

Pedagogical Possibilities of Graded Readers Retold from Literature

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to show that the abundance of literary works retold in the three major Graded Reader series (Macmillan Readers, Oxford Bookworms Library and Pearson English Readers) have strong pedagogical potential. The first part of the paper indicates problems associated with using original texts from literature at the beginner and intermediate level when teaching at a Japanese university. The next section explains how the author's class avoided these problems. In the class, a simplified version of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1892) by Thomas Hardy was used as the main textbook. A handout, which encouraged students to think and write in English, was also introduced. In the last session of the year, a students' interest survey was conducted and it became clear that many students of the class were interested in retold versions of British and American literature. Following on from these results, the number of simplified versions in the three major Graded Reader series was tallied. According to the survey, it became clear that as many as 30-40% of each series were retold versions and that these had infinite possibilities in the language classroom at a Japanese university.

1. Introduction

Traditional targets of English language classes at Japanese universities have recently been changing. There is more focus now on the improvement of students' communicative competence and preparation for English language proficiency tests. As a result, teachers seldom choose an original text from classic literature as a main textbook. The uncustomary features of an original text make teachers avoid using one in their classroom. This paper will begin by considering some of the difficulties in using an original text at the beginner and intermediate levels, while introducing previous studies about the vocabulary of an original text and about the Grammar-Translation Method, which teachers tend to apply when they use an original text as the main textbook. This will be followed by a report on the author's class. In the class, a Graded Reader of a Victorian novel written with simplified vocabulary was chosen as the main teaching tool. The Grammar-Translation Method was also applied in a limited way. Lastly, there is a consideration on pedagogical possibilities of Graded Readers of classic literature in language classrooms in Japanese universities.

2. Review of Literature

2.1 Challenging vocabulary in an original text

The first reason an original text causes problems when it is introduced into a language classroom is its complex vocabulary. Nation proposed “the four strands” and he thought that appropriate language learning should have “meaning-focused input,” “language-focused learning,” “meaning-focused output,” and “fluency development” with an equal balance of 25% each (Nation, 1998). Based on this thought, he and Deweerdt compared the original text of *Dracula* (1897) by Bram Stoker and its simplified version in the Oxford Bookworms Library (level 2) and analysed word repetitions and levels of difficulty of the vocabulary (Nation & Deweerdt, 2001).

Nation and Deweerdt pointed out that the simplified text contained a lot of important words in “the first 2000 words,” which they thought learners should master first. Although some words outside “the first 2000 words” were used, they also said that these words were repeatedly mentioned and this repetition of words provided learners with excellent opportunities to master new words. On the other hand, the original version had much less repetition of words, forcing the learner to struggle with demanding words such as *alacrity*, *aquiline*, *baying*, *crags*, *diligence* (a type of stagecoach), *engendered*, *goitre*, *hospadars*, *oleander* and *polyglot*. They thought that these complex words were not necessary at the top of a learners’ list. While they did not deny the value of an original text, for these reasons they concluded that simplified texts were much more appropriate especially for learners at the beginner and intermediate levels, because they were able to provide learners with “meaning-focused input” and promote their “fluency development.”

2.2 Dependence on the Grammar-Translation Method

Secondly, the teaching method where teachers use an original text as the main textbook is often criticized. Because an original text has many difficult words and complicated grammar, it is nearly impossible for the teacher to conduct a student-centred lesson. Usually, teachers take the initiative in the class to explain the complicated text and apply the Grammar-Translation Method. However, many second language acquisition researchers and teachers criticize this method. This section examines the history and definition of this method.

