

## The Progress of Reading Competence by Using Multiple Texts

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### Abstract

This research studies the progress of reading competence of Third year Japanese specialization students at Yangon University of Foreign Languages by practicing comparative reading. It explores not only the reader's comprehension of a text but also his perception and feelings on the text and the progress of critical thinking skills. When students read a particular text, they can only rewrite only their understanding of the subject matter which is already stated in prescribed text book, but they cannot restate their personal thinking, feelings and perceptions on the text except for the prescribed subject matter which is explained by the teacher. The aim of this research is to examine whether comparative reading can assist students to promote their critical thinking skills and to enhance the application of this method, a kind of student-centered approach which is the most effective one for language learning, in teaching reading. Observational study and a kind of descriptive method, is used in this research. The data are collected and analysed using pretest, posttest, and comparative reading is introduced and practised four times. According to the results, it was found out that comparative reading can help to promote students' capacity to read, and to know their interested reading genres, yet learners' ability to criticize the quality of a reading text is weak.

**Keywords:** reading, comparative, third-year Japanese specialization

### Introduction

Nowadays, students' ability to think critically on the text excerpt for the subject matter, which is already stated in the prescribed text, is becoming weak. This study shows that students can state their views on the characters up to 56% after practising comparative reading. The data are collected from 64 out of 105 third year Japanese specialization students from Yangon University of Foreign Languages. Participants are asked to work in groups of five and read the first text and retell the subject matter as they understand. Then they are asked to read the second text and compare with the first one. Their progress of reading competence and data collection process are shown in tables 1,2,3 and figures 1 and 2. According to the result, it is found out that practising comparative reading can help students who are weak in thinking critically improve reading competence.

In this research, it is found out that practising comparative reading while reading fiction and non-fiction can promote students' comprehension of the subject matter, understanding of characters and plots, their feelings, perceptions on the quality of the text, and understanding the author's purpose.

### Literature Review

The researcher reviews some researches concerned with enhancing reading competence by using comparative reading. In a research entitled "yomun ouryokuwotakamerushidouhounokennyuu", by Okitahiroshi<sup>2</sup> (2008) focused on exploring how comparative reading affect on reading competency of middle school students. Two stories named "Chuumon no ooiryourimise" and "Name to koyamanokuma", which are prescribed in Japanese middle schools and primary schools, were used as materials. The results revealed that reading multiple texts

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<sup>2</sup>Okitahiroshi, yomunouryokuwotakamerushidouhounokennyuu (kyouikukennyushitu,008),1-4

comparatively can help students widen their perspectives on the text and present the differences between two stories more vividly.

Funatsukeji<sup>1</sup> (2010) conducted a study named “bunngakuniokerukurabe yominohattatu”. In the study, students were asked to read two stories “Ganpiisan no Daraibu” and “GanpiisanvnoFunaasobi” comparatively and write differences between two stories and the facts they like about the texts. The study showed that after using the strategy, students had wider perspectives on the subject matter of the texts and improved critical thinking skills.

According to the collected data, it is found out that reading different literary genres comparatively can arouse students’ interest for different reading genres, and improve their ability to understand the subject matter and the ability to criticize the quality of reading texts, characters, story and plot. Moreover, teacher can aware of students’ individual differences. According to the results, it can be concluded that student-centered approach is the most effective one. Many researchers conducted similar researches by using different methods and materials, but the participants were primary school students, middle school students and high school students. They conducted pretest before introducing comparative reading, then they introduced comparative reading and let students practise the methods using multiple texts four times. Afterwards, posttest was conducted and finally, the outcomes of pretest and posttest were compared.

### **Aim**

This study aims to explore Japanese specialization students’ levels of comprehension on the subject matter of the text they read and their critical thinking skills.

### **Research Questions**

1. How can comparing and analysing different literary genres differentiate the students’ levels of comprehension?
2. How does the study of the literary genres make an impact on the students’ performance?

