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Teachers' Cognition Regarding Reading Instruction in L2 Japanese

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ABSTRACT

The current study examines the cognition of reading instruction held by teachers of Japanese as a second or foreign language (L2 Japanese) working mainly in Japan, New Zealand, and the US. The study reports findings obtained from two data collection methods: interviews and metaphor elicitation contained in a questionnaire. The researcher interviewed twenty-two teachers and 52 metaphors were obtained from 60 questionnaire respondents. The findings illustrate the complex nature of teachers' cognition in regard to reading instruction. Overall, teachers were apprehensive about reading instruction because of contextual limitations such as a lack of formal teacher education and time shortages caused by grammar-dominant curricula. In addition, many of the interviewees acknowledged that aspects of the unique, complicated orthography of written Japanese both facilitated and inhibited learning at times. With such acknowledgement, they also maintained student-centered views and a belief in the importance of reading for learners' mastery of the target language.

INTRODUCTION

As identified by Borg (2006, p. 1), "the recognition of the fact that teachers are active, thinking decision-makers who play a central role in shaping classroom events" has invigorated teacher cognition research since the 1980s. Numerous teacher cognition studies have been conducted in the context of L2 English, but research is lacking in other L2 contexts as well as in L2 reading instruction. L2 Japanese teacher cognition research is even less well served, such that no research to date has delved into L2 Japanese teachers' cognition regarding reading instruction to the best knowledge of the current author. This is despite the fact that reading is one of the five essential strands of language teaching and learning (along with speaking, aural comprehension, writing, and intercultural competence), and that the orthography of Japanese is unique, being a complicated adaptation of Chinese logographs (*kanji*) and two types of phonetic scripts (*hiragana* and *katakana* syllabaries). This study attempts to fill this gap by its exploration of L2 Japanese teachers' thoughts, knowledge, beliefs, and emotions (Borg, 2012) regarding reading instruction. It adopts a contextual approach, which views teachers' beliefs as emergent and contextually-constructed. Specifically, the study employs interviews and metaphor elicitation typically used by the contextual approach in order to ascertain the participants' complex cognitive and affective reasoning regarding reading instruction.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Under-researched area of L2 teacher cognition research: Reading instruction

Freeman (2002) elucidates that the aim of teacher cognition research is to verify the claim that teachers' mental lives form an intangible component of teaching. Accordingly, studies in L2 contexts are increasingly investigating teachers' beliefs and the relationship between these beliefs and actual practices. Despite teacher cognition research becoming an established research domain, a discrepancy of vigor exists among target languages and specific skills, with studies of L2 *English* teacher cognition (as opposed to other languages) and studies of L2 teacher cognition about *grammar instruction* (as opposed to other aspects of language teaching such as reading instruction) predominating. This is also the case when compared to L1 teacher cognition research regarding reading instruction which has a long history, starting with early studies conducted in the 1980's (Barnyak & Paquette, 2010; Borko & Niles, 1982; Meloth, Book, Putnam, & Sivan, 1989). Nevertheless, Borg (2006) identified seven L2 teacher cognition studies regarding reading instruction: Johnson (1992), Collie Graden (1996), Richards, Li, and Tang (1998), Meijer, Verloop, and Beijaard (1999, 2001), Tercanlioglu (2001), and El-Okda (2005). Borg (ibid.) observed that these studies differed diversely in terms of focus (what they examined), methodology, location, sample size, and participant characteristics.

Since the publication of Borg's 2006 book, more studies have been conducted. Caboroglu and Yurdaisik (2008) investigated how 50 foundation course teachers at a Turkish university viewed reading instruction and reading strategies via a questionnaire. Six of the participants were also interviewed. The study found that the participants emphasized strategy training in reading instruction probably because they were aware of its importance being L2 readers themselves, and that their practice mirrored their daily reading behaviors. Kuzborska (2011) used video stimulated recall, class observations, and document data analysis. It revealed that eight Lithuanian university teachers demonstrated a skills-based approach that was congruent with their practices, but which was not aligned with, the then, empirically supported metacognitive-strategy approach. Interviewing their participants twice each, Hu and Baumann (2014) found that 12 Chinese teachers of English at different school levels perceived reading curricula and the 2001 national curriculum, differently. Specifically, contextual variables such as assessment frameworks affected their views and approaches toward vital issues such as fluency instruction differently according to the school levels. Cirocki and Caparoso (2016) used surveys, interviews, and lesson observations with a view to investigating 30 Pilipino teachers' beliefs about motivating learners to read in L2 English. The study found that the participants viewed teaching strategies as an essential component in reading instruction. While they valued the availability of texts on a wide range of topics, and regarded a high interest-level as a motivation enhancer, they did not value learners' autonomy or creative thinking in the act of reading.

