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Reading Lessons for Advanced-Level Learners Using Modern Japanese Literature
Learners' and Teachers' Observations from Portfolios

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Abstract This paper describes the program of advanced-level reading lessons carried out in the Department of Japanese Studies at Hamburg University in 2014. We will first sketch a framework of the lesson. To enable students to study autonomously, we began to compile a portfolio in order to look back on studies throughout the semester, focusing on reading comprehension and presentations during lessons. In this paper, we will describe the structure of this portfolio and give an overview of individual students' goals and reflections of the semester as a whole, as well as the records that each student kept of their preparation for and observations regarding presentation assignments.

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1   Introduction

A recent trend in teaching Japanese as a foreign language is to focus on the development of communication skills as the primary learning objective, which, in the sphere of reading comprehension, is evident since increasing emphasis is being placed on extracting information necessary for communication or accomplishing given tasks, using scanning and skimming strategies.

This accounts for the on-going tendency in the selection of learning material for intermediate and advanced level lessons – in which relatively lengthy passages are read – to use texts that are written primarily to serve the purpose of conveying knowledge and information such as articles on current affairs taken from the Internet, newspapers or journals, and academic papers. By contrast, literary texts are being perceived rather negatively since they are believed to be unsuitable for the training of communication skills: as a matter of fact, the language of literature is predominantly considered to be unique, as discussed by Takahashi (2009) in the context of English education, and literary texts are often associated with the grammar-translation method.

Since its founding, studies undertaken in the Department of Japanese Studies at Hamburg University have centred on classical literature that, together with political studies, still constitutes one of the key areas of research today. Thus, it is natural for the students enrolled in Japanese Studies to consider literature as a subject area of further research, while they also tend to adopt learning materials taken from literature with some degree of familiarity. In the meantime, the opportunity to study in Japan for at least half a year as required to obtain the degree enables students, when they read, to perform an analysis based on their personal experiences or to envisage specific situations that can be anticipated in a Japanese setting.

In this paper, we will first offer an overview of advanced-level reading lessons for Japanese Studies majors using the unaltered, original text of a literary work. Then, we will discuss the portfolio programme introduced during the Winter Semester of 2014 and examine the effects on students' learning observed over one semester. We will review the framework of the portfolio, which was implemented as a potential aid to encourage students' autonomous learning, giving details on the elements provided from the teaching side such as learning the goals of the course, points to focus on when reading, student assignments and assessment method. By analysing observations and reflections from both students and teaching staff, we wish to examine from various perspectives the learning outcomes of one semester of reading lessons using unaltered, original texts from modern literature.

2 Reading Lessons using Literary Works: Learning Goals and Assessment

2.1 Learning Goals of Reading Lessons using Literary Works

First of all, we will present the learning goals of the reading course. Depending on the semester in which the course is held, the majority of course participants may have already finished their exchange period in Japan, or may have yet to leave to Japan. In either case, primary emphasis is placed on acquiring the ability to independently read and understand literary texts that have not been specifically modified for learners. The first step to achieve this is to learn and understand the vocabulary as well as the grammar that are used in the texts, and to acquire techniques so that students can solve their own questions using various tools.

In addition, the course aims to give an understanding of the characteristics that are unique to literary texts and to provide an opportunity to raise awareness about the significance thereof. These are, in detail:

– To understand expressions that are unique to written dialogue, written language, or literary Japanese.
– To visualise text, i.e. to create mental pictures or images based on the text that has been read, including gestures and movements of people and animals, scenery and landscapes.
– To identify factors that are of great significance to understand the text, but that cannot be investigated using tools, unlike vocabulary or grammar. These include identifying speakers in dialogue, restoring omitted elements in the text, linguistic expressions related to inversion and viewpoint, and entities indicated by demonstratives such as こ ko, そ so, あ a.

The text will be read while attention is paid to the above points. Once the students have fully understood the text, we will proceed to the literary reading of the text, where opinions will be exchanged with regard to possible interpretations of the text, predictions of the ending and so on. In this course, we are determined that the goals of reading lessons using literary works have been achieved once students have increased their awareness about different possibilities in the interpretation of a text through the aforementioned process.

2.2   Reading Lessons Using Literary Works:
    Lesson Plan and Selection of the Text

Our lessons start with the goals presented in the previous section and continue for one semester. It should be noted that, after the first couple of sessions, students will take over the responsibility of conducting lessons themselves. More precisely, a section of the chosen text will be assigned to each lesson according to a reading plan created at the start of the course so that the students will be able to prepare a presentation in advance and give lessons in turns. Using only Japanese in principle, the 'presenter' discusses his or her section in the text by giving explanations or posing questions concerning vocabulary, grammar, context and interpretations of the text, while confirming the understanding of other participants. Other students are likewise required to attend the lesson prepared so as to participate in discussions and compare their own interpretation of the text to that of their peers.

Now, we will describe how the learning material is selected, exploring the aspects taken into account in the selection process. There are pros and cons in relation to the use of an extract from a long piece and, likewise, of a short, complete piece as a learning material. However, since finishing a short piece will enable students to exchange opinions and questions concerning the entire piece, during class time as well as in their papers, it is common to use pieces that can be finished during the course. At the same time, it is important that the chosen text provides an appropriate length for a week's reading when divided by the number of participants. On the one hand, in terms of vocabulary, it is often observed that seemingly difficult words can be readily understood by simply consulting a dictionary; on the other hand, even when one lacks the knowledge of certain words or expressions used in the text, an approximate meaning can occasionally be guessed provided that the development of the overall story is rather straightforward. For this reason, the difficulty level of vocabulary is not considered to be a criterion for text selection.

When examining the contents of the text, we ensure that the subject matter is one that more or less attracts students' interest, while it is equally important that the story progresses with an agreeable – somewhat speedy – tempo throughout the text. This is because having an interest in the actual contents of the text plays a critical role in motivating students to proceed with reading. In addition to this, we select a text that includes a large amount of dialogue and in which the latter plays an important part. Furthermore, it is preferred that the text has a structure that is more complex and not merely descriptive, yet not overly complicated. Another condition we take into consideration is the implied meaning behind linguistic expressions used in a text, including expressions of emotions or states of mind, and the depiction of scenery.