The Grammar-Translation Method is one of the oldest methods in the history of English language teaching. Kelly pointed out that this method came from Latin education during the mediaeval period (Kelly, 1969). Howatt and Widdowson showed the oldest textbook, which was intended for the Grammar-Translation Method. According to their investigation, Johann Christian Fick was inspired in 1793 by the French textbook, which was written by Johann Valentin Meidinger. Fick subsequently published the English textbook for German speakers called “Praktische englische Sprachlehre für Deutsche beiderlei Geschlechts, nach der in Meidingers französischen Grammatik befolgten Methode” (Practical English Course for Germans of both sexes, following the method of Meidinger’s French Grammar) (Howatt & Widdowson, 2004, p.152). Prator and Celce-Murcia gave the eight definitions of the Grammar-Translation Method.

1. Classes are taught in the mother tongue, with little active use of the target language.
2. Much Vocabulary is taught in the form of lists of isolated words.
3. Long, elaborate explanations of the intricacies of grammar are given.
4. Grammar provides the rules for putting words together, and instruction often focuses on the form and

inflection of words.

5. Reading of difficult classical texts is begun at an early stage.
6. Little attention is paid to the content of texts, which are treated as exercises in grammatical analysis.
7. Often the only drills are exercises in translating disconnected sentences from the target language into the mother tongue.
8. Little or no attention is given to pronunciation. (Prator & Celce-Murcia, 1979, p.3)

However, by the end of the 19th century, a new method, “The Direct Method ” was prescribed. This resulted in drastic changes in second language teaching in both Europe and America. For example, François Gouin expressed his bitter experience of learning German. Gouin, who believed in the Grammar-Translation Method, studied German diligently and memorized as many grammatical rules and vocabulary words as he possibly could, but he still could not communicate with German speakers easily. Based on his bitter personal experience and his observation of children’s language acquisition, he thought that a target language should be learned without translation or explanation of grammatical rules. Maximilian Berlitz, who called his own method “The Berlitz Method,” also criticized the Grammar-Translation Method, and brought native speakers of the target languages to teach in his language school.

Furthermore, changes in methods of teaching reading also brought criticism to the Grammar-Translation Method. Krashen, Day & Bamford and Nation indicated that extensive reading had tremendous benefits (Krashen, 2004; Day & Bamford, 1998; Nation, 1997). Elley also proposed his innovative idea, “book floods” (Elley, 1991). As a result, the way of teaching reading has dramatically changed since the 1990s. Davis said, “The watchwords are quantity and variety, rather than quality, so that books are selected for their attractiveness and relevance to the pupils’ lives, rather than for literary merit” (Davis, 1995, p.331). In short, it is not the contents of textbooks but the quantity that has gained focus. As a result of this change “from quality to quantity,” many researchers and teachers expressed further scepticism about the efficacy of the Grammar-Translation Method. Richard and Rogers criticized this method as one without any theory or rationale.

It [the Grammar-Translation Method] has no advocates. It is a method for which there is no theory. There is no literature that offers a rationale or justification for it or that attempts to relate it to issues in linguistics, psychology, or educational theory. (Richards & Rogers, 2001, p.7)

As the previous sections have shown, teachers are forced to face two problems when they choose an original text as the main teaching tool – complex vocabulary and the Grammar-Translation Method. It is no surprise then, that there are many teachers who hesitate to use an original text in their classroom.

From a cultural aspect, however, several researchers have admitted that literature has enormous advantages. For instance, Collie and Slater said that literature gives “cultural enrichment” to learners (Collie & Slater, 1987, p.4). Divsar and Tahriri also stated that literature enabled learners to be interested in other cultures and promote their cross-cultural understanding (Divsar & Tahriri, 2009). The author too, was convinced that literature would

become an effective teaching tool with skilful use, and its exciting development would attract learners at every level. Based on this, the author conducted a class, using a simplified version of a 19th century British novel in order to avoid the problem of understanding complex vocabulary. The Grammar-Translation Method was not applied often. The details of the class are explained in the next chapter.