It is apparent that when compared to the L1 context, this small body of research of L2 teacher cognition regarding reading instruction is not characterized by well-defined research agendas, recurring research tools, or vigorous replication (Borg, 2006).

L2 teacher cognition studies regarding Intensive Reading and Extensive Reading

Many researchers and teachers agree that the goal of L2 reading instruction is to make learners fluent readers (Nuttall, 1996). Fluency in reading can be defined as the ability to effortlessly read at a relatively -fast rate with satisfactory accuracy. In some contexts (including many L2 Japanese contexts), however, the design of a curriculum, the content of widely used textbooks, and assessment methods, make teachers focus on accuracy rather than fluency. For this, they typically employ the more traditional Intensive Reading (IR) approach (Day, 2013; Grabe, 2009; Kumada & Suzuki, 2015). IR refers to a reading instructional approach whereby learners are assisted by a teacher or dictionary when reading texts that are well above their proficiency level (Macalister, 2010a). The reading process that occurs in IR often results in laborious, slow reading with many regressions. In contrast, approaches, such as Extensive Reading (ER), have been found to be effective in developing learners' reading fluency. In ER, learners independently read a variety of very easy texts for general understanding. Numerous studies have verified the benefits of ER in regard to reading rates, vocabulary gain, and comprehension, as well as in the affective domain (e.g., McLean & Rouault, 2017; Nation & Waring, 2020). It is important for teachers to understand that both accuracy and fluency need to be equally emphasized and therefore IR and ER need to be employed in a complementary manner.

There have only been a limited number of studies that investigated teacher cognition regarding these approaches, however. Macalister (2010b) observes that ER has not received deserved attention in teacher cognition research. He has reported that, despite teachers' positive beliefs about ER, various problems including insufficient teacher education, course design, and poor resource provision, inhibited teachers from practising the approach in university foundation courses in New Zealand. Huang (2015) confirmed Macalister's findings in the context of L2 English in Taiwanese high schools. Chan and Renandya (2017) corroborated the findings of both these studies when they reported that 119 L2 teachers (mainly L2 English teachers) in Asia believed in ER as an effective approach in nurturing learners' overall language abilities, but that they faced numerous difficulties in practising it. These studies show the discord between teachers' beliefs about ER and the reality of their teaching environment. Albeit pioneering, these studies are limited in geographical span and report only on the L2 English context.

The purpose of this study

In the L2 Japanese context, no study to date (as far as the author is aware) has delved into teacher cognition regarding reading instruction per se, not to mention IR and ER. As mentioned above, the orthography of Japanese is unique and complicated. Considering the challenging nature of L2 Japanese reading, studies investigating L2 Japanese teachers' cognition regarding reading instruction and different approaches to this are indeed needed. Such studies have the potential to reveal what happens in L2 Japanese reading classes, since teacher cognition determines what they do in the classroom to a significant extent (Macalister, 2012).

With these theoretical and methodological orientations in mind, the present study explores L2 Japanese teachers' emergent cognition regarding reading instruction using a contextual approach (Barcelos, 2003), by addressing the following research question:

What do L2 Japanese teachers think, know, believe, and feel about reading instruction?

METHODOLOGY

Participants

First, Table 1 below presents the details of the 22 teachers who were interviewed. Four of them were L1 English speakers and the others were L1 Japanese speakers. Their teaching experience ranged from half a year to 37 years.

Table. 1 Details of the 22 interviewees

ID	L1	Speciality	Experience	Working Region	Courses to teach
1	J*	L2 education	3***	O****	Language*****
2	J	L2 education	3	O	Language
3	J	content area**	5***	J****	Various*****
4	J	L2 education	5	J	Language
5	J	L2 education	5	O	Language
6	E*	content area	6***	O	Content*****
7	J	L2 education	1***	O	Language
8	E	content area	7***	O	Various
9	J	content area	4***	O	Various
10	E	content area	4	O	Various
11	J	L2 education	3	O	Language
12	E	content area	1	O	Various
13	J	L2 education	5	O	Language
14	J	content area	1	O	Various
15	J	L2 education	1	O	Language
16	J	L2 education	5	J	Various
17	J	L2 education	7	J	Language
18	J	L2 education	6	J	Language
19	J	L2 education	5	J	Language
20	J	L2 education	4	J	Language
21	J	L2 education	4	O	Language
22	J	L2 education	2***	J	Language

Note: *J: Japanese, E: English; **content area includes specialities such as literature and pragmatics; ***1: less than 5 years, 2: 6~10 years, 3: 11~15 years, 4: 16~20 years, 5: 21~25 years, 6: 26~30 years, and 7: more than 31 years; ****J: Japan, O: Outside of Japan (US or New Zealand); *****regarding courses to teach, Language refers to structural language courses, Content refers to content courses such as culture and literature, and Various means that a teacher has opportunities to teach both language and content courses.