It must be observed that it is certainly not easy to find a text that satisfies all the above criteria. In addition, we must take into account that the overall linguistic level of the class varies from one semester to another, not to mention interests among student: as a consequence, we renew learning material every semester accordingly.

2.3 Assessment Method of Reading Lessons Using Literary Works

At the end of the term, having read the entire text through a semester, a paper assignment will be given to students, who are asked to reread and analyse the overall text. The assignment requires them to gain an insight into the text as a whole; for instance, they may analyse the main characters' changing states of mind or how an essential event in the story affects the characters. Students reread the text from the given perspectives and report how they have interpreted or understood the text in their papers using their native language. Now, the aspects to be taken into consideration for the assessment of the paper are:
  – Understanding of the overall development of the text.
  – Whether the text was reread from a perspective suitable for the assignment.
  – Relevance of quotations from the text to support their arguments.
  – Whether quoted parts were correctly understood and translated.

Moreover, if the subject matter has already been handled in lessons, it will be also taken into consideration whether the student has developed his or her argument on the basis of what has been discussed or taught in the class. While accuracy is the primary criterion for assessing comprehension from a linguistic point of view, inclusion of personal opinion or observations will serve an additional basis for the assessment of text interpretation.

3 Reading Lessons in Winter Semester 2014

3.1 Course Overview

So far, we have offered an overview of a typical course being taught every semester. From here on, we will focus on the course taught in the Winter Semester of 2014 as our case study. In this semester, a total number of 22 students took part in the course: 18 of them were in the 7th semester of a Bachelor programme (for whom this course was obligatory), 1 student in the 9th semester of a Bachelor programme and 3 in the 1st semester of a Master's programme (the course was optional for these 4). A lecturer

and a teaching assistant (hereafter referred to as TA) took charge of the lessons and were given different responsibilities. Lessons were held once a week for 14 weeks (excluding Christmas holidays) and the duration of each lesson was 90 minutes. In each lesson, a text equivalent to approximately 4 paperback pages in length was studied and 2 students gave a presentation, each using half of the total lesson time.

All the participants had had a long-term experience of living in Japan and most of them were due to start writing a thesis to complete their degree programme soon after this course, which implied that they would no longer be attending Japanese language lessons from the following semester onwards. Thus, at the start of the semester, students were told that one of the learning goals was to acquire the ability to conduct self-directed learning. It is against this background that we introduced the portfolio method as a potential instrument to guide students towards an autonomous learning. A set of conditions favoured the implementation of the portfolio, including the availability of a TA and that the level of Japanese language competence was fairly consistent among participants. Details of our twofold portfolio approach – one part concerning the semester as a whole and the other focusing on individual presentations – will be given in a later section.

It must be noted that the TA has contributed greatly to the preparation of each student's presentation; prior to his or her presentation, the presenter is required to study and understand the assigned part of the text in detail, even though it is quite difficult for a student to thoroughly prepare a presentation on his or her own. This task gives those students who are otherwise not proactive in terms of participation in the classroom a chance to explain and pose questions in Japanese regarding the assigned section of the text. We instructed students on how to prepare the presentation with the assistance of the TA, as described later. It was assumed that the other students had prepared before attending the lesson.

3.2 Text Used: "Xie"

A short novel titled "Xie" (獬　シエ Shie), included in *Hajimete no bungaku* (Literature for beginners, Asada 2007) published by Bungeishunju-sha (first appearing in *Tsubaki-Hime* in September of 2003, published by Bunshunbunko) was selected as the text for the reading course in the Winter Semester of 2014.

This novel tells a story about a woman named Suzuko and of her encounter with a legendary creature called Xie. Having lost her pet cat named Rin that she kept for 9 years, Suzuko, a lonely woman with no family, is given Xie from a mysterious pet shop owner. The story depicts a series of events occurring in the several days they spend together as well as the leading character's inner growth. It displays aspects of a fantasy novel and

features the depiction of scenery, characters' states of mind and feelings throughout the narrative in both dialogue and internal monologue.

This piece, consisting of 45 pages with 15 lines per page, was selected as the course material for the following reasons:

First, this novel contains clear fictional elements in its setting: a legendary animal endowed with the ability to distinguish between good and bad people, and which survives by fulfilling people's woes. Second, a good deal of descriptive writing about personal memories and feelings is featured in the text; for example, the secret surrounding the birth of the leading character Suzuko and the inferiority complex she feels about her life in general. This novel explores a young woman's view of marriage and life as well as reactions from the people around her, revealing in the background common views in Japanese society, which is thought to provide possible topics for further discussion. Furthermore, the text includes a foreshadowing to later events hidden in the narrative, which is thought to be enjoyable for students to read and interpret.

In the actual reading process, the main goal in the comprehension of a text was to understand its vocabulary, grammar and syntactic structures; we also aimed to build correct linguistic comprehension by understanding essential elements such as omission, inversion and the viewpoint of a sentence. Students analysed emotions and intentions as indicated by the depiction of facial expressions and gestures, and exchanged opinions during classes. At the same time, they were able to make assumptions about personalities and human relations among the characters on the basis of specific words, expressions or a speech style used in dialogue. Furthermore, discussions were held on a regular basis to deal with topics such as the course of events, characters' reactions or the predictions of consequences in the story.

3.3   Assignment and Assessment

Having finished reading the complete text over a period of a semester, according to the plans and the method described above, students were given a paper assignment to be completed in 3 weeks. This assignment required students to read the text once more and summarise in their native language the kind of animal Xie is (e.g. appearance, character and temperament) and the significance Xie has in Suzuko's life. In so far, students were further required to make reference to and provide translations of parts in the text in which these aspects are well described, and to add personal opinions to explain their argument. Since this was an obligatory subject, it was necessary to award grades in addition to a simple pass-or-fail evaluation for course credits. For this purpose, we adopted a grading system that combines the assessment of the paper report and the portfolio,

allotting 90% weight to the former and 10% to the latter in the calculation of a final grade. The following criteria were considered for assessment and each item was evaluated on a scale of 1 to 5:

1. Structure and length.
2. Validity of argument/discussion concerning the given topics.
3. Personal opinions and originality.
4. Length and relevance of quotations.
5. Accuracy in understanding and quotations.

