpful for teachers when they decide which book to teach at what age in reflection of the English teaching context of each country. Literature for juveniles and young

adults may also play a significant role as a bridge to authentic literary texts from graded readers. Schulz (1981) points out, in observing American college students, that the transition from *learning to read* to *reading to learn* is one of the major problems in foreign language pedagogy (p.43). There seems to be room for using these books for teenagers and young adults in foreign language classrooms.

The actual classroom practices with two literary texts for children will be discussed in the following section.

4. Classrooms Activities

4.1 Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*

This story is suitable for general practices in CLT, since it has a strong narrative line and each event happens sequentially and chronologically. Activities primarily focus on instrumental use of literature and they include the standard ESL procedures, such as jigsaw reading, matching, paragraph writing about the work and the author, vocabulary and grammar exercises, recitation with a film, journal writing and presentation, etc. The following is an example of one of these activities, which illustrates a grammatical exercise for the subjunctive mood;

- a) Have students do the reading and find these target sentences. They are advised to highlight or underline the structure of the subjunctive mood.

1. After losing them [shoes], he ran on four legs and went faster, so that I think he might have got away altogether if he had not unfortunately run into a gooseberry net,...
2. It [the can] would have been a beautiful thing to hide in, if it had not had so much water in it.
3. A white cat was staring at some goldfish; she sat very, very still, but now and then the tip of her tail twitched as if it were alive. (Beatrix Potter, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*)

- b) Explain the meanings and the usage of the first conditional, the second conditional, and the third conditional.
- c) Give students exercises to finish sentences in the first and second conditional.
- 1) The first conditional (If I get too much homework today... / We will all be very sad if...)
 - 2) The second conditional (If I were a genius... / My parents would be very delighted if...)
- d) For the exercise of the third conditional, have students write down three things they had done (or not done) in the past which they regret and three things they are glad they did.
- I missed the train this morning. / I didn't study math hard at high school.
 - I stayed in England in summer vacation.

Have them imagine what it might have meant to them if these things had not occurred, and

write down sentences expressing what would have happened if things had been different. The teacher checks one sentence for each student, and corrects errors in the forms (focus on form).

- If I had not missed the train this morning, I could have attended the class.
- If I had studied math hard, I would have passed the entrance exam.
- If I had not stayed in England in summer vacation, my English would not have been improved.

Have students share and discuss the experience in a small group. Each student in turn chooses one item to talk about, and others are encouraged to react and comment on the topic. This activity is helpful to promote students' oral fluency.

- e) To ensure that students have understood the meaning of each target sentence, ask concept questions. Questions should be simple and direct, and should specify the crucial, defining components of meaning.

[Target Sentence 1] Did Peter run into a gooseberry net? / Did he get away altogether?

[Target Sentence 2] Did the can have much water in it? / Was the can good to hide in?

[Target Sentence 3] Is the tail of the cat alive?

- f) Have student read target sentences in the text, and check the meanings of them. The teacher may have students translate the sentences into Japanese, if necessary.

4.2 Roald Dahl, Charlie and the Chocolate Factory

Activities using this text are also based on the concept of language-based approaches, and this story can more sufficiently provide activities which serve the literary goals. Students are required to complete various tasks along with the worksheets, and then develop them in the classroom. The procedures such as filling in the diagrams and grids, grammatical reinforcement, TOEIC-typed exercises, questions and answers, paraphrasing and summarizing, film study, role play, and extensive reading are included.

Diagrams and grids are very beneficial to involve students in reading a story especially one with plentiful information, and to make them understand the structure and the plot of the story. For example, we find out a lot of information about four children who found the golden tickets before Charlie in Chapter 6 and 8. The teacher may have students form a small group and choose one character and write the descriptions of the person or quotes about them with page references into the appropriate boxes. They will share the ideas in the group so that they can get the information about other characters from your group members. By being assigned one of the characters, students feel responsible and try to carefully read the story to write correct and sufficient information. Moreover, they can be engaged interactively with their group members

in the process of exchanging information. This can be a good oral practice when this gap-filling activity is conducted in English.

	Personality	Appearance	Information about parents	The way to find the golden ticket
Augustus				
Veruca				
Violet				
Mike				

Another activity is designed by turning one of the features in literary texts to advantage, which is called re-registration. Since literary texts can offer samples of a very wide range of styles, registers, and text-types (Duff and Maley, 1990), TOEIC-typed exercises can be produced in the part of the text which is written in the newspaper style. As Duff and Maley (1990) indicate, the richness of literary language is raised as one of justification for using literary texts.

<A TOEIC-typed exercise for a journalistic style of English>

Mr. Wonka has decided to allow () five children to visit his factory.