Another group of participants (N = 60) completed a teacher cognition survey questionnaire, which included a metaphor elicitation task, regarding L2 Japanese reading instruction. This was generated for a larger study that is yet to be published. Ten of the interviewees also completed the questionnaire. All except four respondents were L1 Japanese

speakers, and 65% of the respondents worked mainly in Japan. Their teaching experience ranged from less than 5 years to more than 25 years. The majority had a master's degree (41.7%), while 28.3% had a bachelor's degree, and 23.3% had a doctorate.

The participants were predominantly L1 Japanese speakers. This study sample well represents the population of L2 Japanese teachers in Japan itself, but that of other areas of the world to a lesser extent (The Japan Foundation, 2017). This should be borne in mind when interpreting the findings below.

Data collection

The researcher initially recruited interviewees using her work and research network, and then early stage interviewees assisted to recruit more participants (snowball recruitment). All the interviews were conducted in person in the US, New Zealand, and Japan.

Based on relevant research norms (e.g., Day, 2013; Grabe, 2009), the researcher developed a list of potential questions for semi-structured individual interviews (see Appendix A). However, she did not follow these questions rigidly, preferring to follow the natural flow of responses. The interviews lasted about one and a half hours, and were audio-recorded with the participants' permission. They were conducted in the participants' L1, either English or Japanese. The recordings were transcribed, and the Japanese transcripts were translated into English by the researcher.

Prospective respondents were invited to participate in the questionnaire through the researcher's research network and through regional teacher-study groups. The questionnaire included a metaphor elicitation task, a method typically used by studies in conjunction with a contextual approach. Metaphors enable individuals to conceptualize novel and complex topics by relating them to other, easier concepts that are possibly more familiar to them (Wan & Low, 2015). Metaphors also reveal people's affective aspects and practice (Seferoğlu, Korkmazgil, & Ölçü, 2009). Specifically, respondents were asked to complete an open-ended metaphor elicitation task: "Please use a metaphor to describe 'a teacher of Japanese who teaches reading classes,' and write a brief explanation of why you chose the metaphor."

Data analysis

The interviews included yes-no questions as well as open-ended questions. As Labov (as cited in Macalister, 2010b, p. 64) suggests, "The initial impetus provided by the Yes-No question is an important element" leading interviewees to give the "necessary justification of the claim made by the first response." These necessary justifications, the answers to the open-ended questions, and the interactions between the interviewee and interviewer during highly co-constructed moments noted in the researcher's log formed the study's qualitative data.

The content of the qualitative data was content analyzed. During the initial multiple readings, the researcher gained a general understanding of the interviewees' responses, and divided the transcripts into meaning units. With their core meanings preserved, the meaning units were condensed and then coded. The researcher conducted this analysis process twice with at least two months between each time. A research assistant with an L2 pedagogy background used the same procedure and analyzed half of the data independently. The intra-coder agreement rate was 0.90, as calculated by Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula, whereas the inter-coder agreement rate was 0.80. Only the codes that were supported by both the analysis of the researcher and the

research assistant, and by the researcher's two analyses were categorized before being given appropriate categorical labels.

All the elicited metaphors were categorized by two judges: the researcher and another research assistant with an L2 English teaching background. The two judges first analyzed and categorized the whole data set independently. During this process, their analyses and categorizations were guided not only by the meaning of the metaphors given, but also by the respondents' entailments of why they chose particular metaphors. The two judges independently created categories and then compared them. While the exact labels of each judges' six main categories differed, they referred to the same semantic concepts, for example, 'teacher who promotes reading' versus 'teacher who arouses students' interest in reading.' Disagreements were solved through discussion. Four metaphors were categorized as 'Others' due to their idiosyncrasy. The inter-coder agreement rate was 0.85, as calculated by Miles and Huberman's (1994) formula.

RESULTS

In this section, the findings obtained from the two data collection methods in answer to the research question, "What do L2 Japanese teachers think, know, believe, and feel about reading instruction?", are provided separately.

The results of the interviews

The interviewees are referred to by alphanumerical codes such as T1 (Teacher 1) and only female pronouns are used to protect their identities.

The interviewees' belief in the importance of reading

A common belief was identified among the interviewees in that they all expressed a deep belief in the importance of reading acquisition, as illustrated by the following comments:

> T18: It is quicker to practice both [listening and reading to master Japanese]…When students are progressing, they cannot avoid reading. A need for reading comes naturally, I guess.

> T8: If students only learn listening and speaking, then in due course, they come to the point where their language does not get much better. But, if they have learned to read, they can extend their vocabulary through learning what *kanji* (Japanese logographs) mean, in a way you can't do in European languages.

> T13: After all, students have to write, and more importantly read, in order to speak, because their vocabulary and knowledge don't expand otherwise.

