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Developing English Reading Comprehension Strategies for Japanese Universities:

Shifting From Learning to Read to Reading to Learn

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本研究は、日本の大学での英語読解の授業において、英語読解力を向上させるために必要となる戦略を開発するものである。文部科学省は1980年代後半から2017年までに、学習指導要領をグローバル化から問題解決力、協調学習、自分の意見をまとめて発表する力などにシフトしてきた。しかし、実際のところ大学生は未だに文法と語彙の知識に依存した和訳をしている。性別、年齢的、メディアの背景などといった多様な文化の違いを熟考せず、古い方法で英語から日本語へと訳している。ゆえにこの研究は、文脈の背景となる知識を得る点に焦点を置く授業を開発し、その授業の結果、クリティカルシンキングの気づきと態度がどの様に変化するかをアンケート調査の結果を基に論ずる。対象としたのは私立の2つの大学の一般英語を受講している学生である。

I. Introduction

Over the past several decades, we have seen a paradigm shift from the view of language as a rule-governed system towards the view of language as meaning and communicative competence. Although Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) 's Curriculum guidelines have changed from globalization in the late 1980s to problem solving, collaboration with others and forming learners' own opinions in 2017, university students are still relying on their knowledge of grammar and lexis. Instead of comprehending the context with multicultural differences such as gender, age, and media, the students are still translating sentences with the old-fashioned way by connecting their grammatical and lexical knowledge. Therefore, this study introduces development of reading comprehension strategies by focusing on acquiring background knowledge of English context of content-centered articles. Also it analyzes and compares the critical awareness shift data of questionnaire research by using the developed strategies with two sample groups at two private Japanese universities' English classes. This study focuses on how to realize reading classes in Japan to shift from learning to read to reading to learn, instead of holding onto the old-fashioned way of translating from English to Japanese by merely connecting grammatical and lexical knowledge.

First, this study highlights important elements for L2 reading skills. Second, it reviews the shift in Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) 's National

Standard Course from the late 1980s to 2017. Third, it describes examples of recent Japanese university English classes and a criticism of some university classes. Fourth, it introduces development of reading comprehension strategies by acquiring background knowledge of English context of content-centered articles. Finally it analyzes and compares the critical awareness shift data of questionnaire research by using the developed strategies at two sample groups at two private Japanese universities' English classes. Providing the task-based activities with pre, during, and after reading, the research attempts to offer a clear link between being trained to understand the background knowledge and becoming able to learn how to read to learn independently. Finally, this research concludes that learners' critical awareness and attitude have shifted among the training group.

II. Essential factors for reading ability in Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

When selecting or designing reading materials for the students, it is crucial to consider factors for reading ability depending on the specific purpose. While introducing nine dilemmas for SLA research, Grabe (2002) highlights eight issues for improving learners reading skills¹. There are:

- The importance of discourse structure and graphic representations
- The importance of vocabulary in language learning
- The need for language awareness and attending to language and genre form
- The existence of a second language proficiency threshold
- The importance of metacognitive awareness and strategy learning
- The need for extensive reading
- The benefits of integrating reading and writing
- The importance of Content-Based Instruction

In order to shift from learning to read to reading to learn at the tertiary level reading classes, out of the eight points above, this study will focus on four points. First, learners need to be trained to acquire awareness of text structure so that they can have better ability to comprehend. Koda (2004)² claims that while specific text structure knowledge differs significantly among learners, when learners receive a training to understand the mechanism of specific text structure knowledge, their reading comprehension ability improves. By learning the mechanism of the text and its structure, learners can gain background knowledge that helps them understand the text better. By the training, learners can gain the ability to know when to use reading strategies and in what combinations according to reading purposes and activities.

Second, during the training reading classes should be taught within a content-centered context that gives learners motivation to learn³.

Third, as Anderson (2000)⁴ introduces Grabe's (1991) guidelines for effective reading teaching, Grabe also emphasizes that pre, during and after reading activities could be useful to acquire background knowledge for a learner, and group work and collaborative learning should be used to promote discussions in order to stimulate problem solving ability and interpreting ability.