All the 22 students who submitted the assignment achieved the passing score of 60 or more, with an average score of 71.3 before being merged with the assessment of portfolios.

Instead of simply discussing the topics provided by the teacher or the TA, some students also developed a personal interpretation of the text or a rather sceptical or critical view towards it, or posed further questions in their papers, all of which indicate that they have not only regarded the text as a mere learning material for Japanese but also developed an approach to read it as a piece of literature. Whilst there were some inaccuracies or confusion in students' understanding of finer details, it is reasonable to state that most students have achieved a satisfactory level of comprehension of the text as a whole.

In contrast, during the assessment of the portfolio, due to its main function as a self-review of students' learning progress, we considered personal remarks to be unfitting for assessment and we restricted assessment criteria to the following 3 points that relate to the carrying out of the course:

1. Submission of a total of 4 assignments given during the course.
2. Whether the student has carried out the following at the start and the end of the semester: self-evaluation of skills, consideration of learning purposes and tools, and reflections on his or her own study.
3. Whether records were kept of each student's preparation for and self-review of his or her presentation. The portfolios assessed in Winter Semester of 2014 gave a class average of 4.2 out of 5 grade points, resulting in an average of 79.7 points as a final course grade.

4   Implementation of the portfolio

We now move on to discuss our portfolio programme and implementation methodology in more detail. First, we will introduce the structure and components of the portfolio, followed by a summary of the results. Then, we will review our findings from the implementation of the portfolio and present our conclusions.

4.1 Structure of the Portfolio

As mentioned earlier in section 3, the portfolio used in this course can be broadly divided into two categories: one concerning the semester as a whole and the other focusing on individual students' presentations. More specifically, it consists of a total of 4 worksheets: 2 concerning the entire semester were introduced at the start and the end of the semester, and the other 2 focusing on the presentation were used before and after the presentation. Figure 1 illustrates the lesson plan over the semester and the components of the portfolio.

Portfolio worksheet 1: Objectives before starting the course
Portfolio worksheet 2: Records of the preparation for the presentation
Portfolio worksheet 3: Review of presentation
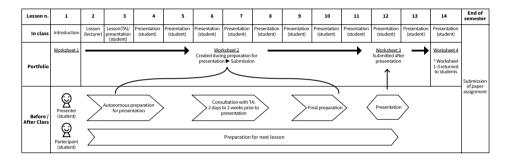Portfolio worksheet 4: Self-evaluation at the end of the course

Lesson n.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	End of semester
In class	Introduction	Lesson (lecturer)	Lesson(TA)/ presentation (student)	Presentation (student)	Presentation (student)	Presentation (student)	Presentation (student)	Presentation (student)	Presentation (student)	Presentation (student)	Presentation (student)	Presentation (student)	Presentation (student)	Presentation (student)	
Portfolio	Worksheet 1				Worksheet 2 Created during preparation for presentation ▶ Submission							Worksheet 3 Submitted after presentation		Worksheet 4 * Worksheet 1-3 returned to students	Submission of paper assignment
Before / After Class — Presenter (student)		Autonomous preparation for presentation			Consultation with TA: 2 days to 2 weeks prior to presentation				Final preparation			Presentation			
Participant (student)		Preparation for next lesson													

Figure 1. Lesson Plan and Components of the Portfolio

4.2 Components of the Portfolio

The following sections will describe each worksheet of the portfolio in detail as well as how it was implemented. Note that students were allowed to complete the worksheets in either Japanese or their native language.

4.2.1 Portfolio Worksheet 1: Objectives before Starting the Course (Appendix 1)

The purpose of this worksheet is to give students an opportunity to objectively assess their own Japanese competence at the start of the semester as well as to articulate aims and challenges related to participating in the lessons. This worksheet was introduced to the class at the start of the semester: after an explanation of the purpose and the methodology of the portfolio, all students were asked to complete this first worksheet. Ques-

tions were created in advance by the lecturer and the TA in the 'can-do' list form based on the learning goals described in section 2.1 of this paper. Since this course was taught as a part of a reading comprehension training, we instructed students, orally as well as by means of supplied worksheets, to answer the questions exclusively from the perspective of their reading competency in Japanese. The questions involved the following spheres:

a. I know how to read Kanji.
b. I can understand the meaning of words.
c. I can understand the sentence as a whole through comprehension of grammar and sentence structure.
d. I can identify and restore omitted elements to understand a sentence.
e. I can understand the author's message written using expressions that are not my native language.
f. I can detect difficult passages and understand them.
g. I have adequate background knowledge of the Japanese culture to understand its literature.
h. Reserved for students' own criteria.
i. Reserved for students' own criteria.
j. Reserved for students' own criteria.

Students perform a self-evaluation by rating each item on a scale of 1 (cannot do) to 5 (can do), on the basis of their own, non-standardized criteria. They are free to leave comments or notes in the designated areas beside items a) to g), as well as to propose further items that they consider to be important in sections h), i) and j).

Next, from the above criteria in a) to j), students select items they particularly wish to improve through the lessons and describe how they intend to achieve this with respect to each selected item. The lecturer and the TA collect the worksheets once the students have completed them.

4.2.2   Portfolio Worksheet 2: Records of the Preparation for the Presentation (Appendices 2 & 3)

The purpose of this worksheet is to keep records of the preparatory process of the presentation, helping the presenting student to grasp the key points of the learning assignment and the presentation by reviewing his or her initial weaknesses or lack in understanding. This worksheet is supplied to each student as he or she starts preparing for the presentation and is submitted to the lecturer or the TA after the presentation once the student has completed it.

First, the student makes a photocopy of the pages concerning the presentation and underlines the parts that he or she did not understand dur-

ing the preparation using a straight line and numbering them in order. Next, the student copies these underlined parts into the designated space on the left side of the worksheet and prepares questions to ask during a Q&A session with the TA. The questions are discussed later on during the consultation session when the student writes solutions or other findings into the space on the right side. If the student notices any mistakes in his or her initial interpretation after discussing with the TA, he or she will underline the corresponding passage in the text with a wavy line (~) and mark their order with letters of the alphabet. Again, the parts underlined with a wavy line are copied into the left side of the worksheet, and the student's observations are written on the right. With the help of this worksheet, the student proceeds further with the preparation by reviewing the elements related to his or her initial mistakes or misunderstanding, and putting together the key questions to ask other students during his or her presentation.