Advanced, formal Japanese contains more advanced lexical items; that is, *kango* (Japanese words of Chinese origin), and thus is written in *kanji* (Lee, 2016). Therefore, for learners to master L2 Japanese, reading plays a pivotal role, as expressed by the teachers above. T8 is an L1 English speaker who has mastered L2 Japanese reading, and has probably come to the above belief partly through her own experiences of learning L2 Japanese.

Experientially formed principles caused by a lack of teacher education and apprehension toward reading instruction

Despite their belief in the importance of reading instruction in Japanese, none of the interviewees received formal teacher education in L2 Japanese reading instruction in which they could have been informed about theories of reading. This seemed to be a source of apprehension for some. T1, educated in a graduate course, lamented:

> There was no particular education for reading instruction. I read theories of Krashen in a textbook and gained knowledge about instructional approaches such as speed reading, scanning, and skimming. However, there isn't time to put such theories into practice in classes. … I am afraid I don't use them.

T12, an L1 English literature specialist with less than two years' teaching experience, showed dismay:

> Researcher: How did you learn to teach students to read in Japanese? Was it from your mentor (who enabled you to read Japanese novels)?
> T12: I'd like to say "yes," but it wasn't. I'm still not happy with how I teach my students reading, especially when teaching third year students.
> Researcher: Why?
> T12: Something, something is missing.

T2 also conveyed her uneasiness to the researcher (italics indicate speakers' emphasis):

> T2: When I am teaching reading, I feel unconfident.
> Researcher: I see.
> T2: I don't have the same sense of fulfilment as when I'm teaching grammar.
> Researcher: So, are you anxious?
> T2: *I am anxious.* Yes. OK, (pause) what should I say, (pause) I've taught them the meaning of each part!
> Researcher: Yup.
> T2: My students can understand the literal meaning of the text *in English*!
> Researcher: Yup
> T2: But, I feel that's not enough. So, teaching reading doesn't give me fulfilment.

In the absence of theoretical-based formal education, some interviewees based their practices of reading instruction on their personal principles. T3 commented:

> Reading is not the only purpose of reading classes. … I believe reading texts creates meaning if students find out there is a different world and a different perspective through activities and listening to others in reading classes.

T5 talked about her own experience when majoring in English, which became the basis of her reading instructional practices:

> In a course [on poetry], one female poet's piece made a strong impression on me, and made me feel, "Wow, this is such a different world." … Then I wanted to read different things. Encountering something I liked encouraged me to continue [reading in English] though I still haven't mastered it. … A variety [of reading materials] is necessary. Because I want to create a chance for my students to encounter something they like.

Only eight of the interviewees confirmed that they were avid readers at L2, and it is perhaps noteworthy that four of them were L1 English speakers who had mastered L2 Japanese reading. Three of them recalled being taught how to read in Japanese through the grammar-translation method, and all expressed a positive attitude toward it. For example, T6 said:

> [B]y the time I was taking fourth year Japanese [at university], the materials were all literary, and translation was a primary teaching mode. … One of the reasons why I liked translation, and I know that translation, during a certain period, had a very bad reputation in language teaching, however, I always thought university students are very competent language users of one language, so it makes sense to use knowledge of one language to learn another. So, I'm content to use translation in class but it has to be a relatively minor part, because there are lots of other ways to teach reading.

In contrast to this cognitive thinking, T7, who repeatedly called her students 'children' regardless of their age, simply presented an affective stance:

> Watching the children makes me feel that an important point is to let the message sink into their guts. So, you don't need to worry about *approaches*.

T6's use of translation with moderation seems legitimate as this is how she became an L1-level reader in Japanese. However, it is vital to note that while personal principles support some teachers' reading instruction, they may not fully compensate for the possible negative impact caused by a lack of formal teacher education.

The interviewees' different focuses in reading instruction

When asking the interviewees about their focus in reading instruction, the researcher gave the interviewees exemplary answers which always included 'fluency.' Despite 'fluency' being a commonly discussed topic in literature (e.g., Grabe, 2009; Nation, 2007; Shimono, 2018), none of the interviewees chose it as their focus in reading instruction. Rather, the interviewees' answers derived from perceived course requirements and their personal experiences.

T8 is an acclaimed academic with 38 years of teaching experience. In response to a question about the focus of her reading instruction, she affirmed, "It depends on the courses." She contended that a primarily language-oriented course should focus on complete understanding of a text, whereas in a content course, such as one on Japanese literature, understanding the content rather than "nitty-gritty-language" learning is more important. The focus of other interviewees in reading instruction also reflected what they were required to teach in given courses. T9 believed that "elementary students should properly understand what a subject and a predicate are. That's the point." Reflecting the fact that she was taught L2 Japanese

with the grammar-translation method, T10 was assertive about focusing on grammar in the reading classes of pre-advanced, four-skill course:

> I tend to focus on grammar. If students can understand grammar, other factors will naturally follow that … If you've got the theoretical stuff out of the way, you can go and build on it.

