

Centripetal Texts and Intermediary Spaces:

Using Literature in *Reading the World in English*,
a Textbook for English Reading Classes

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The Potential for Literature in English as a Foreign Language (EFL) Textbooks about Anglophone Culture

Independent reading of English literature is an important dimension of English as a foreign language (EFL) courses, whether those courses be skill or content-oriented (Gadjusek, 1988; Jouhar & Rupley, 2021; Kooy & Chiu, 1998; Pardede, 2010). Independent reading is a given in reading and writing courses taught at Japanese universities, whether the language of instruction be in a student's L1 or L2. But, there is no accepted pedagogical model for introducing a reading corpus, with a range of practices being implemented in this context, from course readers, to reading lists comprising abridged literature titles, to set texts. Whatever the degree of out-of-class reading there might be expected for a given course, the ability to read and evaluate such a literary work independently remains a basic objective. Even in courses with preselected reading materials that, therefore, were not independently selected by the student, harnessing the same independent reading skills continues to be the aim of such courses.

Independent reading inherently asks of students the capacity to invest time in and freely explore written works in a nondeterministic way, at least to some degree. Literary texts often comprise such classes' reading corpus, since they inherently elicit independent reading skills and motivation from students. In the same sense, as literary texts, an irreducibly elusive quality exists in these materials which educators must assume will provide nondeterministic linguistic understanding, in a curricular or pedagogical sense, for them to enable independent reading objectives. But from an ESL student's point of view, the motivation to engage in reading in less deterministic ways is often nonetheless informed by functional, deterministic understandings of language learned in skills-oriented English courses. Many students are not provided the orientation that they need to overcome their own utilitarian assumptions about reading English literary texts.

“From Transatlantic to the Globe in Teaching Materials on Anglophone Culture: The

Development of Pluralistic English Language Teaching Textbooks”, a research project conducted at Aoyama Gakuin University in the Department of Education, is one which sought to answer the question of how to develop a diverse, accessible, open, but still introductory textbook aimed at general humanities undergraduate students undertaking Anglophone cultural studies in an EFL environment, one in which English literature could provide the main vehicle for the content found within the class.

In this essay, I hope to show how a textbook-centred pedagogical approach to reading classes can inspire independent, nondeterministic reading of literary texts for the ESL context. Such a textbook must be broadly applicable to university reading and writing subjects in EFL courses. Furthermore, the teaching framework coordinated by a textbook must serve at once a classroom-needs-based approach to generating guided, structured, contextualized reading content for EFL around content-based lessons, and at the same time be a vehicle for introducing interculturally significant literary content relevant to various kinds of reading/writing courses taught at universities around Japan, courses involving cultural studies, international studies, and/or critical thinking. Considering the latter, given that many critical thinking opportunities in English at Japanese universities tend to come under the umbrella of a reading and writing course, development of a textbook may provide one lens for understanding how cultural studies-concerned debates can become the point of access for literary materials and concepts and also prove useful to classes in an EFL reading curriculum carrying the objective of student independent reading. In this essay, a textbook I completed in 2024, *Reading the World in English*, will provide examples of how a teaching resource can demonstrate this same pedagogical mission. I suggest that a multifunctioning textbook which explicitly serves a workshop-style, active learning-oriented course, as well as provides access to an existing knowledge corpus, can enable outcomes associated not only with a variety of EFL learning environments concerned with English proficiency, but those with a research focus, such as in cultural studies and elsewhere. Textbooks become a framework for the introduction of what I define as “centripetal texts”.

I define a centripetal text as one which functions centripetally in relation to surrounding content, which is to say, be at once the focal point of a cultural problem discussed in, for example, an average 750-1000-word textbook chapter, and as the axis of the learning experience oriented by chapter content itself. In other words, a centripetal text functions not only as a concern and utility of a cultural studies chapter, but as the target material for the student reader to learn from and experience. My aim is that the notion of a “centripetal text” embedded in learning materials such as textbooks, in a way sensitive to the intermediary space rendered by it, might shift the use of literature in EFL from a utilitarian model to an intercultural, experiential one – here my thinking is indebted to an elder figure in education studies, John

Dewey (2005 [1934]) – in an effort to embolden other humanities scholars to introduce literary texts in concert with their cultural studies-oriented foreign language courses through a suitably class-oriented textbook framework.