Ⅲ. Shifting guidelines' goals of MEXT and recent reading class samples

(1) Shifting guidelines' goals of MEXT

From the second half of 1980s to 1990s, Ad Hoc Council on Education had discussed their educational reform in order to correspond to the Japan's rapid economical growth, its international interdependence and its heavier responsibility in the world⁵. Their major themes were globalization towards 21st century, multicultural coexistence, and market principles. These guidelines were decided to fulfill responsibilities as a member of international society, and Japan realized its goals of education should correspond to the new internationalization. In 1989, the course of study for English higher education shifted to communicative approach, and on top of reading and writing skills, the emphasis of speaking and listening skills were added⁶. In 1999, MEXT introduced the importance of Faculty Development⁷, and in 2002 they included evaluating both schools and instructors⁸. In 2006, listening test was introduced to the Common First-stage Exam for university entrance tests. In 2017, "the New Curriculum Guidelines" were released and their goals shifted to problem solving ability with various mixed contexts, and collaborating with others to live toward unexpected changes⁹. It also emphasized the importance of forming learners' own opinions. As of March 20th, 2018, MEXT's Strategies for Improving English Education –Five Suggestions for English Education Reform by Corresponding to Globalization, in section NO. 3, stated that four English skills should be tested¹⁰.

(2) Recent examples in Japanese university reading classes

In 2015, the author and two other professors of Tohoku University Engineering Department formed a project, which was aimed to improve the students' English ability with four skills with emphasis of academic writing. The university is the most competitive university in the Tohoku region in Japan; however, the majority of the students were still having a hard time to write academic essays in English.

Based on that background, the author and the professors co-wrote *English Learning Booklet*,¹¹ which offered the students various tips to improve their four English skills. Within its academic reading section, basic critical thinking was introduced¹²; such as analyzing arguments by distinguishing facts and opinions, evaluating arguments by evidence, and interpreting arguments. As a model exercise, a PROP exercise¹³ was included. It was to distinguish whether the given

source and evidence are reliable or not.

Using the Booklet as a supplementary material, the author offered the PROP exercise during a pilot class with twenty volunteer students all engineering major from 3rd year to Ph.D. 2nd year started in May and ended in July, 2015 for 10 weeks. Although the main purpose of the pilot class was to design a model class in order to improve mainly students' writing skill while enriching their over all four skills.

Some interesting findings were that almost all of the students had never practiced any critical thinking related activity in English classes, and further, they did not know the existence of thesaurus and phrasal verbs dictionaries which are quite useful tools in writing essays in English. When the students were assigned to read a six -page article¹⁴ about energy policy and to find out its main sentences and supporting sentences, they looked overwhelmed. When asked if they have done any other similar homework, most of them said they had not.

In 2016, the author used three English newspaper articles at another public university in Sendai, Miyagi for general English classes with 50 students from the first year highest-level class. Only a few students were familiar with political ideology and media' stance such as right, left and liberal. The students were majoring education, so presumably some of them will be schoolteachers in the near future.

(3) Criticism about the tertiary level English classes in Japan

Nagatomo (2011) criticizes MEXT's Action Plan of 2003 that it did not pay any attention to Japanese University English classes, including English teacher training courses, and university English teachers. MEXT's concerns were regarding improving university entrance exams and the need for more university classes to be taught in English¹⁵. However, she found some research paper that contradicted to MEXT's goal.

“...English language instruction at the tertiary level is limited and students learn about English -related subjects such as literature or linguistics in Japanese (Aspinall, 2006; Neustupny & Tanaka, 2004) . Nagasawa's (2004) survey of Japanese English teachers' practices in 19 universities (national and private) echoes this common understanding. He found that academic English classes, such as literature of linguistics, are taught in Japanese 95% of the time, and that non-academic classes, such as conversation, cross-cultural understanding and teaching methodology are taught in Japanese 65% of the time.¹⁶”

VI. Developing English reading comprehension strategies

(1) Rationale of developing reading strategies for Japanese universities

As stated above, Japanese students should be taught how to read to learn, not learn to read by using integrated skills and strategies. This study is designed to train learners to acquire the mechanism of English structure using the context of content-centered articles.