T11, following the method she experienced in an ESL course, was clear about her focus with a first-year four-skill course:

> It's important to get students to learn the style of written Japanese. From my experience, if you've learned the style of a language … you can read in a top-down manner, and your reading becomes fast and accurate.

While she was free to practice more discretion in teaching a fourth-year literature reading class, T6, an accomplished scholar with 30 years of teaching experience, was realistically guided by student variables:

> So, when reading and writing are something they (students) have to do, you know, they just see it as a burden. So, I think that, to some extent, if written language can be presented as something enjoyable, it serves their interests.

T2 and T12 presented their overall focuses of reading instruction as not being bound by course objectives. T2, an avid L2 reader who enjoys L2 English texts without worrying about unknown vocabulary, said, "even if students cannot read accurately, I want them to get the gist of the text." An emerging literature scholar, T12, agreed: "I am a literature specialist, so I want my students to understand the meaning or story of the text … If they don't understand it, they can't do anything."

The adverse impacts of situational variables

Many interviewees mentioned feeling pressure from situational variables. One universal problem was time constraints. T13, who opted not to teach reading in her first-year class despite her strong faith in reading as reported above, described her situation as a "juggling act." Working in a similar context, T21 dubbed reading as a "social outcast." The following conversation between T2 and the researcher was one of the highly co-constructed moments that emerged from the interviews, and offered a vivid image of how time constraints limit teachers' options:

T2: Reading is given a back seat to grammar. I haven't thought about reading instruction much, and even when I have, I cannot find time to put it into practice. How can I say, I am always aware of it, but, a metaphor is coming into my head, but not quite. (laughter)
Researcher: Something like, (pause) window-cleaning?
T2: Exactly. (laughter)
Researcher: You keep saying, "I'll do it soon," and you may or may not do it once a year at most.

T2: Yeah, and the windows are definitely getting dirty.
Both: (laughter)

The skill levels required by succeeding courses also put teachers under pressure. T5 said:

> It is stressful because I have to pass my students on to another teacher. They move on to a higher-level class with what I have taught them. So, I cannot manage my reading classes in whatever way I like.

A washback effect clearly existed as well. T14 commented:

> I have to teach my students the points that are to be tested in such a way that they get good scores. So, for me, the teaching methodologies [I have to use] seem to put too much emphasis on efficiency.

As a programme director, T8 contemplated a broader problem, "a lack of formative assessments":

> We've been so pressured to cut down on tutorials and marking costs so that basically, our assessment procedures are almost entirely summative … We simply can't spend time, and don't get help for spending time, on more formative assessments which students really need for reading and writing.

These inhibiting situational variables sharply portray the state of affairs that surround L2 Japanese teachers, as reported by Marcus (2010) who lamented that due to "severe time constraints and less than optimal conditions … It is no wonder instructors of Japanese wrestle with fundamental issues when it comes to teaching reading" (p. 28).

The interviewees' learner-centered views

The interviewees commonly expressed a learner-centered view; the desire for their students to become autonomous readers, as represented by the comments below.

> T6: My goal is to have them be able to read more independently … So, skill building and tool acquisition are basically what I am working toward.

> T5: After all, I guess the ultimate goal is to grow learners who read without any forceful instigation.

> T2: I want to show various exemplary texts in lessons so that they can find ways to be able to read on their own in the future.

The interviewees' degree of confidence that their students would master L2 Japanese reading, however, differed for various reasons. Unlike novice teacher T15 who was optimistic about her students' future developments, experienced teacher T5 expressed a more negative view based on changes in the styles of literacy:

> Everything is digital. Students just highlight a part of a text and take it to Google Translate … So, the style of reading is changing from our generation's. I often ponder what will happen eventually. I feel what I am doing may be a waste of time.

Despite teaching at a prestigious university in Japan, T16 had a somewhat negative view as well, commenting:

> I don't have much confidence [about my students' mastery of L2 Japanese reading] … It is difficult for students to fully enjoy reading authentic texts if their reading levels are not very high.

In contrast, T17 was optimistic, after witnessing the abundance of exposure to the Japanese language enjoyed by her non-Japanese husband who was at the upper elementary level. The following conversation between her and the researcher was one of the highly co-constructed moments that emerged from interviews, and vividly illustrates the differences in teachers' emotions caused by teaching contexts:

> T17: If a person lives in a Japanese-only environment, he starts detecting words he doesn't understand and can check them, which is supported by improvements in other skills. So, in future, he will be able to reach the level which he can functionally read Japanese. My husband has made me think this way recently.
> Researcher: It's a big help for you to see such a positive case.
> T17: Indeed.
> Researcher: I have been teaching in the US and New Zealand. My students don't have much exposure to the Japanese language, and don't get much input either. … I wonder what will happen to them after graduation. Looking at how they are doing in the fourth year leads to sad thoughts. I am teaching, wishing them to flourish, but I am not sure if they are getting better.