3. Method and Results

3.1 Method

3.1.1 Participants and a course goal

The participants were six second-year students at a private university in Japan. The ratio of female students to male students was 3 to 3. Because their major was global communication studies, they were mostly interested in foreign culture and presented eagerness to learn the English language. However, their English proficiency level was not high and their scores only ranged from 400-500 on the TOEIC test. All six students took the class for the first time. There were no students who could not get a credit from the class because of too many absences or failing regular examinations. The main purpose of the class was the improvement of reading ability.

3.1.2 Teaching materials

As Okumura pointed out that Victorian literature and Victorian writers' biographies have been often adapted for films (Okumura, 2009), Victorian novels have gradually become popular among young people. Therefore, the instructor chose a retold version of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* (1891) by Thomas Hardy as the main textbook. With regard to a retold version, the Macmillan one with a CD was selected. Oxford University Press as well as Macmillan Publishers retold this Victorian masterpiece as a Graded Reader, but there were two reasons the Graded Reader from Macmillan Publishers was chosen. First of all, the Macmillan version had a more suitable vocabulary level. *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* published by Oxford University Press belonged to stage six (2500 headwords), which was the most difficult level among the Oxford Bookworms Library series. On the other hand, the level of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* of the Macmillan Readers series was intermediate (1600 basic words) and its vocabulary level was appropriate for the students. Secondly, the Macmillan version of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* contained detailed illustrations and charts pertaining to the book. The illustrations showed several famous scenes of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* such as Angel's marriage proposal to Tess and Tess's drudgery at the farms. The instructor thought that these pictures enabled the students to deepen their understanding of the reading passage. In addition to these illustrations, the detailed relationship chart at the beginning of the Graded Reader was useful. Many of the characters in *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* had complex relationships. The chart provided the students with an opportunity to understand these relationships. From these two reasons, the Macmillan version of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* was chosen over the Oxford version. The instructor divided the novel's 101 pages into parts according to the number of sessions. In each session, the students tried to read and comprehend an average of about 4-5 pages.

In addition to the Graded Reader, Roman Polanski's film *Tess* (1979) featuring Nastassja Kinski was used in order to visually deepen the students' understanding about Victorian culture and farm lives of that time in

Thomas Hardy's *Wessex*.

3.1.3 Class procedure

The class was a 28-week course, which continued for the whole year, covering the first and second semesters. The students met once a week for 90 minutes every session. In the first session in April, the instructor explained the details of the class and administered a test to measure each student's English ability. Afterwards, the students took mid-term and final examinations in the 8th and 14th sessions of the first semester and in the 22nd and 28th sessions of the second semester. In the 9th session of the first semester and the 23rd session of the second semester, the instructor lectured on Victorian culture and the author, Thomas Hardy, using Roman Polanski's film. Aside from these seven sessions for guidance, regular examinations and lectures, 21 sessions in total were used for the reading activity.

Each session was 90 minutes. But the substantial time was about 80 minutes because of roll call and explanations of homework assignments such as preparation for a vocabulary quiz. When a novel is used as a teaching tool, a teacher should make sure that students understand the plot development of the preceding reading section prior to beginning the new section. Therefore, the instructor divided the class time into two parts. In the first 30 minutes, the students were provided with several review tasks about the preceding reading section to deepen their understanding about the flow of the novel. In the latter 50 minutes, the students tried to read the new reading section. The details of both parts are as follows.

3.1.3.1 The former part of the session: Review of the previous reading section

Three tasks were provided to the students in order to reconfirm the contents of the previous reading section in the first 30-minute part of the session. The instructor started by giving dictation from the reading section, which the students had studied the previous week. This task enabled them to understand the flow of the novel. Secondly, the students took a vocabulary quiz. As Day & Bamford pointed out (Day & Bamford, 2000, 2002), the key to the success of extensive reading is providing students with much easier Graded Readers. However, although the main textbook of the class was a Graded Reader, it was not used for extensive reading. The difficult Graded Reader was intentionally selected because the instructor gave detailed explanations about complex vocabulary. As a result, the students often encountered new vocabulary and the instructor gave a vocabulary quiz to help them master those new words. Lastly, after checking, the instructor returned a handout (the details will be disclosed later), which was given the previous week. Thorough explanations were also provided. In short, the instructor was conscious of all students of the class starting a new reading section only after they fully understood the past section through these three activities.