This research has purposely chosen English newspaper articles, due to their concise size and clear context structure to understand the mechanism of English articles. This task-based activity has learners focus on key words in titles, writers' intentions and purposes, used evidence and expressions, and press comments, which are the important elements of background knowledge to comprehend the text. Throughout pre, during, and after reading activities, the research shows how the students learned the differences among the three newspaper articles written about the same topic on the same date and by three different newspaper companies. After paying attention to the learner' reading process of acquiring the background knowledge, it analyzes data of the students' critical thinking awareness and attitude shift.

However, the author has been mainly teaching general English classes, which are aimed to improve university students' English communication ability by four incorporated skills. Therefore, so far, making a set of curriculum has been irrelevant. Also, group work itself has not been evaluated or examined yet.

(2) Critical thinking awareness research project in the first semester in 2017

In the first semester of 2017, a questionnaire research project was conducted with groups of students at two private universities in Sendai. The purpose of the project was to compare the questionnaire results about critical thinking (CT) awareness through reading English between two sample groups. The questionnaire, which asked exactly the same 26 questions, was conducted twice, once in April and the other in July.

Training (T) Group was taught by the author, and Non-Training (NT) Group was taught by ten other English instructors. T Group students read three English newspaper articles written by three different newspaper companies about the same topic written on the same date. T Group students were given specially designed worksheets¹ which focus on key words in their titles, writers' main intensions and purposes, press comments, and media's ideological background. After reading the three articles, how the mean of both T and NT Groups changed was investigated.

(3) Materials

The three English articles were written by three different newspaper media who have

different political ideologies; The Asahi Shimbun, Japan Today, and The Yomiuri Shimbun. Their topic was the “Conspiracy Bill” in other words “the Law on Punishment of Organized Crimes and Control of Crime”, written on Jun 16th, 2017 the day after the bill was passed by the Diet.

The reason why they were chosen was that each article’s political intension was clear and therefore the writers’ intensions and their political positions would have significant influence on improving students reading comprehension ability. Moreover, unlike critical essays or long editorials, newspaper articles need to be concise to write about a matter with comments and evaluations. Their variations are limited, and therefore, it is easier for the students to understand its construction and mechanism.

(4) The questionnaire (See the appendix)

Twenty-five questions were chosen to find out about the students attitude and their CT awareness when they read English. The students were asked to circle in which degree do you agree with each question. Actual number of questions is twenty-six, because the first question “Do you like to read English?” was put to make it easier for the students to set about answering the questions, therefore, not used to calculate its mean. The questions 2, 10, 11, 24, 26 are written with the intention of having the opposite meaning of the author, so the desired figure of mean was negative.

(5) The sample students

There are 869 sample students who go to two private universities in Sendai. 162 students are in Training Group (T Group) who were taught by the author, and 707students are in Non-Training Group (NT Group) who were taught by other instructors. On the whole the students English reading comprehension level could be said about the same due to the two universities’ entrance test deviation measurement figure.

[Table 1]

	University	# classes	# students	University	# classes	# students
T Group	A	4	100	B	2	62
NT Group	A	25	596	B	4	111

(6) The lesson Plans

(6)-1. Pre-reading activity- key words in titles

First, the CT Group students were asked to read the titles carefully. As mentioned earlier, the three newspapers have different political positions. Therefore, a bill so called conspiracy Law,

which received various evaluations, would reveal each newspaper company's stance on it. The actual titles are as follows.

[Table 2] Pre-reading Activity-the titles of three articles

	The Asahi Shimbun ¹⁷	Japan Today ¹⁸	The Yomiuri Shimbun ¹⁹
titles	COMMENTARY: Conspiracy laws foreshadow a bleaker, stifling democracy	'Conspiracy' law enacted through rare Diet tactic	Anti-terror bill enacted bypassing committee vote

First, "The Asahi Shimbun" used 「COMMENTARY: Conspiracy laws foreshadow a bleaker, stifling democracy」 The key words that the students paid attention to is **bleaker, stifling democracy**. By this it was clear that "The Asahi Shimbun" posses negative evaluation toward the conspiracy law.