It was, therefore, evident that despite a shared learner-centered view, there was a mixture of confidence level across the interviewees.

The interviewees' differing conceptions of IR and ER

It is by now apparent that a suboptimal state of affairs exists in that many L2 Japanese curricula lack sufficient emphasis on the development of reading-fluency. As argued in the literature review, whether or not practitioners are well-informed on theories about reading can motivate the first phase towards addressing this problem, through the implementation of effective approaches, including ER. Thus, it is instructive to heed what some of the interviewees had to say regarding this topic.

T18, an active promoter of L2 Japanese ER, presented an invaluable recollection:

> People gain abilities through reading what they can read. I have gradually understood that "*experiencing being able to read*" leads people to understand difficult texts.

Some interviewees who were proponents of ER described their unwavering support for the approach:

> T19: [The beauty of ER is] "being able to read in a natural way." That means … you read because you want to, even if you are at school. You can then continue to read in this way even after leaving school.

> T20: [In ER] I don't have to check students' knowledge and understanding endlessly, and I feel fulfilled to see they are enjoying reading. So, the demoralising mood I have experienced during Intensive Reading doesn't attack me.

T8, an experienced scholar-practitioner, raises an undeniable question:

> It's really essential, I think, to go back to the old grammar translation system and check if they [students] have actually recognized the forms and syntax and vocab that they are supposed to have met before. But, they probably won't remember them all and they probably won't gain a whole picture of what the story or the text is about from doing this. So, I think it's quite important to have, to make as big a mixture of teaching methods as you can which you can adapt for your own classes, because apart from that, some students learn in one way more easily, and some learn in another way more easily. So, I don't like the view that says that grammar-translation is useless and that you should never do it.

Equally, T16 reconfirmed the importance of IR while describing the benefits of ER:

> Extensive Reading, which serves to enlarge input, endlessly expands without teachers' explicit teaching … As for Intensive Reading, it serves as language-focused learning … and also has the charm of creating learning communities.

T16 also contemplated a possible pitfall in L2 Japanese ER from her knowledge of contrastive linguistics:

> Japanese is different from other languages in syntactic characteristics … I think syntax has a heavier weight in a language with a great deal of agglutination [like Japanese]. Some items can be learned by exposure, but others cannot be easily noticed without being told. The latter items call for explicit guidance, and I don't believe such items can be learned only by reading.

It can be said that ER proponents who have witnessed a number of learners' positive experiences, and scholars who possess theoretically and empirically rooted eclectic views, complementarily guide practitioners to positively perceive reading and various instructional approaches.

Findings of the metaphor analysis

Providing examples from each category, Table 2 demonstrates the distribution of the metaphors obtained through metaphor elicitation.

Table 2. Distribution of the Metaphors

Categories	Metaphors (selected examples only)
Teacher who watches over or helps students: 26 (50%)	• Light house • Sherpa
Teacher in a dilemma: 7 (13.5%)	• Paranoid dancer • A teacher who teaches elementary school children L1
Teacher as a promoter: 6 (11.5%)	• Courier of interesting books to students • Person who opens a door to another world
Teacher as a skilful facilitator: 4 (7.7%)	• Host of a quiz show • All-round player
Teacher as a leader: 3 (5.8%)	• Leader of mountain climbers • Conductor of an orchestra
Teacher with time constraints: 2 (3.8%)	• Robot with a timer • Time-keeper
Others: 4 (7.7%)	• Nurturer of philosophers • Prosecutor

Half the metaphors fell into the category of 'Teacher who watches over or helps students' (50%). Within this category, the teachers' entailments for the metaphors they provided show that the degree of support each was prepared to give students differed widely. For example, the teacher who described herself as like a "Tea-serving lady" said the image was "a teacher who was simply happy to see students enjoying reading while she served them tea," whereas the "Painting teacher" was explained as a teacher "committed to transferring secrets to make painting easier and more enjoyable." A "Sherpa" in this category "is merely a guide; a climber conquers mountains." Thus, the many metaphors in this category which portray a teacher who refrains from helping students excessively exhibit the learner-centered view of their authors, in accordance with one of the two main views found during the interviews.

13.5% of the metaphors fell into the category of 'Teacher in a dilemma.' The author of "A noisy parrot" lamented that she "cannot conduct satisfying reading lessons, being unable to stop intervening inadvertently in students who are reading."

Authors of metaphors categorized as 'Teacher as a skillful facilitator' (7.7%) explained that their metaphors indicate that teachers have to invigorate students' engagement using various approaches. "An all-round player" in this category was described by one participant as "a teacher who does various tasks such as grammar and vocabulary instruction, listening practice of texts, and post-reading essays, all under the name of reading instruction."