A) less than B) exactly C) approximately D) more than

Having students answer to prepared questions is traditional worksheet activity which contributes to students' involvement in reading and to improvement of their writing skills. Teachers may ask various kinds of questions from elementary-leveled ones that ask informational facts (Question Type A below), to more complicated ones in which students need to summarize some parts of the text (Question Type B below) and the highest-order ones which require more elaborate inferencing and imagination (Question Type C below). In case the class aims to finish reading the whole story, this activity can be time-saving. Students read some chapters by themselves in class or at home, and check the reading comprehension by answering the questions in a worksheet. Students may share their answers in class or the teacher gives them a feedback about the answers.

<Questions for Chapter 10-11>

Question Type A: What did Charlie find on the way home one afternoon?

Question Type B: What happened at the little shop a few seconds after Charlie found the Golden Ticket?

Question Type C: Why was the shopkeeper so nice to Charlie?

We can develop this Q&A activity into a paragraph writing on controversial issues, so that the activity can get closer to the study of literature. In other words, the class aims to serve the literary goals at this point. By having students write their own opinions in a short paragraph, the activity leads them to interpreting of the texts in their own right. The teacher should ask a relevant question or give a topic to write about. Students with limited writing ability may use their first language, but still this activity is meaningful and specific in literary texts.

<Writing a short paragraph on a controversial issue>

On his birthday this year, Charlie wanted to share his chocolate candy bar with his family members for the first time, by saying, “Here Mother, have a bit. We’ll share it. I want everybody to taste it” (Chapter 7). Why didn’t he eat it up all by himself as usual?

5. Student Perceptions

Background: Twelve students in a department of English at a women’s two-year college were involved in this study. In a one-semester elective course in spring of 2006, of Children’s Literature in English, they read *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*, and the first eleven chapters in *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*, besides reviewing the history of children’s literature and practicing storytelling of picture books. The class was conducted in the methodological concept of modified language-based approaches in which jigsaw reading, matching, paragraph writing about the work and the author, vocabulary and grammar exercises, recitation with a film, filling in the diagrams and grids, TOEIC-typed exercises, questions and answers, paraphrasing and summarizing, film study, and translation were actually used throughout the semester. The questionnaire was completed on the last day of the course by ten students, as two were absent that day. The semi-structured follow-up interview was taken place about six months after the questionnaire with three students whose scores in the exam and attitudes to the class differ.

Discussion: We discuss the results along the following five perspectives.

Issue 1: Student Feelings about Reading Literature

A striking feature in students’ responses in Table 5 on the next page is their positive attitude to reading literature even though we should take account of their potential interest in English literature in this elective course in Faculty of English. It also shows that 70% of the students regard their reading experience as enjoyable. In the interviews six months later, all the students recalled the class and declared that they enjoyed the class and their experience of reading literature. Their comments in the questionnaire include:

- I noticed that reading children’s literature is enjoyable.
- Reading this kind of story helps us to learn culture of the country, just like listening to pop music.
- I wanted to read on, because I was eager to know what would happen next.

Table 5: Students’ responses

	Positive	Fairly positive	Fairly negative	Negative
Q1: How do you feel about reading literature in English?	70%	30%	0%	0%
The reasons why you think so.	enjoyable 80%	educational 40%	intellectual 30%	touching 30%
Q2: Do you think reading literature is helpful to improve your language?	90%	10%	0%	0%
In what area is reading literature helpful?	expressions 70%	foreign culture 70%	vocabulary 60%	reading skills 60%
	grammar 10%			
Q3: Do you wish to read more literary works in the future?	90%	10%	0%	0%
Q4: Did the class motivate you to study English?	80%	20%	0%	0%

The last comment implies one of the advantages of the text in the narrative structure. The pleasure in reading the story that has a strong narrative line can lead learners to keep reading, and also motivate them to study the language more. This aspect of literary texts should be researched empirically with relation to cognitive linguistics.

It was interesting to know that one student pointed out the authenticity of the text and that some of them had not been much satisfied with exclusive use of edited textbooks for Japanese college students, conversation textbooks, and movie scripts.

- I always learn English with dialogues in movies, and I am concerned about poor ability in vocabulary and grammar. I wish to read some literary works in the future. (Questionnaire)
- I like studying English with a story more than other materials, for example, textbooks for Japanese college students. (Interview)

The comments such as “Buying an English paperback and reading it were great experience”

may seem trivial at first glance, but we cannot tell what motivates an individual learner.