Second, "Japan Today" chose 「'Conspiracy' law enacted through rare Diet tactic, and its key word is **rare Diet tactic**. Thus the students understood that "Japan Today" has a neutral position toward the bill, expressing their objective stance.

Third," The Yomiuri Shimbun" used 「Anti-terror bill enacted bypassing committee vote」, and the key word is **Anti-terror bill** ". "The Yomiuri Shimbun" particular chose the word Anti-terror instead of conspiracy bill. By this the students could comprehend that "The Yomiuri Shimbun" wanted to emphasize the readers that the bill would be essential for Japanese citizen to take measures for terrorist attack. Therefore, the students focused on each title's valuable key words, and after that the students were asked to focus on what each article adopted **evidence**. By doing so, they were certainly able to find out each article's press comments. In other words, CT Group students acquired the writers' claims and their positions "background knowledge" by focusing on the titles.

(6)-2. During-reading Activity-Analyzing writers' claims and press comments

After learning about key words in titles' that have the role of the evidence to support press comments by the Pre-reading Activity above, T Group moved on to During-reading Activity. In this activity, T Group paid their attention to writers' claims and press comments in the articles. The students were paired and discussed and then formed groups of four. The following is the result of the activity.

[Table 3] During-reading Activity-The three articles' writers' claims and press comments

	The Asahi Shimbun	Japan Today	The Yomiuri Shimbun
Writers' claims	The Abe administration rushed headlong toward the enactment of the contentious anti-conspiracy legislation without heeding the voices of citizens worrying about the advent of surveillance or a society where people betray one another.	The Diet on Thursday enacted contentious legislation to criminalize the planning of serious crimes, which the government says will help thwart terrorism but opponents claim could lead to the suppression of civil liberties and excessive state surveillance.	With Thursday's Diet passage of a bill to revise the Law on Punishment of Organized Crimes and Control of Crime Proceeds, the stage is now set for Japan to conclude the U.N. Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, which the country signed in 2000.
Supporting sentences	<p>What is spreading in front of our eyes is the shape of a desolate democracy that is totally opposite of a mature one. The essence of the anti-conspiracy legislation is that it allows investigative authorities to keep watch over a wide range of people by using "anti-terror measures" as an excuse.</p> <p>The authorities' surveillance actions are usually conducted secretly. Few of these activities can be easily seen.</p> <p>The anti-conspiracy legislation could infringe on the "freedom of thought and conscience" guaranteed by the Constitution. There is also a strong opinion that the anti-conspiracy legislation alone will usher in the withering of our democratic society.</p>	<p>The amendment to the law on organized crime cleared a vote in a plenary session of the House of Councilors, or upper house, after the ruling coalition of the Liberal Democratic Party and Komeito took the unorthodox step on Wednesday of bypassing an upper house committee vote.</p> <p>The choice to circumvent the normal legislative process effectively allowed the coalition to avoid having to extend the current Diet session, set to end on Sunday, at a time when corruption allegations against Prime Minister Shinzo Abe have prompted heightened scrutiny of the Abe administration.</p> <p>The Abe administration framed the law as an essential tool for thwarting terrorist attacks, of particular importance as Tokyo prepares to host the 2020 Olympics and Paralympics, and as necessary to allow Japan to ratify the 2000 U.N. Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.</p>	<p>Tokyo (Jiji Press) -The Diet enacted controversial anti-terrorism legislation on Thursday after the ruling coalition overcame fierce overnight resistance from most opposition parties and railroaded it by taking an unusual step of bypassing a committee vote.</p> <p>The ruling camp claims that the anti-conspiracy legislation is needed in preparation for the 2020 Tokyo Olympics and Paralympics. The law is also part of the government's efforts to develop a domestic legal framework in order to become a signatory to the U.N. Convention against Transnational Organized Crime.</p> <p>Ahead of the Tokyo Olympics, "Japan wants to sign the U.N. treaty as soon as possible and cooperate with the international community to prevent terrorist attacks," "Prime Minister Shinzo Abe told reporters after the legislation's enactment.</p>
Press comments	Throughout the whole article, it severely criticizes the Abe administration for rushing to pass the bill despite the citizens' worries about the advent of a surveillance society.	This article is well balanced and objectively written by including PM Abe's Kake Gakuen scandal, concern of Cannataci, the U.N. special rapporteur on the right to privacy and opponents' claim, as well as the government's claim to emphasis as an essential tool for anti-terrorism for Tokyo Olympics.	Although the article mentions that Opposition parties stood against passing the bill and their concern over the possible abuse of investigative power, it emphasizes the importance of concluding the U. N. Convention for Tokyo Olympics and Paralympic. So its affirmative stance for passing the bill is easily observed.