The metaphors in the category of 'Teacher as a promoter' (11.5%) can be seen as expressing belief in the importance of reading, which was one of the main findings of the interviews, as reported above. For example, the "virus" was explained as a good virus that "could influence colleagues/students to be passionate in reading despite the common impression of other people that reading is a boring activity."

Three participants came up with ‘Teacher as a leader’ (5.8%) metaphors. For instance, “A conductor of an orchestra” indicates that “a conductor (teacher) directs players (students) to create a great performance, maximising each player’s potential”.

It is noteworthy that two less experienced teachers chose metaphors depicting a ‘Teacher with time constraints’ (3.8%) to portray the entire image of L2 Japanese reading teachers. This image corroborates what many interviewees pointed out; that time constraints due to the predominance of grammar instruction and IR orientation inhibit reading instruction.

The remaining four metaphors were categorized as ‘Others’ (7.7%) due to their idiosyncrasy. Three of the teachers came up with two metaphors each, corresponding to their experiences of divergent instructional approaches; that is, ER and IR. Another teacher came up with two metaphors that had the same meaning and were, therefore, counted as one. Four respondents created metaphors of a “Guide” with similar entailments, which were also counted as one. The researcher applied the same approach to the three metaphors of “Coach” created by two respondents, “Affectionate mother” created by two respondents, and “Laissez-faire mother” created by another two respondents. Five respondents did not provide metaphors.

The authors in the two largest groups in Table 2 did not have notable deviations in regard to their work experience or degrees, whereas those of the smaller groups did show deviations depending on these two variables. For example, the three authors of the metaphors in the ‘Others’ category were experienced and held higher degrees, whereas both authors of the ‘Teacher with time constraints’ metaphors were less experienced.

DISCUSSION

In response to the research question raised above, this study argues that the participating L2 Japanese teachers who regard the learner-centeredness as the primacy of reading instruction, know the problematic nature of their circumstances (e.g., the predominance of grammar instruction). Furthermore, while they believe in the importance of reading instruction, they feel apprehensive about teaching reading, partly due to a lack of formal teacher education. The discussion that follows provides specific factors of this argument.

The findings from the metaphor elicitation reveal that, in half of the cases, differences in authors’ experiences and degrees did not lead to differing cognitions, while the other half demonstrate otherwise. However, the latter cases come from groups with a small number of participants. For example, the fact that two authors with less than five and ten years’experience, respectively, created metaphors for ‘Teacher with time constraints’ cannot lead to a conclusion that less experienced L2 Japanese teachers tend to feel time constraints more. In fact, the majority of the interviewees pointed out time constraints regardless of their experience. In other contexts, Hu and Baumann (2014), Saban, Kocbeker, and Saban (2007), and Seferoğlu et al. (2009) found differences in teachers’ cognition depending on their levels of instruction, experience, and gender. Therefore, future studies need to have more participants to further investigate the interwoven impact of various background variables on teachers’ cognition regarding reading instruction.

Two common factors have, however, emerged from the current study: a learner-centered view and the belief in the importance of L2 Japanese reading. Both factors are supported by the findings obtained from the two data collection methods. The former finding is shared by numerous studies (e.g., Block, 1992; Oxford, et.al., 1998; Seferoğlu et al., 2009). The latter is an

encouraging finding, taking into consideration the possible low instrumental value of L2 Japanese reading capability, compared to that of English, as well as the seeming difficulty of teaching L2 Japanese reading due to its complicated orthography.

The interviews and the metaphor elicitation task also provide access to affective dimensions of the participants' cognition (Fisher, 2015; Huang & Feng, 2019), with both disclosing teachers' apprehension about their practices. For the metaphor elicitation task, metaphors for illustrating 'Teacher in a dilemma' such as "A noisy parrot" reflect "the selves we … despair becoming … the selves we have been," as Pugh, Hicks, and Davis (1997, p. 48) describe. Furthermore, the 'Teacher with time constraints' metaphors, along with the unprompted metaphors that emerged during interviews with T2 and T13 ("Window-cleaning" and "Juggling act") portray the participants' distress caused by their less-than-ideal teaching circumstances, including severe time constraints (Marcus, 2010).

The metaphor elicitation task did not specify whether the respondents should provide only one metaphor. Three respondents created two metaphors each for ER and IR, suggesting that, like the participants in Xiong, Li, and Qu (2015), they seem to have different conceptual classifications depending on the approaches they employ. The other authors created one metaphor each, which may invite the criticism that their metaphors portray only a part of their cognition regarding reading instruction. Such criticism is reasonable, but their metaphors are likely to illustrate their strongest views regarding reading instruction. Assuming this claim is correct, it can be said that learner-centeredness and the importance of reading hold the foremost place in 61.5% of the authors' minds. However, the adverse contextual variables pointed out by the interviewees (grammar dominant curricula and severe time constraints) imply that their practices may not align with what they believe. In short, the findings from the two methods suggest a possible incongruence between the participants' cognitions and the practices allowed by their circumstances.