The Question of Textbooks in EFL Cultural Studies Courses

Foreign language culture courses are numerous throughout the Japanese academic sector, most are taught in the target language of the culture in question, and textbook readings and challenges tend, for good reason, to become the central content that a lecturer uses to address the cultural studies perspectives taught in a subject. In cases of English-language subjects throughout Japan, such courses commonly adopt a general cultural introduction format, such as some form of national studies, e.g. the dominant cases, “American Studies” or “British Studies”, or “Introduction to”, or a broadly titled course, such as “Culture and History”, for other Anglophone cultures. The specialization of a faculty member tends to orient the disciplinary and methodological approach undertaken; furthermore, social sciences or economics-specializing faculty employed in a humanities programme may teach a “Political History of” such and such national context, “Business in (National Context)” or “Global Business” from a cultural studies standpoint, and so on. Then, linguists, applied linguists, or translation experts may teach “The Language of (National Context)”, culturally-inflected linguistics courses under the heading of “Sociolinguistics”, or even comparative culture courses with the instructor’s subfield of linguistics as its focus. The latter has been the focus of one influential textbook creator in the ESL field, Mark Petersen, a researcher and educator well-known for his *Nihonjin no eigo (Japanese English)* (1988). How advanced specialization in humanities subject areas and disciplines can translate to textbook delivery and creation in cultural studies subjects in L2 foreign language programmes that provide English education to humanities undergraduates is better clarified when looking at Petersen’s educational resources, which we will look at in the next section.

Many foreign language courses taught in English with content-oriented curricula can be seen to adopt a “no textbook” approach due to these courses’ delivery via instructor-specific specialization, with educators in most such university syllabi indicating that lecturers provide reading material appearing in the form of handouts or lecturer-designed course readers. However, I want to discuss how there are textbooks by Petersen (2023), but also Paul Hullah and Masayuki Teranishi (2009), Noriyuki Harada, Andrew Houwen, and Akira Morita (2022), and others which represent a different precedent: cases in which such courses can be serviced by a textbook. What are the merits of a textbook in such contexts? Textbooks provide guided orientation for classroom activities along with pedagogical introduction to meaningful scholarly

research, and this can be the preference of some instructors of EFL-context cultural studies courses in which students require greater direction and scaffolded learning. Indeed, researchers from interdisciplinary fields, researchers with acute awareness of functionality for the Japanese university classroom while engaged in specialized humanities research, are increasingly responsible for generating such textbooks playing this intermediary role.

The pedagogical value of such textbooks, and the potential they carry for encouraging the next generation of EFL textbooks in the Japanese print market to absorb aspects of academic specialization, lie with their ability to offer what I would call “intermediary spaces” between scholarship and pedagogy. That is, the majority of undergraduates at Japanese university take some form of EFL instruction, and many encounter English language cultural studies for the first time in those courses. Textbooks that serve students other than English majors with these intermediary spaces of thought can bring greater access to and familiarity with cultural debates and concepts usually found in critical theory from various disciplines in the humanities, knowledge that university students are assumed to have to contend with but often lack the orientation needed to adopt it.

When literary texts are adopted or set in general reading/writing EFL courses, they are rarely contextualized. Instead, for many instructors, student enjoyment of literature tends to be the simplest and least ambiguous goal to target in order to produce greater reader independence. To this end, if unabridged literature ever does get included in a book list or a class handout, it is not uncommon for titles from the children’s literature corpus to appear in first preference because of assumptions about their accessibility and familiarity. Given length and issues of copyright, most likely such texts are experienced by students as selections for independent reading tasks, even if the norm continues to be to use graded readers, i.e. bowdlerized literary works adapted for delivery at particular graded levels of English proficiency appropriate for classes of corresponding ability level, for such tasks as book review assignments. Shorter works, such as poems, do commonly enter the EFL classroom, as do short stories that are short enough to be useful in this context. Indeed, textbooks are one context in which English literary titles, at least, are introduced to students of English who might aspire to be more independent readers and seek out the experience of an original literary work. Curiously, however, the lack of a textbook for both Japanese and international contexts which would more deliberately perform the function of introducing literary titles, concepts, periods, and philosophical orientations of the field, while simultaneously providing the framework for a 90-minute Japanese university humanities course in the manner of a standard English reading or cultural studies course, is evident. English instruction and the introduction of Anglophone cultures that often make up the content of these courses involves independent reading lists and excerpting to be marshalled by individual instructors.