In the article of "The Asahi Shimbun" the main claim criticizes the conspiracy law because it could be the cause of a surveillance society. Its press comments also harshly condemn "rushing to pass the bill despite the opponent citizens". "Japan Today" didn't state the writer's opinion; instead it stated the claims of both the government and opponent sides about the passed bill. It

also included Kake Gakuen scandal and the U.N. special rapporteur’s concern on the right of privacy. Its press comment is merely objective neutral facts. “The Yomiuri Shimbun” article occupies mostly the detailed process of how the bill passed. It mentions opponent parties’ concern over abuse of investigators’ power, however, its affirmative stance for passing the bill is easily observed. It emphasizes the importance of concluding the international convention for the sake of safety for Tokyo Olympics and Paralympic. The way its construction is made, the press comment is obvious to readers that the passed bill is positive and necessity for Japan. Therefore, unlike the other articles, the Yomiuri Shimbun’s article tries hard to limit disclosing the negative side of the bill, and has quite a supporting view. Thus, T Group students comprehended that each English article has critical, neutral and favorable views towards the conspiracy bill.

Through the During-reading Activity, T Group students learned a pattern of most English articles which are constructed as a writer’s claim is written in the first paragraph or the second paragraph, then supporting sentences follow after that. A press comment is usually written clearly in the final paragraph, however, with the limited space of the article, it is not always so, and sometimes it is spread around the whole article. In other words, T group acquired “background knowledge” of sentence construction and mechanism of English articles by focusing on the writers’ claims, supporting sentences, press comments and their positions according to the titles.

(6)-3. Post-reading Activity – Media’s ideological background

As a final activity, Post-reading Activity was done as a group activity to let the students find out each of the three newspaper companies’ ideological background. This was also important, because when asked if they know the difference between right wing and left wing, or liberal position among various media companies or organizations, almost all the students answered “NO.” Therefore, they were asked to use the Internet to learn about each medium’s ideological stance to find out why there are differences in the three press comments. The following is the outcome of the activity.

[Table 4] Post-reading Activity- The three Newspaper Media’s ideological background

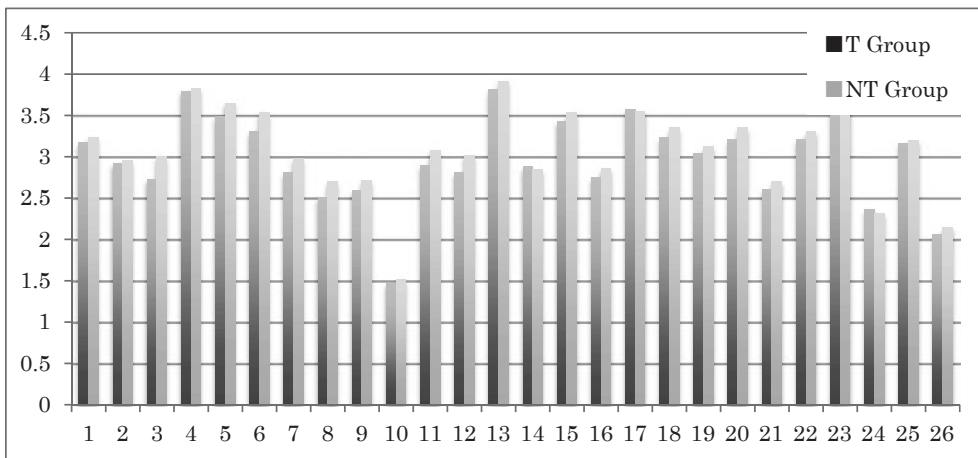
	The Asahi Shimbun	Japan Today	The Yomiuri Shimbun
Media’s background	English version of The Asahi Shimbun	No particular ideology was found.	English version of The Yomiuri Shimbun
	Critical toward the government	Perhaps neutral political stance	Right ideology
	Left ideology		