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<sup>1</sup>Funatsukeji, bunngakuniokerukurabeyominohattatu(zenkokudaigakukokugokyoyuikugakkaihappyo uyoushishuu(112),2010),107-110

## 1. Data Collection

**Table 1 : Data Collection**

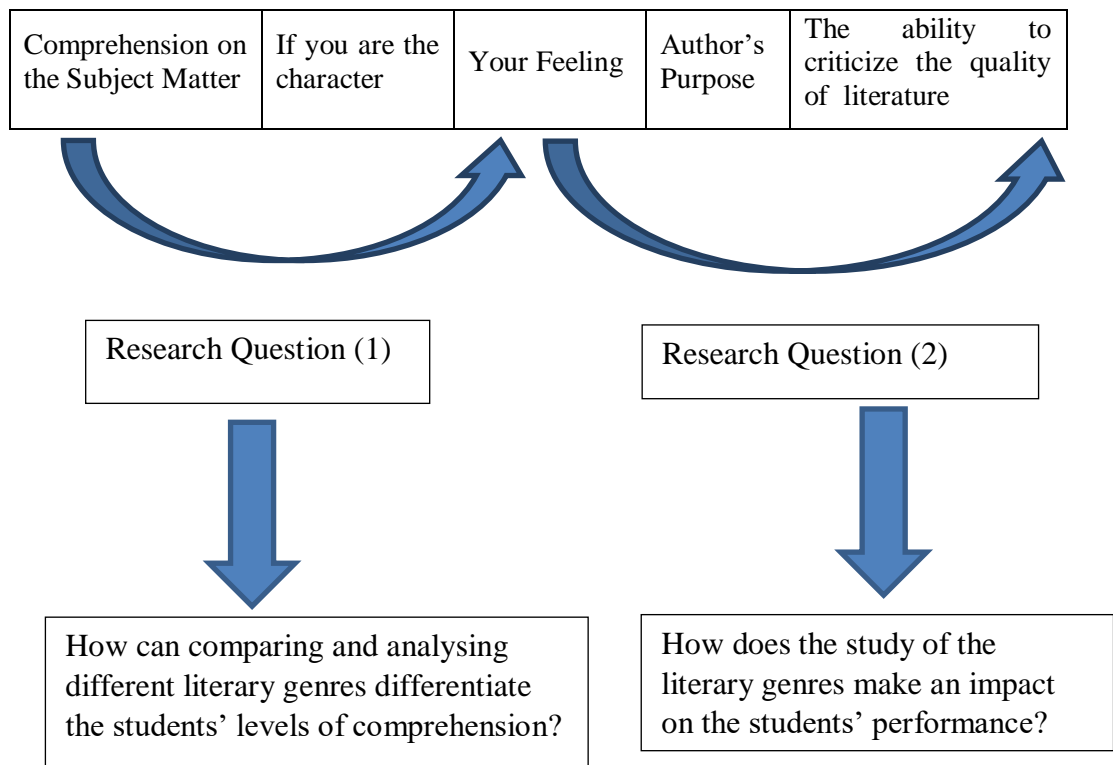
	Title	Genre	Period of Parctice (Minutes)			No. of Participants	No.of Participants Chosen as Subjects
			Reading Time	Presenta tion	Writing Time		
Pretest	The Rabbit in the Moon	Story	20	-	30	100	64
First Time	The Quarrel of the Monkey and the Crab	▪	10	15	25	71	64
	The Ant and the Grasshopper	▪	10	15	25		
Second Time	Travel to the West	News	15	10	50	95	64
	Travel to the West	▪	15	10			
Third Time	Toilet	▪	15	10	50	100	64
	Toilet	▪	15	10			
Fourth Time	Robot Girl	Novella	15	10	25	87	64
	Lovely Clock	▪	15	10	25		
Posttest	Nose	Story	20	-	30	101	64

105 third year Japanese specialization students from Yangon University of Foreign Languages are divided into two groups. They have to practise comparative reading 4 times (50 minutes each time). As the reading materials, stories, news and novella which are assumed to be appropriate for their level are used. When practising comparative reading, students have to work in groups of five. Each group have to read the text and share the message of the text as they understand. Then, they have to read the second text , compare it with the first one and write down their views on two texts. Only 64 students participants in pretest, posttest and 4 practised periods. Therefore only 64 out of 105 students are chosen as subjects on this study.