4.2.3 Portfolio Worksheet 3: Review of the Presentation (Appendix 4)

The purpose of this worksheet is to review the presentation in an objective manner as well as to summarise observations regarding the presentation. It is supplied to individual students on the day of the presentation and is to be submitted to the lecturer or the TA during the following lesson.

This worksheet is to be written in prose in relation to the following 3 points: successes in the presentation, difficult or challenging parts of the presentation, and observations from the presentation (e.g. of oneself being a presenter or feedback from the class, etc.).

4.2.4 Portfolio Worksheet 4: Self-evaluation at the End of the Course (Appendix 5)

This worksheet aims to provide students with an opportunity to review their participation in the course over the semester and perform an objective self-assessment at the end of it, whereby they can identify accomplishments with respect to the objectives established at the beginning as well as identify goals to progress further. The worksheet is supplied to the entire class at once during the final lesson.

The students objectively self-evaluate their end-of-course Japanese competence by answering the same 'can-do' questions asked in portfolio worksheet 1. To facilitate the students to reflect on their participation in the course, the previous three worksheets, namely, 'Objectives before starting the course', 'Records of the preparation for the presentation' and 'Review of presentation' are temporarily returned to them. After performing a self-

evaluation in the same way as at the start of the course, they can include further comments in response to the questions such as to what extent the 'Objectives upon start of the course' have been achieved; how they evaluate the achievement plan of the objectives set out at the beginning of the semester; or what kinds of text they hope to read in the future and for what purpose.

Worksheet 1 to 4 were collected either at the end of the lesson from the students who finished writing during the lesson, or were alternatively submitted together with the end-of-semester paper assignment from those students who wished to take more time to complete their entry to the worksheet or keep the portfolios as reference for their papers.

5 Results from Portfolios

This section analyses the collected portfolios and presents a summary of our observations for each worksheet. Note that, although 22 students participated in the course as mentioned in section 3.1, our analysis takes into account a total of 21 students since one student failed to submit some of the required worksheets.

5.1 Portfolio Worksheet 1: Objectives before Starting the Course

We will begin our analysis with worksheet 1. After discussing the method used for the self-evaluation of Japanese competence, we will observe which areas students hoped to improve in particular through the course as well as how they have planned their study in this context. Although it is assumed that each student has a different yardstick to base his or her evaluation on, in order to grasp the feedback from the class as a whole, we will calculate the average score (on a scale of 1 to 5) for each competency area as well as indicate the areas that are of particular interest for improvement, as summarised in table 1.

Table 1. Start-of-semester class average of self-evaluation scores and areas of interest for improvement (n=21, multiple selection possible)

Questions		Self-evaluation scores: class average /5	No. of students who selected this criterion for improvement /21
a	I know how to read Kanji	2.6	10
b	I can understand the meaning of words	3.2	9
c	I can understand the sentence as a whole through comprehension of grammar and sentence structure	3.6	5
d	I can identify and restore omitted elements to understand a sentence	3.0	14
e	I can understand the author's message written in a language of which I am not a native speaker	3.3	5
f	I can detect difficult passages and understand them	4.2	2
g	I have adequate background knowledge of the Japanese culture to understand its literature	3.3	4

As shown in table 1, the lowest score was given to a), "I know how to read Kanji" (class average of 2.6), highlighting the need shared among participants for improving their Kanji competence. This is followed by d), "I can identify and restore omitted elements to understand a sentence" (class average of 3.0). In contrast, f), "I can research difficult passages and understand them", received the highest average score at 4.2, indicating that each student has a learning strategy of his or her own and is adequately satisfied with it in practice.

When asked which competency areas they particularly wished to improve, the most commonly selected area was d), "I can identify and restore omitted elements to understand a sentence" (14 students), followed by a), "I know how to read Kanji" (10 students), and b), "I can understand the meaning of words" (9 students). Again, similarly to the aforementioned results of the 1-to-5 scale self-evaluation, it seems reasonable to conclude that most of the students are confident with their own learning strategies.

It should be mentioned that some students provided additional items and articulated personal objectives using the free space in h), i) and j), including the ability to read the text more quickly, the ability to understand the text without consulting a dictionary for vocabulary and Kanji, the ability to understand onomatopoeia, and the ability to read and summarise a text.

5.2   Portfolio Worksheet 2: Records of Preparing for the Presentation

In this section, we will summarise the characteristics observed on worksheet 2 of the portfolio that was introduced during the preparation. We will categorise responses from the students according to the 'can-do' question items of worksheet 1 and give examples of passages with which students found difficulty along with additional comments.

5.2.1   Knowledge of Kanji Readings

It was observed that, with the help of dictionaries, many of the students were able to find the correct reading for Kanji. However, the worksheets also revealed students' difficulty to choose the most natural reading option out of multiple possibilities or to determine the appropriate option based on the context (example 1 below). Other mistakes or questions from students centred around 'sequential voicing' (*rendaku* 連濁), as demonstrated in example 2.

Example 1: 外見 *gaiken*, 'appearance' (161)
     Despite the help of dictionaries, it appears that it was difficult for students to determine the correct reading between *gaiken* and *sotomi*.

Example 2: 全品 *zenpin*, 給食係 *kyūshokugakari*, 'lunch duty' (161)
     ぜんひん *zenhin*, きゅうしょくかかり *kyūshokukakari*, respectively.

5.2.2   Knowledge of the Meaning of Words

It was evident from the collected worksheets that students had prepared for the lesson in terms of vocabulary, in the same way as for Kanji readings; that is, by consulting dictionaries about meanings or asking a Japanese native speaker. At the same time, however, our results revealed limitations associated with self-teaching in understanding subtle nuances of onomatopoeic words or distinguishing idioms as presented in examples 3 to 5.

Example 3: ふむふむ *fumufumu*; ぼそぼそ *bosoboso*; ちょこんと *chokonto*, 'small and quiet' (158)
     Despite the use of dictionaries, subtle shades of the meaning of these words were not fully understood.

Example 4: 一目置いてる *ichimoku oiteru*, 'have respect to, yield the palm to' (158)
     Failing to recognise 一目置く *ichimoku oku* as an idiom, some students

read 一目 *hitome*, misinterpreting it as 'a glance'.