Accompanying the general shift toward cultural studies and intercultural awareness attuned to twenty-first century forms of globalization and its effects on the humanities more broadly, the terms under which Anglophone cultures might be studied by way of a multiuse, pluralistic textbook would therefore need to serve a range of diverse disciplinary interests in Anglophone contexts that literature might illuminate, as well as to accord with student expectations regarding curricular infrastructure properly serving the EFL context. Although concerned with secondary school textbooks, Nobuko Yamanaka identifies a lack of diversity in the cultural content used in textbooks in the Japanese education system that could apply to universities also (Yamanaka, 2006). As Michael D. Hollenback has argued, in order for students to move beyond a monocultural view of identity when they engage with questions of global citizenship, the use of materials that themselves sufficiently provide an actual experience of cultural difference and enrich intercultural literacy becomes essential (Hollenback, 2016). Moreover, the classroom activity of negotiating these ideas can provide a firsthand experience of debating them. As Mary Kooy and Annette Chiu argue, “[r]eaders in a class get to know other readers – their insights, visions, questions, and views of the world” (1998, p. 83). So, in order to engender independent reading experiences, we might ask how textbooks might provide a form of direct intercultural reading experience that can be shared with others and thereby have a socially meaningful impact, since so often it is through this interface that students are introduced to Anglophone cultures.

Discovery of an intercultural approach to English literature in a wider multimedia context that includes film, television, music, and other forms that provide conduits for cultural analysis, one that includes Japanese content and intercultural contextualization in a comparative way, was made in the development of *Reading the World in English* and offers one promising outcome of this project. Most particularly, such a discovery has involved a deeper consideration of morphologies of what I have called the intermediary space between scholarship and pedagogy as they might exist between the scholar’s academic work and their classroom. In contrast with perspectives that reproduce mandates about internationalization and global citizenship, however valuable those mandates are, I discover that comparative studies of Japanese interculturalism, such as Japanese-English literary comparison, or Japanese-English linguistic comparison, promise a particularly influential route for acquiring an awareness of theoretical principles conventionally reserved for scholarly, rather than pedagogical, materials.

Existing Models for Integrating Literary Content into English Courses

Textbooks are associated with students’ lack of freedom to navigate class texts in the

classroom and rarely used in a literary studies course, nor, indeed, are they often used in Anglophone literary studies courses globally, as one can see when reviewing a range of publicly available curricula delivered by colleagues at international universities in Anglophone contexts. But, as Csilla Weninger and Tamas Kiss show, by contrast, textbooks in many EFL contexts can provide valuable global consciousness to students, often students' first encounter with particular concepts and debates (Weninger & Kiss, 2013). Indeed, given this burden of responsibility, Weinenger and Kiss urge that textbook composition shift from a focus solely upon "linguistic competence" to greater "reflexive engagement with cultural information" (p. 712). In order to foster that engagement, of course, the "cultural information" itself, such as found in literature, proves more fruitful than a synopsis of or reference to it. Furthermore, Kooy and Chiu identify how classroom discourse about one's experience of reading a particularly meaningful cultural text is a valuable experience for EFL students, including the very struggle with more elusive works which do more than simply provide information (Kooy & Chiu, 1998). Accepting the challenge seems to be critical to the smooth functioning of literary texts in an EFL classroom. If a textbook is also to provide interactions with texts usually associated with independent reading and free selection from a book list, we must ask how textbooks would perform two functions that otherwise seem to contradict one another: (a) how they might provide firsthand access to original, interculturally meaningful texts that encourage further reading, and (b), how they might enable experiences of English that challenge students to advance in proficiency with English without reducing a literary text to a utility or mere representation of cultural experience.