3.1.3.2 The latter part of the session: Comprehension of the new reading section

In the latter 50 minutes of the session, the students were required to read the new section while listening to the audio CD. The students were also directed to underline words or expressions that they were not able to understand. After that, the instructor explained several points, which the students had indicated for better understanding. Even if they had not pointed them out, the instructor clarified sentences, which she thought

included important grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, there was pronunciation practice of words that were hard for Japanese learners to pronounce. After completing these procedures, the instructor had students read the new reading section again, accompanied by the audio CD. On this second reading, the students were required to underline sentences, which they thought were important for the development of the novel in order to deepen their understanding of the plot. At the end, a handout to confirm their understanding was provided.

The handout consisted of three types of questions, multiple-choice, extract, and written questions. For example, when the students read Chapter 11 (pp. 78-82) of the main textbook in which Tess toiled at a farm at Flintcomb-Ash, the handout included the multiple-choice question, "What is the name of the farm where Tess worked hard? a) Flintcomb-Ash, b) Abbot's-Cernel, c) Trantridge." The handout also had an extract question like, "What thought appeared in Tess's mind when she saw Alec coming to meet her again? Please extract the part which showed her thought from the reading section." Furthermore, the students were asked to answer a written question like, "Why did Tess try to escape from Alec? Please explain the reason in English." After the students answered all of the questions, the instructor collected the handouts. She subsequently checked and returned them a week later.

3.2 Results

3.2.1 Feedback from the students

The instructor gave a questionnaire to survey the students' interests and evaluations towards the class. The questionnaire asked students to choose their most fitting number from a Likert Scale, a five-point bipolar response. It ranged from "I strongly agree (5)," "I agree (4)," "Neither agree nor disagree (3)," "I disagree (2)," to "I strongly disagree (1)." The questionnaire contained four types of statements: 1) "I could understand the contents of the novel," 2) "I was interested in the novel," 3) "I was interested in a retold version of British and American literature," and 4) "I was content with the class." The instructor stated that the questionnaire would be conducted anonymously and answers would not affect their grade.

Responding to the first statement: "I could understand the contents of the novel," four students chose "I strongly agree (5)," and two students chose "I agree (4)." On the second statement: "I was interested in the novel," three students chose "I strongly agree (5)," and three students chose "I agree (4)." Concerning the third statement: "I was interested in a retold version of British and American literature," four students chose "I strongly agree (5)," and two students chose "I agree (4)." Lastly, regarding the fourth statement: "I was content with the class," two students chose "I strongly agree (5)," three students chose "I agree (4)," and one student chose "Neither agree nor disagree (3)." As the results revealed, the students were interested in the teaching material and ultimately satisfied with the class procedure.

3.2.2 Instructor's observation of the class

Two noteworthy outcomes were identified after the class was completed. To begin with, it was surprising that a Chinese student actively took part in the class and appreciated the class management greatly. In the class, a translation activity from English to Japanese was seldom given, unlike traditional reading classes in Japan. Instead, the instructor used mainly a handout devised for the class and required the students to answer the questions on it.

The three types of questions on the handout (multiple-choice, extract, and written answers) were all written in English. As a result, there were few tasks for the students to undertake in Japanese. This situation made it less stressful for the student whose native language was Chinese. According to a survey by the Japan Students Services Organization (JASSO), 208,379 foreign students were studying in Japan in 2015. 41,396 of those students were enrolled in graduate schools and 67,472 in undergraduate schools. In the near future, Japanese universities may be asked to accept more students whose native language is not Japanese. Judging from this trend, it will become more difficult to introduce the Grammar-Translation Method under the assumption that all students are monolingual.