By learning about the three media’s background, it became clear to the students why the three articles’ writers’ claims and press comments had their own claims and they were very

different from the other two. The “background knowledge” T Group acquired deepened the students’ understanding about the articles by focusing on the media’s ideological background.

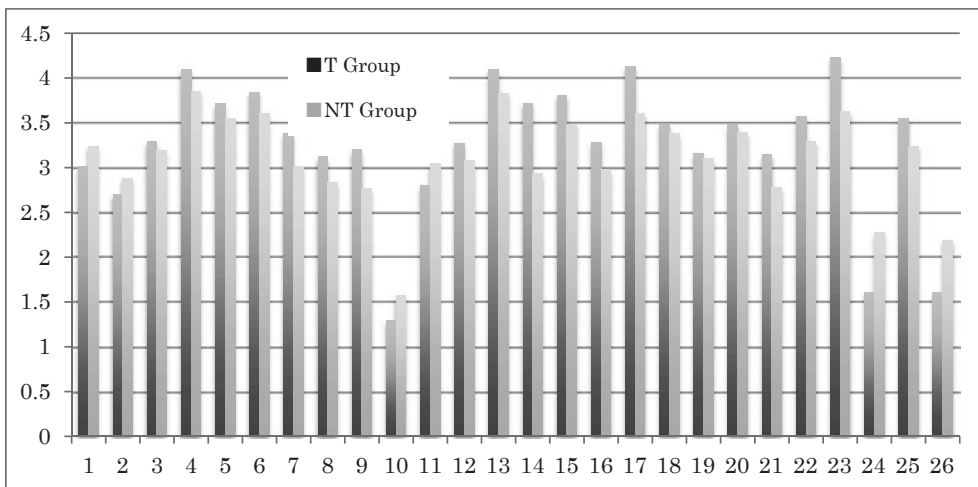
(7) Four bar graphs of the questionnaire results

The first questionnaire was conducted April in 2017. And T Group and NT Group had no significant differences in the mean of all of the 26 questions.



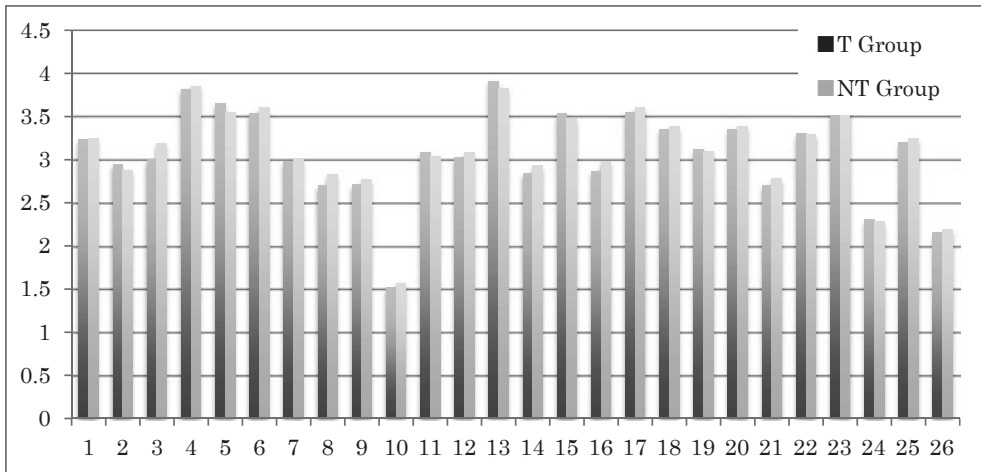
[Graph1] The changes in the mean of T Group and NT Group in April.