An EFL class often demands a unifying and pragmatic resource that serves students in a classroom setting where reading outcomes are assigned not out of class but compose a portion of classroom time. In my own Aoyama Gakuin University courses in the Education Department, I deliberately provide students with both a literary studies-oriented, lecture format subject, "History of English Literature", and a workshop-oriented, textbook-centred subject, "English Literature", to provide a diversity of learning experiences of literary texts and a varied quota of independent reading. Every year, this requires a significant degree of in-class orientation due to students' preference for prepared readings, and their relative lack of familiarity, and therefore independence, with general print culture in English, which I nonetheless endeavour to have them engage with independently in assignment challenges. Since the latter subject is a compulsory subject consisting of students with a wider disparity of English reading and composition abilities, and ambitions for said abilities, a subject such as this requires a centralized reading source sufficiently integrated into the class hour such that students may be suitably informed about literature for them to be able to understand the general categories of English literary studies without having to consult reference material, especially in order to be able to write essays on literary works they later choose independently. Consulting reference material

when comprehension is difficult may be a given in classes where the literary culture concerned is best represented in students' L1 (such as Anglophone literary studies courses in Anglophone contexts, or Japanese literary studies in Japan). However, preparing students for consultation of reference material in their L2, in addition to appropriate suggestions for reference materials in L1, where available, mean that, outside of concerted English literature programmes in Japan, which are not the concern of this study, students' consultation of reference material proves to be an oftentimes unsuccessful expectation for most EFL subjects.

Textbooks delivered in literary studies first-year survey courses globally, the most popular being examples such as the *Norton Anthology of English Literature* series, with their helpful prefaces, scholarly marginalia, and supplementary bibliographies aimed at undergraduates, are often inappropriate for administering in EFL classrooms. The reason is that these textbooks tend to serve courses with reading requirements that would generally exceed what is assigned in an EFL reading context by five-fold or more. Furthermore, the financial burden of these large anthologies is exorbitant for subjects in which such a comparatively small amount of reading material is used. Not only are such textbooks inappropriate for literature subjects within programmes otherwise not conducted in English, such as in my case, at Aoyama Gakuin's Department of Education, but elsewhere where such courses are commonly taught, from law departments, social sciences, economics, to medical schools, the most convenient-to-use literature textbooks found commonly in Anglophone university syllabi are most certainly inappropriate for subjects of Anglophone culture in foreign language courses referred to earlier.

A general reading textbook in the EFL context that elicits intensive reading experiences couched in literary texts accompanied by sufficient literary criticism to enrich students' reading experiences is almost non-existent, a point reflected in Simon Bibby's interview of another literary studies-oriented EFL scholar and textbook writer, Paul Hullah (Bibby 2012). Notwithstanding the dearth of fully integrated textbooks that provide literary reading experience alongside cultural analysis appropriate for the EFL classroom, undergraduates studying English reading and writing in a cultural studies subject within a foreign language course component of numerous Japanese university programmes expect a degree of systematic classroom experience not facilitated by introductory or reference texts about English literature aimed at L1 readers.

Specialists Creating Textbooks for EFL Classrooms

Mark Petersen's background in modern Japanese literature, and his long career teaching applied linguistics and cultural studies in Japan since 1980, have enabled him to develop a

comparative cultural and applied education approach to classroom resource development. While the pedagogical experience of adapting cultural studies' discourse to the linguistic and educational needs of students in the Japanese context that Petersen relates in "Opinions on English Language Study" is experienced in common by scholars teaching in English in Japanese universities, few have generated textbooks that directly serve the unique curricular phenomena traced earlier (Petersen, 2014). Newer textbooks developed by Petersen are titled such that they appear to be English training workbooks optimal for more practically oriented advanced English courses. But, in reality, they are intercultural, comparative linguistics educational resources that introduce questions of cultural difference and sociolinguistic analysis of language diversity, and may provide undergraduates with their first encounter with such questions found commonly in the linguistics field and comparative Japanese language discourse. Consider, for example, this passage from *English Lessons with Mark Petersen*:

One of his most valued short stories, "*Kaze no Matasaburō*" (「風の又三郎」), was published posthumously, in 1934. The best translation of this story into English was done by a British man, John Bester, and it did not appear until 1992. One of the first major problems Bester faced was how to translate the title into something that would seem both natural-sounding and attractive in English. The name Matasaburō, of course, could simply be rendered as is, though it is conventional to avoid the use of a macron, as with "ō," in publications that are targeted at a mass market. ... Also, "*Kaze*" (「風」) would present no particular problems either – it could obviously be rendered simply as "Wind." The difficulty was how to express the relationship between "Matasaburo" and "Wind" that was presumably implied by the Japanese-language particule "*no*" (「の」). (Petersen, 2023, p. 14)