Secondly, the students' interest toward a retold version of British and American literature was also surprising. It is probable that those students were not interested in reading a novel written in English, or even in Japanese, and had no experience finishing a whole English novel before they took part in the class. Surprisingly, however, the students were intrigued by Tess's turbulent life and devoutly read page after page of the retold version of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. The main textbook of the class, the Graded Reader version of this Victorian masterwork, contained all crucial events in the original *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*. For instance, it included a traumatic scene where Tess was sexually violated by Alec, the birth and death of Tess' natural child named Sorrow, her son's baptism which Tess performed, Angel's voyage to Brazil, and Tess's turmoil at Flintcom-Ash. It also contained Tess's murder of Alec and her last journey of escape with Angel. These events were crucial and necessary for the plot development of this masterpiece. The Macmillan version of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* did not omit these crucial events. All of the exciting and thrilling events in the original were described in full detail, one after another in the 12 chapters of the Graded Reader version, in simplified English. These events sparked the students' interest into thinking, "What will happen next," which motivated the students to read on. As Dörnyei paid attention to affective aspects of literature and concluded that literature made a positive motivation climate (Dörnyei, 2005), the instructor also felt the same power of literature when she watched the students reading the Graded Reader eagerly and voluntarily.

However, there was a matter that required attention for a better class management. Quite a number of students in Japan are used to understanding written passages by using Japanese word-for-word translation. Consequently, some students wanted to get the Japanese translation of every sentence. But what was most important for the students was the context behind the reading, not the translation. Therefore, the instructor stated the importance of the content. Once the students heard the instructor's advice, they were relieved and worked on the handout with greater ease. From an educational perspective, however, all teachers should keep in mind that Japanese students tend to be worried about the lack of translation from English to Japanese.

3.3 Future Pedagogical Suggestions

As the previous section has shown, although the number of students was strictly limited, all of them were interested in simplified versions of British and American literature. These results indicated that Graded Readers retelling English literature have strong pedagogical potential. This section examines whether the Graded Reader series used in Japan can meet this expectation from the students or not.

Graded Readers are teaching materials, which are written with controlled vocabulary and grammar. Their genre covers a broader spectrum ranging from novels and essays to biographies of famous people like David

Beckham and Princess Diana. In Japan, the most popular Graded Reader series are the Cambridge English Readers, Macmillan Readers, Oxford Bookworms Library, and Pearson English Readers (formerly Penguin English Readers). Graded Readers of these four series are categorized mainly by headwords. For example, Cambridge English Readers has seven levels, Macmillan Readers has six levels, Oxford Bookworms Library has seven levels and Pearson English Readers has seven levels. Among them, only Cambridge English Readers consists mainly of newly written Graded Readers. In order to assess how many of the other three Graded Reader series have simplified versions of British and American literature, the author tallied the number of Graded Readers of English literature written between 1500 to 1930 in Macmillan Readers, Oxford Bookworms Library and Pearson English Readers. At a side note, these three Graded Reader series are sold all over the world with regional adaptations. This means that learners around the world are exposed to Graded Readers that differ quite a bit from country to country. For this survey, the latest catalogue for the school year 2016/2017, which the three publishers made for the Japanese market, was used when the data was collected.

Among the 15 Graded Readers at the starter level (300 basic words) of Macmillan Readers, one Graded Reader gave a retold version of *Gulliver's Travel* by Jonathan Swift. Among the 35 Graded Readers at the beginner level (600 basic words), the number of retold versions of works such as *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë and *Northanger Abbey* by Jane Austen amounted to 18. Among the 32 Graded Readers at the elementary level (1100 basic words), 16 masterpieces such as *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson and *The Picture of Dorian Gray* by Oscar Wilde were retold. The pre-intermediate level (1400 basic words) included 29 Graded Readers, and 13 masterpieces such as *Persuasion* by Jane Austen and *The Tenant of Wildfell Hall* by Anne Brontë were simplified. Among the 52 Graded Readers at the intermediate level (1600 basic words), 18 masterpieces including *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen and *The Merchant of Venice* by William Shakespeare were retold. The upper level (2200 basic words) had 23 Graded Readers, and 12 masterpieces such as *Moby-Dick* by Herman Melville and *Middlemarch* by George Eliot were retold. In total, among the 186 Graded Readers of Macmillan Readers, 78 books were the retold versions of classical literature. The percentage of simplified versions amounted to 41.93%.