The second questionnaire was conducted in July. Its result shows that compared to NT Group, T Group’s means are higher on the whole. However, the results of questions 2,10,11,24,26, which are opposite from the author’s intension, the T Group’s means are lower.



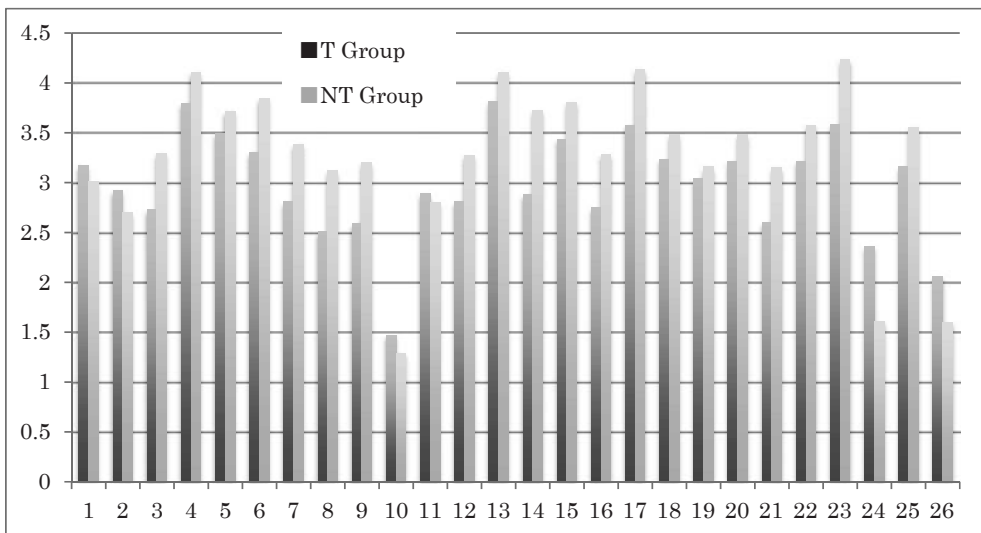
[Graph 2] The changes in the mean of T Group and NT Group in July.

Here we can see that there are almost no changes in NT Group's means in April and July.



【Graph 3】 The changes in the mean of NT Group in April and July.

Now we can see the means' changes of T Group in April and July in 2017.



【Graph 4】 The changes in the mean of T Group in April and July.

(8) Awareness changes

According to the questionnaire research conducted twice, now we can find some awareness and attitude changes from T Group, which focused on writers' intension and purposes, key words in the titles, and press comments. Their total means 0.43 points (10.76 divided by 25 questions) per question increased in July.

The followings are the top 6 questions whose means increased.

[Table 5] The top 6 questions whose means increased.

The top 6 means increased questions.	Increased points
14. You can understand the author's opinions quite well without reading all the sentences.	0.84
24. <u>The conclusions in the articles are the same even though different authors write them.</u>	-0.75
23. here are big differences in newspaper articles on the same topic depending on the newspaper company.	0.65
8. When you read, you pay attention to whether the author's opinion is too simplified or not.	0.61
9. You read two different articles/ books with opposite opinions on the same topic.	0.61
7. After understanding an author's opinion, you ask yourself "Is it really true?" while reading.	0.57

(9) Observation

The two times questionnaire research demonstrated that T Group's means increased in almost all the questions. However, the mean of Question 19, "When you write a report, you use more than two pieces of literature/ documents." went up only 0.12, which could be said that learners' reading critical awareness have increased, however, this study has not influenced on their writing attitude yet.

By the result, under the various mixed context, it became clear that learners should be trained to pay attention to the context structure by focusing on key words in the titles, writers' claims, their supporting sentences, and press comments rather than translating every sentence in the traditional way of merely using their grammatical and lexical knowledge. Thus finding out the information according to the purpose and a set of goals, as well as making independent decisions and solving problems with others are effective in reading comprehension exercises.

VII. Conclusion

When the students leave university and start to work, they will immediately face the situation to select what they can believe and what they cannot. Therefore, it is crucial for the students to acquire the skill of reading to learn before they start independent learning. Instead of holding onto the old-fashioned way of translating using their extensive knowledge about the grammatical rules for the language and an impressive amount of lexis, this study aimed to train the students to understand the mechanism of specific text structure knowledge so that they will be able to comprehend the background knowledge.