Certainly, this chapter, like many in the textbook, provide only a brief and sometimes informal introduction to questions of comparative literary studies and linguistics, and also to translation studies. Sometimes, the concerns are not scholarly at all. Nonetheless, Petersen approaches university-level, advanced English study in an interdisciplinary, intercultural manner that utilizes student interest in research questions concerning comparative culture and linguistics, targets the existing corpus of knowledge that Japanese students are likely aware of, such as Kenji Miyazawa's work and its linguistic qualities, and challenges students to ask questions that themselves do not belong to orthodox Anglophone studies. Other researchers have enabled various experiences of literature in English by adopting this seemingly counterintuitive notion of working with L1 cultural knowledge, in this case Japanese. For example, consider Motoko Fukaya's account of teaching a Haruki Murakami story in English translation (Fukaya, 2015). A textbook that introduces concepts from these specialized fields concerning intercultural analysis,

in tandem with book lists for further reading of original texts that present the sources of such knowledge, might foster greater independent engagement with primary materials in English.

Results in an EFL classroom that show “deep learning” in classes tend to emerge in more active classroom environments involving “doing” – challenges, reflection, group work and so forth – therefore lower supplementary, extracurricular requirements and expectations that tax students’ time (Matsushita, 2018). As Matsushita articulates, “active learning is a matter of acting and then learning by reflecting on those actions”, as opposed to passive digestion of thought processes provided by the pedagogical representative in a classroom setting (p. 16). So, sensitivity to student morale and time is a key aspect of enabling an active learning environment to function when the activity involved is reading intriguing texts. Additionally, I have observed during my years teaching at Japanese universities that students can prefer the structured reading offered by a textbook to a reading list, since the former provides broader knowledge of Anglophone cultures that EFL students often encounter for the first time in such courses, and then arranges that content usually found in a lecture alongside primary reference material that an educator would set the student, but in a logical and accessible format. While textbooks might at first glance be associated with more passive learning environments, most EFL contexts in which dynamic and reflexive learning is taking place have challenges and projects presented incrementally akin to a textbook, with, indeed, many lecturers adopting textbooks to function as a mutually transparent interface to enable these active educational experiences, a transparency that Matsushita also highlights is necessary for a functioning active learning infrastructure.

Seminar-style ninety-minute classes are the norm at Japanese universities. Due to the comparatively large amount of hours spent in class in an average student’s timetable compared with an average humanities student, say, in Australia, students lack time for extensive homework, not to mention for enjoying other characteristics of campus life, elements central to university cultures abroad, according to Kariya Takehiko and Yoshimi Shunya, such as collaboration and debate (Yoshimi 2020). The cultural debates that a textbook might refer to in the context of a British or American Studies subject cannot be assumed to link to Japanese students’ own concerns regarding contemporary cultural debates. However, seminars which foster the same sorts of discussion that are seen by Kariya and Yoshimi to have undergone decline in recent years can be received exceedingly well in the classroom by students hungry for socially relevant discussion. Indeed, the seminar form, emphasizing oral assignments and activities, carries a greater burden of responsibility to serve a students’ temporal needs for targeted, guided learning. The additional burden of second-language attention to and absorption of content renders the capacity for achievement in a class hour reduced but intensified, in other words; the requirement for greater pedagogical structuration of reading content and critical thinking inquiry increases in an EFL context, but so too does the appetite that students have for

more open approaches to content engagement.

So, undergraduates' lack of time for out-of-class reading and writing, consultation of secondary references, and supplementary reading, not to mention debate, can and should be compensated for in the dynamic, reflexive components of a class's pedagogical experience, components well served by a critically stimulating textbook. Consider this example of Chapter 13 of Tim Knight's *Welcome to Britain* (2018), which would serve a British Studies course arranged to have oral reflection and critical commentary outcomes from students.