## 2. Data Analysis

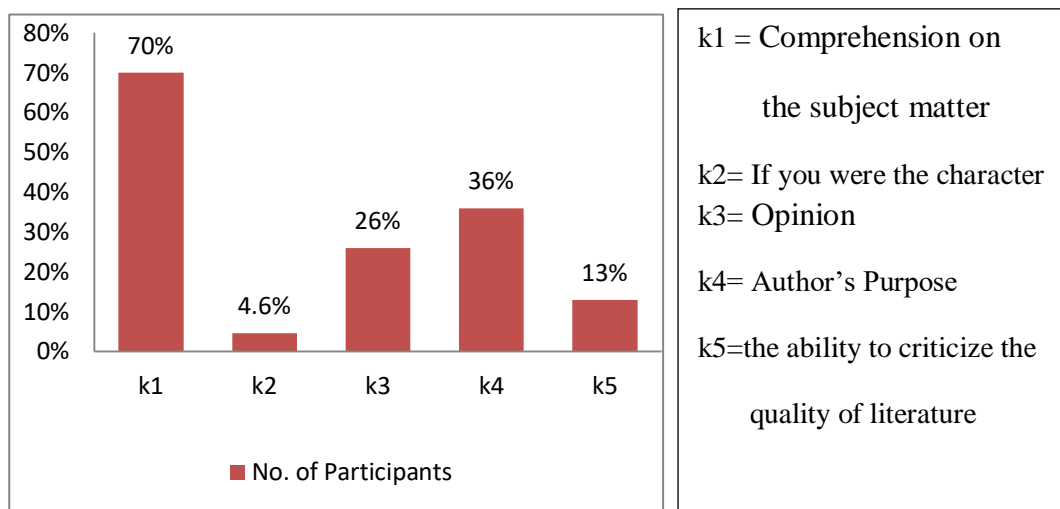
Researcher uses different literary genres. Five sub-headings are defined and used to analyse the collected data.

For question 1, “How can comparing and analysing different literary genres differentiate the students’ levels of comprehensio?”, students’ written answers which are assumed to be relevant for the question are put into the table. For question 2, “How does the study of the literary genres make an impact on the students’ performance?”, answers which describe the author’s purpose, knowledge acquired from the subject matter, view on the subject matter and readers’ different point of views are collected and analysed.

**Figure (1) Data Analysis**

### 1. Pretest Results and Discussion

Reading material used in pretest is famous Japanese story, "The Rabbit Gone to the Moon". Without having any input, students have to read the story and write down their opinion on the story.

**Figure 2 : Pretest Results**

After reading the story, students write down their opinion and feelings on the text. Few students give answers such as "If I were the rabbit, I would not scarify myself", and very few students can think of the best way to get to the moon. Besides, they cannot express their opinions on the text very well. Some students write down interesting idea such as "It is important to help friends with

good heart”, “ Being human is better than being any other creatures”. In pretest, very few students can grasp the message that the author wants to give to the readers.

Many students can write their comprehension on the subject matter, yet they have difficulties in identifying themselves as the character, expressing their opinion and the author’s purpose.

Students can well express their comprehension on the text since the material they read is a story and similar stories exist in Myanmar literature.

While thinking themselves as the character, many students fail to express their idea well. The reason may be that it is the first time for them.

When students criticize the quality of the text, they can only describe whether a text is good or not. They cannot express the insights acquired from the text because of weakness in critical thinking skills.

Researcher conducts the study because only few answers are appropriate for the 5 sub-headings and it is believed that comparative reading can assist students for the progress of reading competence.