Example 5: 立派なビルに囲まれて見る影もない *rippa na biru ni kakomarete mirukage mo nai*, 'unrecognisable, surrounded by enormous buildings' (159)

Failing to recognise 見る影もない *mirukage mo nai* ('unrecognisable, have no trace left of') as an idiom, some students misinterpreted the sentence as 'being shadowed by tall buildings'.

5.2.3 Understanding of Grammar and Syntactic Structures

The general impression was that students possess sound knowledge of grammar up to the intermediate level; nevertheless, students asked the TA many questions in relation to expressions that are peculiar to the written or literary language such as those of examples 6 to 8. In particular, it seems that they were not able to investigate certain expressions by themselves since it was unclear as to how to determine the word boundaries of an expression consisting of multiple grammatical elements or verbs conjugated according to Classical Japanese, as shown in example 9.

Example 6: さぞ悲しかろうねえ *sazo kanashikarō nee*, 'must be deeply saddened' (151)

Example 7: 怪しげな *ayashige na*, 'dubious, suspicious' (153); 眠たげな *nemutage na*, 'seems sleepy' (154)

Example 8: ばかなりに可愛い *bakanari ni kawaii*, 'cute, though silly' (168)

Example 9: 飛びかからんばかりに *tobikakaran bakari ni*, 'as if it would throw itself upon' (171-2)

Furthermore, many of the questions and misinterpretations concerned sentence final expressions such as sentence-ending particles (example 10) or inflections that are unique to spoken language (examples 11-12). We had assumed that the participants would be familiar with various speech styles of spoken Japanese thanks to their long-term experience of living in Japan; instead, our results indicated that they have had little opportunity to analyse spoken language in written form, more specifically, to deduce a character's profile from a certain sentence-ending style or review grammatical rules of spoken Japanese.

Example 10: とんでもないわ *tondemonai wa*, 'no way; not at all' (153); シエ というんだがね *shie to iundagane*, 'it is called Xie'; また猫かよ *mata*

neko kayo, 'a cat again?'; あなたがいなくてもちっとも困らないもの *anata ga inakutemo chittomo komaranai mono*, 'I would be perfectly fine without you' (171)

Example 11: 来やしないさ *koyashinai sa*, 'will definitely not come' (154)

Example 12: こりゃすごい *korya sugoi*, 'how impressive' (156)

5.2.4 Understanding Omissions

Japanese is commonly regarded as a language featuring a frequent use of the omission. Elements that are omitted "can be of any scale, ranging from a word, to a phrase equivalent to a sentence, or even the topic itself or speech acts in some cases" (Kumagai 1997, 49). When reading, a native speaker of Japanese restores the omitted element in text on the basis of the context, even though this process is generally considered to be difficult for Japanese learners. This was evident in our case study, emerging in the preparatory process of the presentation: examples include incorrect identification of the speaker in a dialogue, or misunderstanding the omission of a sentence subject or the point of view in a specific section (examples 13-14).

Example 13: みなにっこりと微笑みかけてくれた *mina nikkori to hohoemi-kakete kureta*, 'everybody gave a smile' (159)
Some students failed to deduce from the context as to who smiled at whom, why, and the character that was pleased by this smile.

Example 14: プロポーズを断った男の人 *puropōzu wo kotowatta otokono-hito*, 'the man whose marriage proposal was rejected' (167)
The subject is omitted in the text but can be understood from the context that it is わたし*watashi*, (literally 'I', used by a female character) who rejected the proposal. To the contrary, some students misinterpreted it as 'the man rejecting a proposal from another woman'.

5.2.5 Understanding Expressions

Our overall impression is that students have difficulty in understanding Japanese euphemism and rhetoric to visualise a specific situation or scenery as examples 15 and 16 demonstrate.

Example 15: 踊り場の空 *odoriba no sora*, 'the sky from the stairway landing' (159)

The term appears in the text to describe the sky seen from the window on a stairway landing but was misinterpreted as 'the sky on the ceiling of the staircase'.

Example 16: 老けないのではなく、若い時分から変に老けていた *fukenai no-dewa naku, wakai jibun kara hen ni fukete ita*, 'not that he doesn't get old, but he's always looked rather old' (161)
This passage implies that this male character has had an old-looking face since he was young. Some students could not determine whether or not he really looks old.

5.2.6 Autonomous Problem-Solving Ability and Techniques

No input was seen on the worksheets in direct relation to this subject; nevertheless, it was observed that the learning action taken in response to an unsolved problem, such as a word not mentioned in dictionaries or an unclear expression, differed among the participants. While a group of students took further steps of their own initiative by asking a Japanese native language-exchange partner or searching for information on the Internet, other students waited until the Q&A session with the TA for further explanation, although it must be mentioned that the difficulty level of the problem as well as each student's acquaintance with Japanese native speakers have played a major role in making this difference.

5.2.7 Background Knowledge of Japanese Culture

Our results concerning background knowledge of Japanese culture and society showed that, even for students with experience of studying abroad in Japan, it was not as straightforward for them to correctly interpret some terms and expressions encountered for the first time.

Example 17: お嬢さん *ojōsan*, 'young lady' (149)
This term is used in the text by an elderly pet shop owner to address the female protagonist who is in her thirties. The application of this term does not necessarily depend on the age of the other party: it can be used at times by a shop assistant to address a female customer. Nevertheless, the students seem to have strongly associated the term with "a familiar form of address for somebody else's daughter or a young girl" (Meikyō Kokugo Jiten), i.e. a common definition in dictionaries, leaving them to question an appropriate age range for the use of *ojōsan*.

Example 18: 保健所 *hokenjo*, 'health care centre' (153)

The pet shop owner talks about bringing Xie to this facility because he has not found anybody to look after it. Since many dictionaries define the term as "a public organisation which provides local residents with services such as health consultation, sanitary guidance and disease prevention" (Meikyō Kokugo Jiten) or similar, the students were not able to anticipate the animal's destiny insinuated in the context.

Example 19: シェー! *shē!* (160)

This expression originally appeared in a popular animated TV series in the sixties as a shout used by a character, together with a peculiar body gesture, to express surprise. It appears in the text as a pun with シエ *shie*, made by a male character who learns that the animal is called Xie. For the students without this background knowledge, it remained unclear as to why the man says in this particular scene.