A few years ago the Japanese film animation director Hayao Miyazaki was nominated for an Academy Award for his *Howl's Moving Castle*. The story was based on the novel by the English fantasy writer for children, Diana Wynne Jones. ... Long before, in 1983–84 NHK showed an anime series called *Fushigi no Kuni no Arisu*, based on the *Alice in Wonderland* story. And of course more recently the Harry Potter series sold millions of books and won thousands of fans in Japan, not just thanks to the author J.K. Rowling, but also to the Japanese translator, Yuko Matsuoka. (Knight, 2018, p. 75)

This example may lack the density of expertise found in Petersen's textbook and be comparatively informal when considered as a piece of comparative literary inquiry. However, on the other hand, the accessibility and meaningfulness of the passage for a wide spectrum of undergraduates, especially those with less motivation to tackle original literary texts, suggests that Knight's textbook carries a greater quantum of potential for in-class student debate on comparative Japanese-English literature and media, one goal aspired to by independent reading tasks. It must be said that, however we achieve it in the classroom, a student's experience of being a reader of English with the ability to communicate that experience must remain our objective. Here, discussing the texts adapted to influential Japanese anime, from Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* to Dianne Wynne Jones's *Howl's Moving Castle*, the chapter enables an intercultural study predicated on existing, domestic knowledge – for most students in the Japanese context, the comparative study involves Japanese-British juxtaposition – Knight's textbook fosters a discussion of the literary history of fantasy and contemporary British popular culture.

If I were using this textbook, I would be able to pair this textbook with a reading list that included *Howl's Moving Castle*, or with a course reader that provided an excerpt from the novel. In *Welcome to Britain*, a "Going Further" section, as in all the chapters, follows the content, and the questions found there emphasize self-expression and student interaction. Similarly, Paul Hullah and Masayuki Teranishi's *Britain Today: Old Certainties, New Contradictions* (2009) makes use of contemporary debates alongside related popular culture artefacts to enable similar

pedagogical outcomes. Petersen's recent *English Lessons with Mark Petersen*, we saw, also employs comparative cultural analysis, emphasizing Japanese reader self-knowledge to engage in applied linguistic and socio-linguistic debate with relevancy for comparative linguistics research.

English and the World: English Literature Studied as Intercultural Experience in Japan

From the standpoint of a literary scholar working in an EFL pedagogical environment, a workshop- or seminar-style classroom model managed with a multifunctional textbook which provides the raw material for critical discussion and also serves as a course reader has merits as the means for introducing English literature to EFL students, to students who often lack experience reading literature in either their L1 or L2, and feel a similar disinclination toward reference material. Here, pedagogical ideas undergirding my own recently completed textbook manuscript, *Reading the World in English*, might demonstrate how to employ literary texts within an English reading and writing course found at a middle-sized Japanese university such as Aoyama Gakuin, which may in turn illuminate new possibilities for generating classroom reading content, intercultural experience, and firsthand interaction with literary texts.

Rather than present literary material in a passive learner-directed lecture-style course reading list, *Reading the World in English* provides a textbook framework for consolidating the materials an average Anglophone cultural studies course involves into one reading source, integrating primary learning materials with lecture-style critical commentary, classroom activities focused upon active learning, independent criticality, and review, and outcome, evaluation-oriented quizzes and assignments that structure class time. As an educator who serves humanities students, students often with an aspiration of becoming educators themselves, a single resource for them to acquire intercultural awareness and linguistic sensitivity through literary texts of cultural significance aids in addressing such students' expectations and ambitions for not only independent reading but also sufficient knowledge to contextualize and evaluate these sorts of texts.

Here is a passage from Chapter 3 of *English and the World* that, while serving as an accessible introduction to basic facts about British culture and language, also problematizes the givenness of national identity by introducing the concept of regional diversity in the UK along with it:

Some of the most groundbreaking English literature has been written in and about places far from the English capital, London. Robert Burns, who wrote a song most will know, Auld Lang Syne, composed his work in dialect-rich Scots English, and his poetry remains some of

the most important of the late eighteenth century. Dylan Thomas, one of the most quoted twentieth century English-language poets, grew up listening to Welsh and English in his household. Like Kenji Miyazawa in Japan, then, Thomas and Burns both represent regional differences *within* a literary culture as well as representing the whole.

Many textbooks in the context of foreign language courses presented in cultural studies subjects within them go this far with literary examples, but then hesitate to provide the textual examples such understandings of literary figures are based upon. However, as the following extract from the poem series “What is the Language Using Us For?” by W.S. Graham used to introduce Chapter 3 of *English and the World* shows, the questions raised by literary language not only can assist comprehension of a literary work, but the literary work can operate centripetally in the learning resource. A centripetal text, I argue, provides a central axis through which to ground a cultural debate about dialect, standardization, and self-expression which might comprise the discussion component of a lesson:

What is the language using us for?
It uses us all and in its dark
Of dark actions selections differ.

