

Developing a principled approach to the teaching of reading in the classroom

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要 約

本論文は教室において最新の学問的リテラシー理論を使い長崎外国語大学でのリーディングクラスのための一連の指導原理を確立する試みとそれを筆者のクラスで実際に実践する試みについての考察である。論文の最初の部分はリテラシー分野における最新理論を参照しながら、このコンテキストにおける筆者が選ぶ指導理論の背後にある理論的根拠を詳述し吟味することを試みる。第二番目にはこれらの理論をリーディング指導の実践に応用し、選ばれたテキストに関わる異なった段階での作業に使われるリーディング活動の特定の例に焦点を当てる。これらの活動の内2つは学生にテキストに関心を向けさせるよう考案された「リーディング前」の活動であり、2つは学生がいっそう詳細にテキストの意味を理解しようとするのを助けるよう考案された「リーディング中」の活動となるであろう。

Abstract

This paper is a reflection of an attempt to formulate a set of teaching principles for reading classes at Nagasaki University of Foreign Studies using current academic theories of literacy in the classroom and attempts to implement them practically in my classes. The first part of the paper will attempt to detail and then discuss the rationale behind my chosen set of teaching principles in this context, making reference to current theories in the field of literacy. In the second part of the paper I will attempt to apply these theories to the practice of teaching reading and highlight specific examples of reading activities for use at different stages of working with a chosen text. Two of these activities will be “before-reading” activities designed to orient students to the text and two will be “during-reading” activities designed to help students engage in a more detailed way with the meanings of the text.

At first it is necessary to explore the context of the students I teach as this will have some affect on the principles underpinning my practice in the teaching of reading at Nagasaki University of Foreign Studies. Firstly, the students are young adults who have been studying English in a formal setting for around 6 years or more. To have gained access to the reading course students will have to have previously demonstrated some competence in English reading skills, either through the entrance examination while undergoing enrollment to the school, or placement tests that determine the class they are in. Based on my knowledge of the Japanese school system it is also safe to assume that students will have encountered what Mary Kalantzis and Bill Cope (1993) describe as “the traditional curriculum of a classical canon from the layout of the classroom, to student discipline”, including “teacher dominated talk that requires student recitation”. They would also have studied most of their English from a textbook “one of the most distinctive icons of the traditional curriculum of a classical canon”(Kalantzis and Cope, 1993). Within this classroom experience Kalantzis and Cope argue that if the aim of education

is “to teach socially relevant things or a critical understanding of the nature of a culturally diverse, industrial society” it is “irrelevant nonsense”. This has implications on how students have engaged with reading texts in the past and their “ways of taking from books which seem natural in school” (Heath 1994) and where students need to be offered greater opportunity in the activities they undertake. Heath’s concept of “literary events” entails that students follow “socially established rules for verbalizing what they know from and about the written material”. In presenting texts to students it is therefore necessary to take into account these “rules” in order to make the texts as accessible as possible and engineer ways to develop their engagement with texts further. Finally, we must consider the current contexts in which students experience texts. In the university students have chances to interact with English on a regular basis, either in the classroom, through meeting foreign students or even if they are to study abroad in their second year. Students therefore experience a wide range of “literary practices and events” (Hood and Joyce, 1996) and this has implications for the activities we undertake in class in order to practice contexts where they can use the language again in domains outside of the classroom, in “family, community, [or] work”. In class it is important to tailor activities that prepare for events where students can “use their knowledge of the culture and society as they engage with a number of related written texts”.

With this context in mind it is now necessary to formulate a set of teaching principles for these students when they undertake one of the core reading programmes in their first or second year of study at the university. A first step towards doing this is to provide my own definition of literacy with particular reference to the context I have outlined. Freebody and Luke (1990) claim that it is not possible to “determine any final, categorical criteria for ‘adequate’ or ‘functional’ literacy (Resnick and Resnick 1977), they claim that we can only describe expectations in terms of “the shifting civil, socio-cultural and job credential demands that any particular culture places on its members in their dealings with written text”. So my definition of literacy in the university context will be what I want the students to be able to do, what the university demands of them (civil and social-cultural demands) and what literacy domains they are likely to encounter when they graduate (job credential demands). Freebody and Luke further provide four “components of success” based on “our perceptions of what our culture expects, here and now, from people in their management of texts.” If I adapt these components to the context I have outlined we therefore have the beginnings of a set of principles that can underpin my own reading programmes, namely: “code breaker”, “text participant”, “text user” and “text analyst”. In designing my programme it is necessary for me to consider how I offer these these “literacies” to my classes. In order to do this effectively I must therefore employ a range of methodologies when tackling texts with my students whether it be with basic skills in mind, a communicative English or a critical approach.