Example 19: 吹きこぼれる花のただなかにたゆたい消えて行くシエの魂 *fukikoboreru hana no tadanaka ni tayutai kieteyuku shie no tamashii*, 'Xie's soul swaying amidst the scattering petals of the cherry trees in full bloom, fading away' (189)

The student who presented this part of the text had made many entries in her worksheet with regard to vocabulary, noting the meaning of terms such as 吹きこぼれる花, ただなか and たゆたい During the Q&A session with the TA as well as in the class, it was also discussed that the author employs these words together to give an effective depiction of a dying life, given the significance of the cherry blossom tree in Japan as a symbol of impermanence. Furthermore, it was discussed that the frequent use of cherry blossoms throughout the text helps the reader to visualise the passage of time.

5.3   Portfolio Worksheet 3: Review of the Presentation

Using this worksheet, students reflected on their own presentations with regard to the following 3 aspects: successful parts of the presentation, difficult or challenging parts of the presentation, and observations about the presentation (for example about the experience of presenting or feedback from the class). This worksheet was written in prose, with students making remarks from various standpoints on each of the above aspects. To aid our analysis, we grouped students' remarks into the following 3 categories: 1) remarks on presentation method, 2) remarks on individual student's Japanese competence, 3) observations about the rest of the class. A summary of students' remarks is presented below.

5.3.1   Presentation Method

Many of the remarks made on the presentation itself were about time allocation, style of asking other students to contribute, manner of talking, and attitude as a presenter.

5.3.2   Japanese Competence

In relation to Japanese competence, it was observed that the experience of conducting a presentation led many of the participants to recognise their weaknesses in the Japanese language. Some students wrote in more detail and analysed the reasons for a difference in levels of competence in different areas.

5.3.3   Observations about the Rest of the Class

In terms of impressions of the other members of the class, many students observed how diversely the text was interpreted among students. Also, many remarks were made concerning mistakes or misunderstandings that were common to most students; some example are "often, everybody in the class made the same mistake" and "the entire class encountered difficulty in the same part".

5.4   Portfolio Worksheet 4: Self-evaluation at the End of the Course

We asked students to perform a second self-evaluation at the end of the semester using the same 'can-do' questions asked at the start of the semester. Again, for each question, we calculated the class average of self-evaluation scores and display these alongside the results to the start-of-semester values in table 2.

Table 2. Comparison of class average of self-evaluation scores at start (worksheet 1) and end (worksheet 4) of semester (n=21)

	Questions	Worksheet 1 / 5	Worksheet 4 / 5	Change from Worksheet 1 to 4
a	I know how to read Kanji	2.6	3.5	+ 0.9
b	I can understand the meaning of words	3.2	3.7	+ 0.5
c	I can understand the sentence as a whole through comprehension of grammar and sentence structure	3.6	3.9	+ 0.3
d	I can identify and restore omitted elements to understand a sentence	3.0	3.3	+ 0.3
e	I can understand the author's message written in a language of which I am not a native speaker	3.3	3.6	+ 0.3
f	I can detect difficult passages and understand them	4.2	4.3	+ 0.1
g	I have adequate background knowledge of the Japanese culture to understand its literature	3.3	3.5	+ 0.2

As table 2 shows, the class average values at the end of the semester (worksheet 4) are higher than at the start of the semester (worksheet 1) in all items, which implies that many of the participants believed that their Japanese reading comprehension had improved over the semester.

That said, it must be also stated that 6 students had in fact lowered their evaluation scores for several items. To give some examples, Student A who assigned 3 points to d) at the start of the semester lowered this score to 2 at the end of the semester, while Student B assigned 5 points to f) at the start and 4 points at the end of the semester. The reasons for this decrease in self-evaluation remain unclear because no follow-up interview or questionnaire was carried out with individual students after the semester. Nevertheless, it can be presumed to be a result of these students reconsidering their own Japanese proficiency and learning approach through attending lessons, preparing for lessons, and creating the portfolio as a part of this course.

When asked what types of text they would be interested in for future reading, students named a variety of written works including technical books, newspaper articles, novels and fairy tales, thus reflecting their personal interests as well as plans for a thesis topic. As for goals for further learning, some students mentioned specific learning topics such as Kanji or vocabulary, whilst others referred to more general learning approaches

(for example "to continue reading in Japanese", "to maintain motivation" and "to invest more time in learning than the others"). These responses confirm that individual students were capable of objectively assessing their present learning status.

6   Observations on the Portfolio Approach

So far, we have presented the results from a new teaching approach by using portfolios in reading comprehension lessons in the Department of Japanese Studies at Hamburg University. Keeping these results in mind, in this section we will move on to discuss reflections from the perspective of both students and teachers and summarise the achievements gained from our portfolio approach.

First, from the students' perspective, it must be mentioned that one notable achievement is the establishment of a learning process: that is, keeping records of learning objectives, learning methods and problems encountered over a semester, followed by a review thereof at the end of the semester in order to identify weaknesses and further challenges. The introduction of portfolios has positively affected the students' approach to lessons as well: instead of attending the class without a clear objective, with the help of a portfolio students have formed a clear vision of their weak points as well as learning difficulties experienced during the preparation of the presentation and analysed themselves from an objective point of view, which eventually enabled them to identify goals for further learning. Considering these effects, it seems natural to conclude that the portfolio has proved to be an effective tool to encourage an autonomous learning. In addition, remarks from students related to the other members of the class, such as "often, everybody in the class made the same mistake" and "the entire class encountered difficulty in the same part", prove that portfolios enabled students to make observations from a broader point of view, reflecting on the class as a whole.