Issue 2: Student Perceptions of Literature in Language Learning

All the students realized that reading literature was helpful in improving English by learning the cultural context in which the target language is spoken, enriching their vocabulary, and improving reading skills. One of the students wrote in the questionnaire:

- I think reading a story helps acquisition of vocabulary, because we learn the word in the contexts.

In the follow-up interview, one of the most advanced students stated that she was able to increase her vocabulary and learn the correct usage of them in actual situations though she was not convinced of improvement in her reading skills.

Issue 3: Difficulties in Reading Literature in a Second Language

While some students claimed that extending their vocabulary was a good point in reading literary texts, others said, "Unknown words were a primary obstacle to getting the gist of the plot." In fact, these students seemed to be struggling in reading in class. They could not have kept reading these stories without some help from the teacher and classmates. For these lower-leveled learners who have great difficulty in reading an authentic text, simplified texts with linguistic controls may be of value in a second language classroom.

Issue 4: Student Perceptions about Materials

It was fortunate that the students loved and enjoyed these kinds of stories. In choosing a text, a popular, well-known one or a work of which they have heard would be preferable.

- I could enjoy reading the story because I had known it. Otherwise, it might be difficult. (Questionnaire)
- It was good to choose the story that is known to everyone. I was always talking about the story with my family. It was very motivating. (Questionnaire)
- I had a bad experience in reading Hemingway's work last year. As it was too difficult in vocabulary and sentence structure, I had lost interest in literary texts in general. (Interview)

Issue 5: Student Perceptions about Instruction

A lot of interesting suggestions for teachers are among their comments on instructions. Supposedly learning activities for modified language-based approaches in Japanese contexts were successfully conducted. Students were actually more involved in the activity-based, learner-centered instructions than the lecture-based, teacher-centered ones, and, in addition, they were able to read the story with pleasure unspoiled, which is sometimes unattainable in procedures focusing on only language issues.

- Through the worksheet activities, we could grasp the main points in the story.
- I am usually bored in the class which only focuses on grammar and translation.
- Using film versions not only helps comprehension but also broadens our view of the story.

- In the class which focuses on translation, all our attention goes to translation. The content is of less concern in that case.

While most students definitely benefited from the teacher's linguistic and lexical explanations, some comments which mentioned the necessity of more explicit grammar explanations and translation remind us of the importance and difficulty in keeping a balance between these two different methodological concepts.

- Activities and worksheets were helpful to understand the story, but I sometimes needed more explanation about grammar and meaning of the sentences.
- I sometimes wanted the instructor to translate a sentence, and highlight collocation.

On the whole, students had an enjoyable experience of reading literature and they gained confidence in reading. One of the most successful students in this course testified that these experiences can motivate them for further reading and language learning in general.

- I read the rest of chapters (Chapter 12-30) by myself with the help of an English-Japanese dictionary. It was the first time for me to read through a long story. (Interview)

6. Conclusion

This paper has explored some possibilities of the use of literary texts in English classrooms in Japan from a methodological standpoint. Starting with examining British-born language-based approaches, the application of their basic notion to actual practices in EFL classrooms has been discussed.

It has been indicated that usefulness of language-based approaches in this setting is conclusively worthy of consideration and that some of the procedures need to be altered in order to be more effective in the specific context when they are adopted. In these classrooms, teachers are required to take account of difficulties in reading literature in a foreign language and necessity of exercises for developing learners' linguistic competence while aiming to cater to literary goals through various activities along the text. It is challenging but crucial for teachers and syllabuses designers to offer appropriate materials and activities so that they will be able to integrate language and literature in the most appropriate ways.

The research of student perceptions of these activities has shown that reading literature in English class was pleasurable and motivating for most students and that the teaching method in which some elements of traditional approaches were incorporated into language-based approaches succeeded, though some students needed more explicit grammar explanation and translation in order to fully realize improvement of their language skills.

It is truly regrettable that English education in Japan has not sufficiently taken into account the theory and practices in the literature resurgence movement in language teaching in the UK

and the USA. By reflecting the recent trends in which “literature teaching in FLT has been away from exclusivity” (Gilroy and Parkinson, 1997, p.217) in the choice of literary texts, teaching method and classroom practices, and also the level of students being given access to literature, it is time for us to reconsider the role of literary texts in EFL classrooms in Japan.

Notes

- 1) F. R. Leavis, who was influential in promoting literature study to an academic discipline, established the concept of an elite literary “canon” in the 1940s, clarifying his view by saying, “It [literature] trains, in a way no other discipline can, intelligence and sensibility together, cultivating sensitiveness and precision of response and a delicate integrity of intelligence” (1943, pp.34-35).
- 2) In this movement, the focus of foreign language instruction has been placed on the ability to communicate about real-world topics with native speakers of the language.

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