This study has explored a questionnaire research to find out if the gained particular background knowledge within an environment where various contexts are mixed, the background knowledge will be able to function as a tool to help shift learners' awareness and attitude to read more critically from various angles.

T Group read three articles written by three different newspaper companies with different

political ideology and stance while paying attention to the context structures to gain the reading strategies to find particular information according to a set of goals.

Also group work and collaborating leaning took place to promote discussions in order to stimulate problem solving ability and interpreting ability. Throughout pre, during, and after reading activities, this whole process led learners to focus on specific content structures, and therefore, by taking account of background knowledge, the students' awareness shifted towards reading more critically.

This study results were able to show the students' awareness shift from April to July in 2017. However, in order to analyze the data into more specific categories, it needs to divide the questions into more detailed components by adding more questions. It will also be important to conduct follow-up research to find out how long this awareness shift will remain or if it will go back to the way it was after a certain period.

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APPENDIX

Please read the questions below and circle the number that best describes your feeling. If you strongly agree, circle 5 and if you strongly disagree, circle 1.

		1	2	3	4	5
1	English Reading comprehension is fun.					
2	Theses have correct conclusions.					
3	While reading, you pay attention to stereotypes such as gender, race, occupation and ethnicity.					
4	Even within the same topic, opinions differ with different authors.					
5	Most English reading classes are useful for thinking about things deeply.					
6	When you read, you try to understand the "author's assertion/ opinion".					
7	After understanding an author's opinion, you ask yourself "Is it really true?" while reading.					
8	When you read, you pay attention to whether the author's opinion is too simplified or not.					
9	You read two different articles/ books with opposite opinions on the same topic.					
10	All the information on the net is correct.					
11	The ability to comprehend English means an ability to translate into Japanese.					
12	You pay attention to the difference between facts and opinions while reading.					
13	There is a big difference in opinions on the same topic depending on the net media.					
14	You can understand the author's opinions quite well without reading all the sentences.					
15	Each paragraph contains a topic sentence and supporting sentences.					
16	You consider whether "the fact", which is the grounds for the opinion, is a good representative of the whole piece or not.					
17	Depending on the publishing company, the contents differ significantly on the same topic.					
18	You pay attention to "cause and effect" while reading.					
19	When you write a report, you use more than two pieces of literature/ documents.					
20	While reading you search for the grounds of the author's opinion.					
21	After reading a piece of literature/ document, you read another that may have a second opinion on the same topic.					
22	After reading you ask yourself "Maybe there is a different interpretation of this."					
23	There are big differences in newspaper articles on the same topic depending on the newspaper company.					
24	The conclusions in the articles are the same even though different authors write them.					
25	While reading you consider whether "the fact" that was the ground of the opinion, is really a trustworthy fact or datum.					
26	Everything written in books is correct.					

Developing English Reading Comprehension Strategies for Japanese Universities:

Shifting From Learning to Read to Reading to Learn

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This study explores developing English reading comprehension strategies for Japanese university reading classes. Although Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology (MEXT) 's Curriculum guidelines have changed from globalization in the late 1980s to problem solving, collaboration with others and forming learners' own opinions in 2017, university students are still relying on their knowledge of grammar and lexis to understand English texts. Instead of deliberating the context with multicultural differences such as gender, age, and media, the students are still translating sentences with the old-fashioned way by connecting their grammatical and lexical knowledge. Therefore, this study introduces development of reading comprehension strategies that focuses on acquiring background knowledge of English context of content-centered articles. Also it analyzes and compares the critical awareness shift data of questionnaire research by using the developed strategies with two sample groups at two private Japanese universities' English classes. As a result, learners' critical awareness and attitude have shifted among the training group. Providing the task-based activities with pre, during, and after reading, the research attempts to offer a clear link between being trained to understand the background knowledge and becoming able to learn how to read to learn independently.

Key Words : English Education, English reading Ability, Media Literacy, Critical Thinking