Many of the participants demonstrated what they *intuitively* and *experientially*, think, know, believe, and feel about factors that are vital to reading instruction. For example, ER promoters 'know' and 'feel' that the approach enhances learners' L2 reading motivation and fluency. T2 and T11 believe in the virtues of top-down reading. Similarly, T3 thinks that for students, reading classes are a space of meaning-negotiation with peers. T6, T8, and T10, all of whom are L1 English teachers of Japanese who have mastered L2 Japanese reading, believe that grammar-translation plays a contributory role. The interviewees also show a strong faith in the importance of reading for learners' mastery of the target language. Those who are 'Teachers who watch over or help students' perceive themselves as an "Escort runner" to support autonomous learners.

Such thoughts, knowledge, beliefs, and feelings can be guided by theories of reading (Macalister, 2012) and reinforced by vigorous collegial discourse. However, the reality seems to be the opposite. For example, the fact that none of the interviewees emphasized the importance of fluency in reading instruction upon the researcher's prompt implies that the everyday practical factors they are faced with supersede such a notion, even if it is actively discussed among reading pedagogues. If these practitioners were better informed by theories of reading, they would arguably be more likely to ask themselves whether or not their reading instruction is nurturing well-rounded reading abilities, perceive why fluency is a significant component, acknowledge what they need to do to develop learners' fluency, and, ultimately, have a better understanding what ER achieves. Concurrently, most of the interviewees declared that there is little collegial, interactive discourse among practitioners about reading instruction. L1 Japanese

speaker teachers would likely benefit from hearing what L1 English teachers of Japanese say about the virtues of grammar-translation that is often used in IR classes. The beliefs in grammar-translation held by the latter teachers could create a balanced notion of ER and IR during collegial discourse, and would align with theoretical discussions about well-rounded L2 programs (Nation, 2007). Similarly, a scholar-practitioner with broad contrastive linguistic knowledge like T16, could inform colleagues of effective methods of reading instruction from theory-based perspectives through collegial discourse.

CONCLUSION

This study, which is possibly the first on L2 Japanese teacher cognition of reading instruction, concurs with previous studies in regard to teachers having a lack of formal teacher education, learner-centered views, positive perceptions toward ER, and numerous situational obstacles such as time constraints. Significantly, it also finds that the participants commonly held a firm belief in the importance of reading for learners' mastery of Japanese despite the challenging nature of teaching and learning of L2 Japanese reading (as well as the possibly low utilitarian value of L2 Japanese reading capability). The study also suggests that having access to theoretical knowledge regarding reading instruction can enhance such positive attitudes held by the participants.

A metaphor elicitation task employed in this exploratory study enabled the participants to express their thoughts, knowledge, beliefs, and emotions regarding reading instruction. Although metaphor elicitation may contain shortcomings, if future relevant studies recurrently employ this tool, along with methodological improvements, it may create an established research agenda ('metaphorical images of L2 reading teachers') which is currently lacking in the research context of L2 teacher cognition regarding reading instruction.

Limitations

This study has some limitations in terms of trustworthiness. First, the use of purposive sampling rather than random sampling and the possible unfamiliarity of metaphor elicitation, despite its relatively established state as a research method, may have affected the credibility of this study. At the same time, factors such as using tactics to ensure honesty in the participants, iterative questioning, and acknowledging its shortcomings (Shenton, 2004) hopefully serve to enhance the study's trustworthiness. This study's transferability is also limited since the participants were predominantly teachers working in tertiary education and were mainly from Japan, the US, and New Zealand. Furthermore, overlapping methods such as, obtaining long-term written narratives from the metaphor authors in addition to the metaphor elicitation task, could have enhanced the study's dependability. Lastly, while open-ended metaphor elicitation and constructionist-oriented interviews aimed to enable participants to explore their experiences and ideas in their own accounts, the guiding questions inevitably included the researcher's predispositions, which may have negatively affected the study's confirmability to some extent.

There are also other limitations of this study that need to be addressed by further research. These include: a lack of classroom observation; a failure to investigate the influences created by locality and institutional level; and a lack of investigation of learners' views on the role of reading instruction in their language development.

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APPENDIX A
Guiding questions for interviews

- Are you an avid reader in your L2?
- Have you had formal training?
- What aspect do you emphasize most strongly when you teach reading?
- Is the importance of reading instruction the same as that of the other three skills?
- Do you think you have enough instructional knowledge to teach reading classes?
- Can you get enough resources?

- Do you feel that institutional accountability creates limitations on your reading instruction?
- Do you believe that your students will master L2 Japanese reading?
- Can reading instruction be removed from a language curriculum?
- Are there any contextual problems you face?
- Do you try alternative instructional approaches other than Intensive Reading?

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