Another set of principles that provide a firm foundation for my reading programme can draw from the Hood and Knightly (1991) longitudinal case study research project undertaken in New South Wales AMES in 1990 and 1991. The project aimed to “illustrate the changes in learners’ written language over the course of their formal language tuition” (Hood and Joyce, 1996). The study found that during many classes where students were presented with texts the “potential links to concrete experience of students were often not exploited or made apparent by the teachers”. Having previously outlined the literacy events that many of my students will experience the recommendations of the study seem to provide a very sound basis for my reading programmes, it recommends: “introduced to written texts in a context where there is a very close connection to familiar concrete real world events and concerns, that the purpose in reading the text is meaningful, and that the meaning in the text is made as accessible as possible through clarity of presentation” (Hood and Knightly 1991, in Hood and Joyce 1996). In the Nagasaki University of Foreign Studies there is great scope for concrete real world English

events and it is therefore important that the activities in my classes reflect these events in a meaningful way. Further to this is an investigation by Gerot (1989, from Hood and Joyce 1996) that showed that “good readers were very easily able to make the right decisions and to explain how they were able to do the task through use of knowledge of the text types and the related language features; that is they recognized the text types from the titles and predicted what language features would occur within each text”. Through experiencing texts previously and learning their structures, their social purposes and their grammar and language features, students were able to “predict, to sample language and to apply different reading strategies”. In my classroom therefore activities should provide knowledge about these structures, purposes and grammars and provide experience of a wide range of text types so that when they encounter them again, inside or outside of the classroom, they approach them with a basis of awareness and knowledge of the relationship between language and genre. This approach would also therefore encapsulate three of the four “components of success” outlined by Freebody and Luke. Namely, “code breaker”, whereby students are acquiring proficiency with the structured nature of spoken language – its components and their combinations”, the “text participant” whereby we limit the “use of texts about which learners have limited background knowledge [that can be] a hindrance to comprehension” and also that of a “text user” whereby students view literacy “as not entailing a solitary, individual act or process, but rather as a set of social practices undertaken with others” whereby students must know “what to do with text in particular social context other than those of the specialized site of the classroom” replicating “actual contexts of use and foreground interaction”.

Further evidence of the value of this “genre-based literary approach” is exemplified by Rose and Acevedo (2006) who state that “Genre-based approaches to western teaching reading and writing have been widely adopted in Australia and other western education systems, and have achieved spectacular improvements in student outcomes, from twice to more than four times expected rates of learning (from Martin and Rose, 2007). Halliday (1994) also claims, “as a language is manifested through its texts, a culture is manifested through its situations; so by attending to text-in-situation a child construes the code, and by using the code to interpret text s/he construes the culture” (in Martin and Rose 2007). Considering the context of Japanese education that was detailed earlier Martin and Rose further outline the orientation that the concept of genre and genre structure based structure offer to the similar school context of China which also has “traditional grammatical knowledge to build on”, detailing that it provides “a context for introducing discourse analysis and functional grammar in ways that are meaningful for language teachers and subject teachers and their students”. A genre based approach therefore allows for literacy defined as a set of skills involved with decoding letters on a page and further as a process of comprehension which occurs as a result of interaction between letters on a page and the reader’s cognitive processing abilities and finally the notion that literacy can be seen as a social construct. With a genre based approach, as well as traditional interpretations of literacy we also see literacy as something which is embedded in the social and cultural fabric of society. A genre based approach therefore allows us to employ a range of methodologies in the classroom when approaching texts with the students that draw on what they already know, as well as creating experiences for the future.

What a genre-based also clearly allows therefore is a teaching approach that encapsulates the last of Freebody and Luke’s four components, that of a “text analyst”. Freebody and Luke argue that it is a necessary status of a reader to involve “conscious awareness of the language and idea systems that are brought into play when a text is used”. A genre based approach that delves into discourse analysis and functional grammar allows us as readers to view the language of the text and study how the writer of such a text “covertly positions us as readers into ordering our sense-making procedures within an ideological perspective”. A discussion of tenor and mode of a text born from a genre-based approach allow us

to consider the social role of the grammatical features of the text. The purpose of a text influences grammatical as well as structural choices. For example, as Butt et al (2000) describe an expository text as one that is used to justify and argument or put forward a point of view. According to Butt this genre exhibits very specific structural and grammatical references. An expository text will have a structured “position statement” for example, and grammatically the conjunctions in the text will show reasons and conditions. Adversative conjunctions are used to present a contrasting or opposing idea to the one being justified and clauses that support the argument have conjunctions that are nominalised. We also see examples of modality in the exposition text. A study of these structural and grammatical features will allow a critical approach to the text and highlight the fact that “language use is not neutral” (Hood and Joyce, 1996). A teacher should aim to enable students to see that “written texts present different world views, social purposes, intentions and perspectives”. Hood and Joyce claim that “this skill of reading the ideological message of a text is again seen to come from understanding the social purpose of the text and how the language choices within the text attempt to position the reader into a particular world view”.