I am not making a fool of myself
For you. What I am making is
A place for language in my life
(Graham, 2005, p. 199)

Such examples from literature may appear to resist easy use in a purposive classroom resource like a textbook since such passages of modern lyric poetry are inquisitive rather than expository, presenting challenging questions to readers rather than presenting them with clear answers. However, approached differently, as the axis for what Matsushita would call the “deep learning” enabled by an active learning environment, the centripetal quality and intercultural value of such a literary work enables an experience, not merely a representation, of cultural inquiry, here in terms of language and identity. Pairing this Graham quotation with a discussion of regional diversity in national literatures not only intends to introduce an important conceptual problem of interest to literary studies, but facilitates a meaningful, hopefully memorable experience of a question of language that many EFL students will ask themselves, one presented in beguiling poetic language: how do I make “[a] place for language in my life”?

An interesting contradiction exists in the expectations regarding the role of English literature

in EFL education in university contexts, and the realities of student experience that this approach to literary texts in EFL countenances. That is, English literature carries with it the aura of “advanced English”, presenting as the acme of English language learning and the final rung in a ladder whose lower divisions are pragmatic and higher divisions require greater and greater independence, creativity, and flair. Literature under this conception, whatever the context, author, period, or form, is a hurdle. Meanwhile, literature in literary studies, not to mention literature for lovers of reading more generally, carries the contrary reputation as a means of liberation from pragmatic demands, the very study of the concept of the literary an introduction to unpurposive and so-called “useless” language (Archambeau, 2020).

This contradiction may appear unresolvable and a key irony that comes with language mastered as an art. However, rather than avoid this contradiction or try to overcome it with utilitarian solutions that alienate students from becoming freer readers of creative English language texts, educators might make the experience of this question a realization within the realm of possibility for students themselves, enabling the appeal of liberation from functional expectations about their English proficiency and so forth to paradoxically encourage a more individualistic process of self-creation as a reader to emerge via literary works.

Gadjusek’s study of this problem concludes that instructors ideally perform the role of “facilitator” to allow this horizon of independence to emerge (Gadjusek, 1988, pp. 252–54). So, a textbook that scaffolds how an instructor might better perform such a role – rather than simply implement unguided activities such as asking students to summarize or translate literary works into their L1, we must point out – evidently becomes increasingly important. The realities of student experience – time-poverty, a system based on a lack of independent research, the prioritization of English acquisition over individual outcomes – too mean that students engage in little exploratory reading that a standard English literature survey course often intends to enable, and a great reliance on instructor facilitation.

Vigour

Ellie Chambers and Marshall Gregory (2006) argue that higher education assessment in the UK in the late 1990s highlighted how literature, from the point of view of excellence in the humanities, could represent a model of “vigour” that might stimulate student results exceeding simple quantitative educational modelling. A particularly illuminating reference to the assessors’ account of literary studies’ outcomes in the classroom from the point of view of a government-facilitated higher education assessment perspective emerges regarding the “vigour” of an English literature education where “student achievement [in this subject area] in general reflects

considerable intellectual challenge” (Chambers and Gregory 10). Rather than assume that such vigour is unique to a literary studies education, however, educators should make the inspiration of that quality the target of EFL culture studies subjects. According to Dewey, who concerned himself with this very question of how education might embody its responsibility to provide experiences, literature itself is understood as an experience based *a priori* in an inherent faculty of understanding within its appreciator more easily harnessed than other expressive faculties because literature is inherently linguistic and therefore *a priori* communicative. In this way, Dewey’s concept of literature lies at odds with the “hurdle” model of literature:

The expressions that constitute art are communication in its pure and undefiled form. Art breaks through barriers that divide human beings, which are impermeable in ordinary association. This force of art, common to all the arts, is most fully manifested in literature. Its medium is already formed by communication, something that can hardly be asserted of any other art. (pp. 253-54)