#### **4. Results of Practising Comparative Reading From First Time to Fourth Time**

**Table 2 : Results of Practising Comparative Reading From First Time to Fourth Time**

Title	I	II	III	IV
	Story	News	News	Novella
1. Insight got from the subject matter	48%	25%	17%	64%
2. Similarities and differences between two texts	40.6%	67%	84%	89%
3. The reasons why the participant likes the text	55%	55%	88%	92%
4. Feelings and Opinions	45%	13%	59%	90%
5. The ability to criticize the quality of the text	3.1%	19%	88%	22%

In the first period to practise comparative reading, 48% of participants write the insights of two stories “The Quarrel of the Monkey and the Crab” and “The Ant and the Grasshopper” under the guidelines of the teacher. It is found out that reading and comparing two stories can improve students’ thinking skills. Therefore, using stories to teach reading can arouse students’ interest.

In second time, the news about people who travel to North Pole without assistance, which is stated in Tokyo newspaper and Keizai newspaper, is used. Since participants are not accustomed to reading Japanese news, it may be different for them to understand the text. For this reason, the news article is used as the material in this research. Although significant number of students can write different writing styles of the two articles, which express same subject matter but different presentation, only 25% of them can express the insight of the news. Only 13% of students can express their feelings on the texts.

For the third practice, the article named “Toilet”, which express same message but is written in different styles, is chosen. However, only few students can express insight of the news. For this reason, it is concluded that teachers should choose texts which can draw readers’ attention and practise newspaper reading frequently.

In forth time, two novellas, namely, “Robot Girl” and “Lovely Clock”, are used since they are assumed to be appropriate for the students’ level. Although students have to study novella only in the first semester of third year, reading novella is more difficult than reading news, yet students can give appropriate answers for all 5 sub-headings.

### 5. Comparing Pretest Result and Posttest Result

**Table 3 : Comparing Pretest Result and Posttest Result**

	<b>Comprehension on the Subject Matter</b>	<b>If you are the character</b>	<b>Your Feeling</b>	<b>Author’s Purpose</b>	<b>The ability to criticize the quality of literature</b>
Pretest	70%	4.6%	26%	36%	13%
Posttest	56%	19%	97%	70%	9%

In posttest, a story named “Nose” is used. According to the result, 56% of students can describe how they understand the subject matter. Although, this number of students is not very significant numerically, they can describe their opinion on the character. Besides, number of students who can criticize the quality of literature is fewer in posttest, yet interesting comments such as “Writer makes readers think in different ways, uses funny tone and similes, he can describe lifestyle” can be seen. In pretest, students can only give simple comments such as “This story is easy to read and it is interesting”.

After practicing comparative reading, students have improved reading competency and critical thinking skills, so this is a really effective method for teaching reading.

### Findings

Reading different literary genres comparatively, can help the students for the progress of their reading competence. In pretest, 70% of students can understand the text whereas in posttest only 56% of them can describe how they understand the text. The reason is that in pretest, students write the subject matter as they comprehend, but in posttest, they describe not only their understanding of the subject matter but also the opinion on the character. Therefore, it can be assumed that reading multiple text comparatively can not only assist the comprehension but also raise awareness of the character, describe personal feelings. Furthermore, students can criticize the quality of the text and understand the author’s purpose.

Besides, students are more interested in reading stories and novellas. According to results of four practice times, 48% of students can express their opinions on the stories while 64% of them can express their opinions on novellas since they are accustomed to reading stories in Myanmar literature, and stories are fiction. Many students cannot express their opinions on news, for they believe that they can get only information and facts from news.

### Conclusion

To summarize, students get used to reading stories since they were young. Stories exist in Myanmar literature and can give pleasure for readers, so a lot of people are interested in reading them. When practicing comparative reading, students can give more comments on stories. When news are used as materials, students lose their interest, for news can only give information. There are some students who think news can give only information. What is more, news are written according to one's personal opinion, so students give different comments on them. In posttest, students can comprehend the texts more and give opinion on the character, and they can criticize the quality of the texts. Furthermore, it is found out that student centered approach is the most effective for students who are weak in critical thinking and comprehend only the subject matter which is stated in prescribed text.

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