From the Oxford Bookworms Library, there were two retold versions such as *A Connecticut Yankee in King Arthur's Court* by Mark Twain and *The Ransom of Red Chief* by O. Henry among the 14 Graded Readers at the starter level (250 headwords). Among the 35 Graded Readers at stage one (400 headwords), eight masterpieces such as *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* by Mark Twain, *The Withered Arm* by Thomas Hardy and *The Wizard of Oz* by L. Frank Baum were retold. Among the 40 Graded Readers at stage two (700 headwords), there were 17 simplified versions such as *Anne of Green Gables* by L. M. Montgomery, *Robinson Crusoe* by Daniel Defoe, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* by Lewis Carroll and *The Pit and the Pendulum* by Edgar Allan Poe. Among the 40 Graded Readers at stage three (1000 headwords), 17 masterpieces including *A Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens, *Ethan Frome* by Edith Wharton and *The Secret Garden* by Frances Hodgson Burnett were retold. Among the 37 Graded Readers at stage four (1400 headwords), there were 18 retold versions of novels such as *Cranford* by Elizabeth Gaskell, *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott, and *The Scarlet Letter* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. Among the 23 Graded Readers at stage five (1800 headwords), 11 masterpieces including *The Age of Innocence* by Edith Wharton, *The Garden Party* by Katherine Mansfield, *Little Dorrit* by Charles Dickens, *Sense and Sensibility* by Jane Austen and *Wuthering Heights* by Emily Brontë were simplified. Among the 21 Graded

Readers at stage six (2400 headwords), nine masterpieces such as *Jane Eyre* by Charlotte Brontë, *A Passage to India* by E. M. Forster, *Vanity Fair* by William Makepeace Thackeray, *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins, and *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens were retold. In conclusion, out of the 210 books, 82 titles were the simplified versions. Oxford Bookworms Library had a total percentage of 39.04% that were simplified versions of literary works.

Among the 10 Graded Readers at the easy starter level (200 headwords) of Pearson English Readers, there was no retold version of classic literature. However, three masterpieces including *The House of the Seven Gables* by Nathaniel Hawthorne and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow & Rip Van Winkle* by Washington Irving were retold among the 18 Graded Readers at level one (300 headwords), and six masterpieces such as *Persuasion* by Jane Austen and *The Prince and the Pauper* by Mark Twain were simplified among the 19 Graded Readers at level two (600 headwords). Among the 24 Graded Readers at level three (1200 headwords), there were 13 retold versions of works such as *David Copperfield* by Charles Dickens, *The Black Cat* by Edgar Allan Poe, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson, and *The Turn of the Screw* by Henry James. Among the 14 Graded Readers at level four (1700 headwords), there were five retold versions of literature that included *The Adventures of Sherlock Homes* by Arthur Conan Doyle and *The Canterville Ghost* by Oscar Wilde. Among the 14 Graded Readers at level five (2300 headwords), seven masterpieces including *The Mayor of Casterbridge* by Thomas Hardy, *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens and *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald were simplified, and among the 10 Graded Readers at level six (3000 headwords), four masterpieces such as *Oliver Twist* by Charles Dickens and *The Woman in White* by Wilkie Collins were retold. In total, Pearson English Readers had 38 simplified versions among the 109 books. The simplified versions accounted for 34.86 %.