Using Freebody and Luke’s “literacies” as a foundation and a genre-based approach to texts in the classroom it is therefore possible to outline an effective overall philosophy about the teaching of reading within Nagasaki University of Foreign Studies. A philosophy that doesn’t ask whether a basic skills, a communicative or critical approach to reading is most appropriate, but one which requires a range of methodologies in the classroom to enable students to use texts effectively across a range of discourses and tasks. As Kalantzis and Cope (1993) argue, “we must ask what lessons can we learn from this critical dialogue between pedagogies?” It is now necessary to apply these principles to practice and design a set of activities for use at different stages of working with a text. Here I will choose a text for one of my classes and explain its relevance to that group of learners. I will describe 4 learning activities in detail and the rationale behind them with reference to the theories outlined previously. As far as possible I will try to offer 4 activities than that comply with Freebody and Luke’s “heuristic guide for literacy educators”.

Firstly the text I have chosen can be found in Appendix 1 or online at <http://www.guardian.co.uk/food/Story/0,,1520739,00.html> (**Monday July 4, 2005**). It is entitled “Savour the whale”, and comes from the British, Guardian Newspaper. The piece is a special report on whale eating in Japan. The learners I will use this text with are second year “British Culture Course” students. I chose the text because the Field is something that I can make relevant to their own lives outside of the classroom during initial discussions to get them interested in the reading. Also, these British Culture students can begin to see a British viewpoint on whale eating, which they may or may not agree with. This “viewpoint” nature of the text also allows much scope for us later being text analysts and users. The newspaper report genre is also a good starting point for introducing a genre-based approach to texts. They are usually clearly structured and the grammatical choices within the texts are often very easy to identify. It is also appropriate to the English ability of the students in the class, who will see newspapers and websites as an interesting way to provide “literacy events” in their life as they try to find out more about the UK and try out their reading skills. In Japan newspapers and the internet are ideal ways for students to access British culture and texts where they might otherwise struggle. The language is also contemporary and interesting, giving good insight into any cultural differences they may encounter if they study abroad later in the year. This group of students are very interested in young people’s attitudes in the UK, particularly towards Japan and this Field is one which may even surprise them a little as we read it from a British ideological perspective. Hopefully this will cause them to think more about their own opinions and how they would phrase them if they were creating their own texts. The strengths in the class are their interest in British culture and eagerness to tackle tasks that are challenging for them. They are also very open to new ideas

and ways of learning as well as having a firm foundation in a traditional approach to literacy. The difficulties might perhaps be their rather naive view of different viewpoints on whale-eating, particularly in British culture, and the onus of the article on how strange and perhaps negative eating whale is might create some confusion if the cultural context is not discussed beforehand. The article also contains many vocabulary items that were not intended for second language learners, certain idioms and puns will not be readily identifiable to the students. However, on discussion of these aspects of the texts in the class, students will hopefully develop a deeper understanding of cultural and linguistic context.

Task 1: “before-reading:

Task 1 would entail a general group discussion of views on eating whale meat. I would first introduce the Field by mentioning to students that last night I had eaten some whale for the first time and asking them if they had ever tried it. This would bring the topic alive and they would be able to construct English sentences based on their own past experiences. It would also “build the field” (Rothery, in Martin and Rose, 2007). After a brief discussion of taste, shops and so on – I would bring up the notion of the different moral attitudes to eating whale meat around the world, particularly Britain. Explaining that it is the first time that I have eaten whale because in Britain it is not available. At this point I would ask them why they think this is, though I know from previous experience that students are usually aware of how taboo the subject can be from speaking to British exchange students at social events or from reading newspapers. At this point it would therefore be possible to arrange students in groups of 4 to make lists of reasons why whale hunting should be banned or be allowed to continue. The final choice of question for discussion would depend on student awareness of the subject. Hopefully the fact that I have eaten whale meat myself will allow students to be more comfortable in supporting the idea. It would also be important for students to consider both sides of the argument so that we can use this knowledge to help our text analysis later. During discussion I would ask students to jot down any vocabulary they needed to look for in their dictionaries, or words that they used more than once or twice. We would then brainstorm the ideas they discussed in groups on the board, particularly highlighting any useful vocabulary and in this way we build up the Field of the text. At this stage the challenge has been to “foreshadow arguments to be developed in the exposition without starting to elaborate them and at the same time pick up on the different groups of ideas the students have already worked on” (Martin and Rose, 2007). Students have also been encouraged to “reflect on their own experiences relevant to the content and/or purpose of the text” (Hood and Joyce, 1996) whereby we are exploiting links to concrete experience that can be developed further later. This process of talking in groups also highlights the aspect of reading as a social process: that later when we read the text, as an exposition piece, we are supposed to interact with it in a way that connects reader and writer and that what is written is based on ideology and a message. A newspaper report is also a literary domain that students are likely to encounter fairly frequently in family, community, work and education. This group discussion also allows the integration of spoken and written language that Hood and Joyce describe as “significant” in the impact of functional linguistics on language teaching. If students can understand further the linguistic choices that are characteristically employed in spoken and written interactions, they can later enjoy a more critical awareness “and control of a variety of text types”.

Task 2: “before-readings”

Task 2 requires students learning their role as a Code Breaker and Text Participant through a series of vocabulary and comprehension activities. This task then also ensures a range of methodologies are employed.

At first I would provide a list of useful vocabulary from the text to the students, hopefully containing some of the vocabulary they had highlighted in task 1. Freebody and Luke argue that “to be a successful reader, an individual needs to successfully engage with the technology of the script”. The list would contain vocabulary items that they may not understand, but also ones which are key to future discussion of modality and critical analysis. For example, “savour, nightmares, veggies, trepidation, black and chewy”. At first I might simply drill the sounds and spellings of these words with the students, particularly if I feel they have never encountered them before. However, the key reason for the task would also be to ensure the students understand these vocabulary items in context. I would therefore ask students in groups to list the words on a line whereby the top of the line symbolizes a positive word and the bottom of the line represents a negative word. In this way students become “Text Participants” as they are beginning to “construct a meaning which . . . reciprocated the intentions of the writer” (Freebody and Luke, 1990). Students can begin to understand the way in which the writer intends his words to be interpreted and also provides a background knowledge to aid comprehension. To enhance further the role of code breaker I would also ask one person from each group of students to write the words and positive to negative line on the board with the other students spelling out and reminding the scribe where the words should be placed, how they sound and how they are spelt. To develop this further it might also be useful at this point to ask students to pre skim-read the text and answer some simple true or false comprehension questions. Students would be instructed to skim-read using key words in the questions to find the answers as quickly as possible: for example,

Decide whether the following statements are True or False according to the text:

1. The author enjoyed his whaleburger.
2. The author enjoyed his whale sushi.
3. Young Japanese do not like whale meat much.
4. Older Japanese have good memories of whale meat.
5. Most Japanese are in favour of a ban on hunting whales.
6. Selling whale meat is against the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling.

In this way students are achieving some background knowledge of the text before we read and deconstruct it together. It also gives them a chance to ask me any vocabulary or grammatical questions they encounter.

Task 3: ‘during-reading’

Task 3 would include a “Preparing before reading” (Martin and Rose) and a “Detailed reading” discussion of the text as it is read aloud by myself. During this discussion I would outline the social function and stages of the newspaper genre and a summary of the text’s field. I would paraphrase each paragraph of the text so that students found it more accessible and finally summarise the piece as a whole on the board. Coupled with the previous vocabulary and comprehension exercise

this would hopefully allow students to follow the reading aloud with understanding. The paraphrasing and questioning may follow something like this:

Teacher: ‘The title of the newspaper report introduces the key theme behind the story and also some of the differences between Japanese and British culture. The title is actually a pun, what do you think is meant by “savour the whale”?’