As a major accomplishment on the teaching side, we must point out that portfolios have enabled close observations of students on a personal level, for instance, focusing on individual students' learning approach or perception of Japanese competence. In conventional lessons, our assessment of students tends to be based on comparisons between students on their relative performance in presentations, remarks made in the class and participation in discussions, whereas the implementation of portfolios has enabled us to grasp the learning progress of individual students. Moreover, there is little doubt that compiling these records from the students into a class summary will provide invaluable help in developing future syllabi or teaching approaches. Judging from the portfolio-based self-evaluations collected from students, we had assumed that the areas of ability that re-

quired particular improvement were the knowledge of Kanji and reading comprehension of text that features omissions. However, the worksheets used during the Q&A sessions with the TA in the preparatory stage of the presentation have highlighted additional areas that were equally in need of improvement, such as transcription of spoken language, grammatical elements that are peculiar to written language or literary Japanese, knowledge of idiomatic phrases, and developing techniques to research words that cannot be found in dictionaries. Specific problems or weaknesses that are common to students in general and are discovered throughout the use of a portfolio can greatly aid the design of future teaching programmes, for example in setting goals for lessons, choosing teaching priorities, improving in-class and out-of-class activities, and coordinating with other lectures.

7 Further Challenges

Finally, this section will turn to the remaining issues in our case study of portfolio application and consider further possibilities and challenges.

The first point that needs to be mentioned is that students' strategies, reference materials and tools used with the aim of reading comprehension were not taken into consideration in the framework of our portfolio. Even though it is evident that the portfolio has encouraged students' autonomous learning since it raised awareness about what to pay attention to when reading a text, our programme did not provide an opportunity to examine or discuss which learning strategies, knowledge or abilities had to be used; neither did we sufficiently discuss with students the reliability or validity of different reference materials such as dictionaries or IT based sources. We consider that reviewing observations of these matters would further help to develop students' autonomy in reading comprehension.

Secondly, the fact that we could not allow the sharing of portfolios or feedback from exchange activities in our portfolio framework due to reasons concerning the curriculum brought a major drawback to our case study. Systems using portfolios usually include the sharing of portfolios as a part of the implementation process, specifically, with the aim of sharing opinions and information regarding learning methods and achievements, ultimately motivating autonomous learning among students. Although positive effects of this process have been reported (Ishii, Kumano 2010), it is currently not easily feasible to integrate these activities into the programme, given the limited time of the lesson. One potential solution to this is to consider options using the internet, for instance, combining the portfolio with an e-portfolio to achieve higher efficiency.

The third challenge in this programme is the assessment methodology of portfolios. Ideally, for the assessment of a portfolio, each student's learning

process should be taken into consideration. In so far, however, the methodology as to how to assess submitted portfolios in numerical terms and reflect the outcome in the final grade at the end of the semester is subject to further discussion. It must be also noted that performing an assessment of the portfolio scheme itself is of critical importance for the improvement of the structure and the methodology of the portfolio. While this case study saw an experimental introduction of portfolios in reading comprehension lessons, for further applications of portfolios to more courses, it would be essential to have the present study evaluated by third-party institutions or a teaching personnel so that issues and potential improvements can be identified.

8   Conclusion

This paper presented a case study of portfolios introduced as an instrument to improve students' reading comprehension using a literary work as learning material. As mentioned in the Introduction, some of the students who have participated in this course may carry on reading literary pieces as a research subject for their Bachelor or Master thesis. The curriculum of this course primarily aimed for the improvement of Japanese language ability through reading. Through discussions in class and observations from the paper assignment, students have gained an experience of formulating personal opinions and interpretation of an original, unaltered text in Japanese, which we believe will help them in developing an advanced reading approach. This paper has illustrated the framework of a reading comprehension training in which insights gained from lessons and the compilation of a portfolio help students, who finally describe their own interpretation and analysis of the text gained through these linguistic abilities, to understand a text on the linguistic level. It seems natural to conclude that the positive effect of this training on students – since they have begun to study a text with increased self-awareness and autonomy – is a notable achievement, even if it may not necessarily be of direct relevance to conducting research in Japanese literature. Meanwhile, it can be expected that, incorporating additional activities (such as discussion sessions on text interpretation and portfolio sharing among students) into course planning alongside presentations will contribute to the improvement of students' communication skills, thereby providing further potential in the application of portfolios to reading courses using literary works. We hope to continue this programme in the future with the flexibility to readjust the framework in accordance with the issues discussed above as well as the course conditions that vary from semester to semester (for example number and character of participants, texts used, availability of a TA, or administrative conditions inside and outside of the course).

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Acknowledgment

Appendix 1

日本語Ⅴ　文献講読（日本文学）2014年秋学期
浅田次郎『犣（xie シェ）』

名前：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿　　　　Semester：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

●日本へ留学したことが　　　ある　／　　ない
●日本語の勉強を始めてから　＿＿＿＿＿＿＿年
●この授業を受ける前に、日本語の現代文学を読んだことがありますか。
　数字に〇をつけてください。読んだことがある人は、どこで何を読みましたか。
　　１．読んだことがない
　　２．読んだことがある（どこで：　　　　　　　　何を：　　　　　　　　　　）

1．授業を始める前の目標

　はじめに、日本語の現代文学を読む時の自分のレベルをふり返りましょう。そのあとで、この授業の目標を考えましょう。

（1）日本語の現代文学を読む時、今、自分はどのレベルだと思いますか。1〜5の数字に〇をつけてください。h〜jは自由に書いてください。（ドイツ語で書いてもいいです。）

	質問	（できない）← 　　→（できる）	メモ
a	漢字の読み方がわかる。	1　2　3　4　5	
b	単語の意味がわかる。	1　2　3　4　5	
c	文法や文構造を理解して、文全体の意味がわかる。	1　2　3　4　5	
d	文の中で何が省略されているかがわかり、それを補って内容を理解することができる。	1　2　3　4　5	
e	表現方法が自分の母語と違っていても、作者が伝えたい内容がわかる。	1　2　3　4　5	
f	意味がわからない箇所があった時、自分の方法で調べて理解することができる。	1　2　3　4　5	
g	文学を理解するために必要な日本文化の背景知識が十分にある。	1　2　3　4　5	
h		1　2　3　4　5	
i		1　2　3　4　5	
j		1　2　3　4　5	

目標シート：1/2

日本語Ⅴ　文献講読（日本文学）2014年秋学期
浅田次郎『癬（xie シェ）』

名前：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

（2）「（1）」のa～jの中で、この授業を通して特にできるようになりたいことは何ですか。a～jの
　　記号を書いてください。（複数選んでもいいです。）

（3）「（2）」で選んだことができるようになるために、どのようなことをしようと思いますか。努力
　　する内容を具体的に書いてください。（ドイツ語で書いてもいいです。）