In addition, these three publishers also had a wide variety of literature outside the English-speaking world. They included not only retold versions of British and American literature but also ones of French, German, and Russian literature. For example, Macmillan Readers had *The Black Tulip* (beginner level) and *The Treasure of Monte Cristo* (pre-intermediate level) by Alexandre Dumas, *Heidi* (pre-intermediate level) by Johanna Spyri, *The Red and the Black* (intermediate level) by Stendhal, and *Thérèse Raquin* (intermediate level) by Émile Zola. Further, the Oxford Bookworms Library had *Les Misérables* (stage 1) by Victor Hugo and *The Phantom of the Opera* (stage 1) by Gaston Leroux. Lastly, Pearson English Readers included *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (level 1), *The Mysterious Island* (level 2), and *Around the World in Eighty Days* (level 5), all written by Jules Verne, *The Three Musketeers* (level 2) by Alexandre Dumas, and *Anna Karenina* (level 6) by Leo Tolstoy.

Furthermore, it is notable that Oxford Bookworms Library contained several simplified versions of relatively minor English novelists, unlike Macmillan Readers and Pearson English Readers. For example, this Grade Reader series actively retold little known yet renowned works like *The Monkeys' Paw* (stage 1) by W.W. Jacobs, *Tales of the Five Towns* (stage 2) by Arnold Bennett, *Black Beauty* (stage 4) by Anna Sewell and *Lorna Doone* (stage 4) by R. D. Blackmore. As a result of the prevailing New Historicism and Feminist theories in literary criticism, the “canon” of English literature has been reconsidered. Learners will be able to experience a variety of English literature through these Graded Readers of minor novelists.

After close examination, it became clear that the three major Graded Reader series, Macmillan Readers, Oxford Bookworms Library and Pearson English Readers, contained numerous simplified versions of British and

American literature from elementary to advanced levels, as well as newly written Graded Reader content. In addition to this, they included Graded Readers that were adopted from masterpieces of French, German and Russian literature and works by minor English novelists. These facts show that retold versions of classic literature in these three Graded Reader series are so abundant in terms of quality and quantity that they should be able to satisfy the learner's appetite for reading a simplified version of literature.

4. Conclusion

In this paper, previous studies were introduced about complex vocabulary in original texts and the Grammar-Translation Method, which often tended to be used and criticized when an original text was introduced in a language classroom. Difficulties in choosing the original as the main textbook were pointed out. In addition, a class was shown, in which a Graded Reader of *Tess of the d'Urbervilles* with simplified words was used as the main textbook and the Grammar-Translation method was not applied often. In the last session of the class, a students' interest survey was conducted and it became clear that all students who took part in the class were interested in retold versions of British and American literature. Following on from these positive results, the number of simplified versions of the major Graded Reader series was tallied and it was exemplified that many masterpieces of classic literature were retold in the major Graded Reader series, citing specific figures. From these observations, it can be concluded that these simplified texts have infinite possibilities in a language classroom in Japanese universities.

However, there is a problem that still needs to be solved. Nation, presented in Chapter 2, pointed out the difficulty of vocabulary in an original text and suggested that teachers introduce simplified versions to give students "meaningful-input" and promote their "fluency-development." Interestingly, however, he approved of the partial use of the Grammar-Translation Method with language-focused learning and extensive reading.

The classic procedure for intensive reading is the grammar-translation approach where the teacher works with the learners, using the first language to explain the meaning of a text, sentence by sentence. Used on suitable texts and following useful principles, this can be a very useful procedure as long as it is only a part of the reading programme and is complemented by other language-focused learning and by extensive reading for language development and extensive reading for fluency development. (Nation, 2008, p.25)

When a teacher uses the Grammar-Translation Method in a limited way in a class, an original text from literature, especially one from modern literature, can be an effective teaching tool with careful consideration, because it contains a variety of useful and authentic expressions. It would therefore require consideration on how to introduce an intensive-reading activity of an original text of literature into a reading class based on extensive reading of a Graded Reader.

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