In other words, literature consists of communication, arguably making it distinct from other forms of expression that must be learnt from an existing aesthetic standpoint to be sufficiently *informative*, such as music or the visual arts. Utilitarian approaches to English literary content use in an EFL context undergo a helpful renovation in light of John Dewey’s remarks about literature as predicated upon by language. English educators such as Simon Bibby (2014) have made similar efforts to reframe the experience of original literary works as a primary goal in Japanese EFL literary studies contexts as I have, where reading compilations are supplemented for but not replaced by para- and meta-textual materials. Rather than be a distinct order of linguistic expression that students can aspire to understand if sufficiently educated, Dewey argues that literature is a pure art of communication, that nourishes the human communicative faculty in the most universal way. Whether educators believe so or not, the perspective is valuable: an experiential rather than quantitative approach to reading, without prescribed practical reasons, intercultural texts might indeed prove more generally applicable to eliciting greater communicability from students.

So, even if approaches to English literary studies adapted for EFL students that introduce literary works with summaries or bowdlerized versions of texts are a logical approach in the Japanese academic context with greater achievement potential, I must urge that the experience of literary texts themselves promises a range of contrasting academic outcomes that this essay has traced, from intercultural experience to more diverse forms of communication whose more unpredictable outcomes in independence of reading may enable greater self-transformation in students. I urge that educators make literature an experience for students in itself, and develop

textbooks that adhere to this. Such experience students can then apply to their own lifeworld and social context in real intercultural terms, since the materials concerned will have been ones in common with another's culture. Certainly, this conception of a textbook that serves a general EFL humanities students' curiosity about English literature involves para-texts and critical commentary; rather, I want to suggest that quantitative efforts to have students read under the umbrella of "the literary text" elicits less of the educational "vigour" Chambers and Gregory identify in the literature classroom than firsthand experiences of reading unadulterated English literature itself. Indeed, for literary texts to be excerpted in a textbook of this kind, truncation is a given. However, I view truncation as more appropriate to providing an influential experience of English literature, in accordance with Dewey's conception of experience, than the synopsis of literary works.

Conclusion

Martin Puchner has argued that human "agency" is the broader category of human experience that storytelling has historically served, with storytelling at once agency's medium as well as its foundation (Puchner, 2022). Structurally, since poststructuralism, literary criticism's most general form in critical writing, whatever its strain, has committed to the literary work as not only the object of study but imbricated with analysis as the very process of the critical act. The difficult concepts of writing that come after poststructuralism do not have to themselves be difficult; indeed, I see Puchner as finding a way to simplify the question of what it means for literary studies to serve wider cultural awareness and sensitivity in the human subject by using this term "agency". In educational contexts, students' ability to become independent learners is a common horizon of many educators. The centripetal text is a concept of reading that situates agency and storytelling as concerns for the student's practical application in a classroom experience and not simply as the object of observation. As hitherto explained, "What is the Language Using Us For?" by British poet Graham provides the axis for a textbook chapter's discussion of language and agency, and the foundation for a reader's linguistic experience. The poem was chosen for its clarity, its vividness, its relevance to a cultural discussion of linguistic identity in the UK and its many dialects, but also the intrigue of its language, an intrigue that has a centripetal effect on the content that surrounds it. Put differently, reading materials with this centripetal quality can provide the referential axis for cultural debate, rather than simply be the trigger for it.

Reading the World in English presents one literary work per chapter in order to create a centripetal force that leads readers to an intensive reading experience. The centripetal force of

the work thereby requires concordance from the content that surrounds it, such that the centripetal literary text can retain its integrity, provide the reader with an open reading experience uninterrupted by interpretation, and, finally, still serve to exemplify the cultural debate presented in the chapter. While such a textbook is structured conventionally, adhering to a limited frame of reference due to the space constraints for a standard fifteen-chapter resource, targeting the intermediary space between scholarship and pedagogy that such teaching materials provide with such a resource enables educational experiences serving English proficiency, creative reading, critical thinking, and cultural studies objectives common to undergraduate programmes in the Japanese context, ideally at once. Fostering independent reading remains the objective, while centripetal literary texts help introductory, EFL-oriented cultural studies textbook content to provide reading experiences of interculturally meaningful primary texts. At the same time, the introduction to an alternative way of thinking or to a memorable cultural text hopefully can fulfil the function of expanding students' appetite for reading such works independently, beyond the textbook, and begin their journey into becoming a reader of English-language literature.

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