

# Using Authentic Texts in 'English Reading Understanding' Classes at Japanese Universities

## 日本の大学において英語の授業でオーセンティックなテキストを使うことについて

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### 1. Authentic Texts vs. Artificial Teaching Materials

Reading understanding is an important part of the English education of Japanese universities. Many university graduates will in their future working environment be probably more exposed to written English than spoken English. On this background it is important that students are receiving sufficient training to properly understand written texts.

This presentation will be advocating the use of authentic texts in 'Reading Understanding' classes at Japanese universities. It will demonstrate the advantage such authentic texts are having over the edited and artificial texts which are featured in the countless textbooks that are each year thrown on the market by publishing houses more interested in financial profit than the intellectual needs of their customers.

### 2. What are Authentic Texts?

Authentic texts are original texts that are genuine, representing 'realistic' language and represent the written, but also or spoken aspects of everyday life of the English speaking country where they were produced. Authentic materials expose students to a linguistic complexity, which textbooks rarely feature.

Another great advantage of authentic texts is that they also offer a wider range of topics to debate than the prepared and edited texts in textbooks: In textbooks topics/aspect of the featured texts students and teacher will talk about in class have been prepared in advance by the author of the textbook.

Authentic texts in their complexity bring an element of spontaneity into the classroom environment, which is intellectually highly stimulating and raises students' motivation to further study English.

### 3. Finding and Preparing Authentic Teaching Materials.

For teachers in need of teaching material for their 'Reading Understanding' classes there is an abundance of free authentic material on the internet available, ranging from newspaper articles to literary texts of different genres.

This poster presentation will inform about sources where to find teaching materials the presenter regarded as especially useful for the needs of his students.

There will also be a demonstration of ideas on how to prepare authentic teaching materials like newspaper articles and unedited, literary texts for such a 'Reading Understanding' class. Furthermore, strategies of leading students to consider and debate a wider framework issues addressed within the texts read in class in.

Finally, a demonstration of the presenter's 'Reading Understanding' class held this semester at Tokushima University will be given.

### 4. Authentic Texts 2: Using 'Pulp Fiction' in 'Reading Understanding' Classes

This presentation will also introduce a new kind of authentic teaching material for use in a 'Reading

'Understanding' class: Texts that were originally published in the early 20th century in American pulp fiction magazines like 'Weird Tales' or 'Argosy'.

While many stories published in these magazines are of admittedly very low or hardly any literary quality, there is also a significant number of stories that can be used in 'Reading Understanding' classes. These stories feature several advantages: They offer high entertainment value and raise students' motivation to work with the text.

Furthermore, written nearly 100 years ago pulp fiction texts feature at times politically non correct content and language, something that can be used for discussions as well as teaching students proper language. Finally, these stories mirror the tastes, interests and 'wishful thinking' of 'regular' readers of these times, allowing Japanese students also to gain insight in American life and culture.