目標シート：2/2

Appendix 2

日本語Ⅴ　文献講読（日本文学）2014年秋学期
浅田次郎『霽（xie シェ）』

２．発表準備の記録

発表の準備をしてわからなかったことやわかったことなどを整理しましょう。

やり方：

①自分が発表するページをコピーする。

②自分で発表の準備をした時に**わからなかったこと**を書く

②-1：コピーに線（＿＿＿＿）を引いて、それぞれに数字（1、2、3…）を書く。

②-2：表の左に何がわからなかったかをメモする。→　ＴＡに確認する。

②-3：表の右にわかったことを書く。

③ＴＡに相談して、「**自分の理解が正しくなかった**」と気が付いたことを書く。

③-1：コピーに線（＿＿＿＿）を引いて、それぞれにアルファベット（a、b、c…）を書く。

③-2：表の左に正しく理解していなかったことをメモする。

③-3：表の右にわかったことを書く。

※ドイツ語で書いてもいいです。

＜例＞

番号	わからなかったこと／自分の理解が正しくなかったこと　→	TAとの相談のあとで　わかったこと
1	誰が誰に話したか	山田さん→田中さん
2	「食べられる」：Passiv form?Potential form?	Passiv form
3	文全体の意味・ニュアンス	
4	単語の意味　●●？●●？	
5		
a	漢字の読み方	
b	山田さんが笑った理由	
c	助詞「で」の意味	
d		

日本語Ⅴ　文献講読（日本文学）2014 年秋学期
浅田次郎『姉（xie シェ）』

名前：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿　　　発表：　　　　ページ、　　　行目〜　　　行目

番号	わからなかったこと 自分の理解が正しくなかったこと　→	わかったこと

Appendix 3

日本語Ⅴ　文献講読（日本文学）2014 年秋学期
浅田次郎『癬（xie シェ）』

名前：█████████████　　　発表 :179-18ページ、　　7 行目〜　　3 行目

番号	わからなかったこと 自分の理解が正しくなかったこと ➡	わかったこと
1	「ばんたび」：単語の意味？	万度 ＝ いつも，毎回
2	「恥ずかしく」：副詞？ 　　　何を示す？	恥ずかしくて
3	「快かった」：何/誰が快かった？	鈴子は、管理人が 両親みたい に 説諭するから，まず恥ずかしくて そして 快い感じがする。
4	「おればだ」：何の形？ 　　　おる＋ば＋です？ 　　　いる	おる（＝いる）＋ば＋です
5	「しっかり者」：強い性格のある人？ 　　　貯金する人？	まじめな人、何かがちゃんとできる人（例えば、貯金できる）
6	「思いあぐねた末のせりふ」：意味？	思いあぐねた 最後の せりふ せりふ ＝ 言葉、文
a	「まどう」の意味	「まどう」は「惑う」、「迷う」のような 意味だけではなく、動詞＋まどう というのは「たくさん」、「いっもいに」の ような 意味もある
b	「いつだったか」：何を示す？	「言っていたこと」
c	「こうして」：何を示す？	鈴子と 管理人の 十年の 付き合い方：一緒に マンションに 暮らすこと とか、よく 話すこと とか
d	漢字の読み方	「末」＝すえ
e	「ように」の意味	この 場合は：ようだ 　　　　　みたいだ

Appendix 4

日本語Ⅴ　文献講読（日本文学）2014 年秋学期
浅田次郎『癬（xie シェ）』

名前：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

３．発表のふり返り

自分の発表はどうでしたか。思い出して書いてください。（ドイツ語で書いてもいいです。）

発表した日：＿＿＿＿月＿＿＿＿日

（１）発表でよくできたことは何ですか。

（２）発表で難しかったこと、うまくできなかったこと、予定通りできなかったことなどがあり
　　　ますか。また、その原因は何だと思いますか。

（３）発表をして何か気が付いたことがありますか。（自分のこと、クラスの様子など）

Appendix 5

日本語Ⅴ　文献講読（日本文学）秋学期
浅田次郎『鴇（xie シェ）』

名前：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿　　　Semester：＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

４．授業が終わった時の自己評価

「日本語Ⅴ・文献講読」の授業が終わりました。日本語の現代文学を読む時の自分のレベルをふり返りましょう。そのあとで、今後の目標などについて考えましょう。

（１）日本語の現代文学を読む時、今、自分はどのレベルだと思いますか。1〜5の数字に○をつけてください。「1．授業を始める前の目標」の「（1）」でh〜jを書いた人は、それについても答えてください。（ドイツ語で書いてもいいです。）

	質問	（できない）←　　→（できる）	メモ
a	漢字の読み方がわかる。	1　2　3　4　5	
b	単語の意味がわかる。	1　2　3　4　5	
c	文法や文構造を理解して、文全体の意味がわかる。	1　2　3　4　5	
d	文の中で何が省略されているかがわかり、それを補って内容を理解することができる。	1　2　3　4　5	
e	表現方法が自分の母語と違っていても、作者が伝えたい内容がわかる。	1　2　3　4　5	
f	意味がわからない箇所があった時、自分の方法で調べて理解することができる。	1　2　3　4　5	
g	文学を理解するために必要な日本文化の背景知識が十分にある。	1　2　3　4　5	
h		1　2　3　4　5	
i		1　2　3　4　5	
j		1　2　3　4　5	

自己評価シート：1/2

Appendix 5

日本語Ⅴ　文献講読（日本文学）秋学期
浅田次郎『癖（xie シェ）』

（２）「１．授業を始める前の目標」の「（２）」を見てください。この授業を通して、そこに書いた項
　　目（a〜j）ができるようになったと思いますか。

　　　できるようになったと思う…

　　　まだできていないと思う　…

（３）「１．授業を始める前の目標」の「（３）」を見てください。そこに書いた方法は役に立ちました
　　か。また、その方法以外に新しい方法が見つかりましたか。（ドイツ語で書いてもいいです。）

（４）これからは日本語の授業がありません。今後、何のためにどんなテキストを読みたいですか。
　　（ドイツ語で書いてもいいです。）

（５）もっと日本語が読めるようになるために、自分に何が必要だと思いますか（ドイツ語で書いて
　　もいいです。）

自己評価シート：2/2