I would ask about the meaning of the word “savour” and also introduce the slogan “save the whale” if students cannot guess the pun. At this stage students are hopefully becoming text analysts. Hopefully here students will begin to see the structures used in the newspaper genre. I would highlight the tenor of the piece. A good way to do this would be to compare the discussion they had in Task 1 with the newspaper report. The newspaper report is engaging in high affective involvement in order to get its message across. The reporter talks of his “trepidation” and the whole piece contains many features we might see in spoken text, for example its dialogic nature “No, it doesn't taste like chicken.” And how action is not so much reflected on as experienced together “get to the counter and find that I'm in luck.” representing the world he is experiencing almost as a process. The word “nightmare” in relation to eating whale at the start of the text immediately creates a contrary point of view to what the students may understand. There are also key lexical items in the text carrying the key information in each sentence and these would be highlighted on the board, such as “Traditionally in Japan. . .”, “Opinion polls show. . .” or “The Japanese government points out . . .”. In this way students are allowed to become “Text analysts” developing a “conscious awareness of the language and idea systems that are brought into play when a text is used” (Martin and Rose). The text itself is Anglocentric, which is something that I think the students will pick up on fairly quickly, thus highlighting to them the ideological perspective of the piece. Whale eating is seen as a “veggies nightmare” in the opening paragraph, which is not particularly culturally relevant to the Japanese students. The students can only really make sense of the report as a whole by positioning themselves in the place of the English reporter as he explores this strange new land of Japan. The reader very much has to adopt an Anglocentric approach to the text to be able to appreciate it fully. This context should be made very clear to the students so that they can approach the piece critically.

Task 4 – ‘during-reading’ This task aims at allowing students to become Text Users in the classroom. In this case I would reread the text positioning myself as the reporter himself. I would then challenge the students to respond to me as though the text is part of a debate, questions such as “do you agree that . . .?”, or “do you think this is correct?”. After reading “In fact, it is more like a cross between sweet and sour pork and a very cheap steak” for example, I could ask students if they agree that whale meat tastes quite bad, particularly students who perhaps were very supportive of the taste of whale meat in Task 1. Students would therefore be interacting with the text as though it were alive. In this way reading the text becomes a social event – a debate of sorts, as Freebody and Luke claim “it is through social interactions around literacy events that we learn our position as reader and our notion of what for us the texts are for”. In this way I will also be demonstrating the desired form an expository or newspaper report must take with its arguments and justifications coupled with high affective involvement. The students will then be able to understand what to do with this type of expository text, either in a spoken or written domain, in other contexts.

These tasks would ideally follow and precede a great number more related tasks in order to build up a firmer understanding of genre through comparison and experience. It would also be useful to cross literacy domains, into reading and writing or even speaking and listening so that students could develop a greater understanding of languages in different contexts.

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Appendix

Savour the whale

It's a delicacy the Japanese just can't seem to leave behind and now it's being served in a bun. Eric Johnston samples the stuff of a veggie's nightmares - the whaleburger

Monday July 4, 2005

The Guardian

No, it doesn't taste like chicken. In fact, it is more like a cross between sweet and sour pork and a very cheap steak. My first bite into a whaleburger causes trepidation, uncertain of what to expect. While whale sushi and sashimi restaurants are ubiquitous in Japan, burgers are most definitely not. Foreign visitors can find a variety of sandwiches not available at most local fast food restaurants back home, but Lucky Pierrot, the restaurant chain based in the port of Hakodate, has decided to broaden its repertoire.

Even without whale on the menu, Lucky Pierrot would stand out. The restaurant serves 16 different varieties of hamburgers (including scallop, shrimp, Chinese chickenburgers) and 10 different kinds of curry and 12 different kinds of ice cream. Virtually everyone in the shop, just a stone's throw from the waterfront, is around high school or college age. It's nearly 3.30pm and I had been warned by the friendly owner the day before that, as only 20 whaleburgers a day were available, they could be sold out by the time I arrived.

I get to the counter and find that I'm in luck. One whaleburger coming up. After paying for the order and receiving a ticket (number 97), I sit down and wait for my number to come up. On the surrounding walls are photos of carousel animals and famous TV actors eating Lucky Pierrot dishes (though not whaleburgers, it seems). A large teddy bear, wearing a company T-shirt, sits in the corner.

When the whaleburger arrives, it has been deep fried and placed on a bun with lettuce and mayonnaise. It was black and chewy. The cost was 380 yen (£1.90). I look around to see if I am the only one eating a whale. It appears that I am.

Selling whaleburgers was not originally Lucky Pierrot's idea. Earlier this year, the restaurant sent out a survey asking customers what new foods they would like to see on the menu. Responses showed the number-one choice was for "Ghengis Khan" burgers. In Japanese-English, this means thin strips of barbecued lamb, which is all the rage in the province of Hokkaido. The second choice was whale.

Given the long history of whaling in Japan, and the fact that whale meat is easily available in any port, such as Hakodate, it is perhaps not surprising that somebody would eventually add whaleburgers to their menu - for the tourist trade, if nothing else. Hakodate is one of the most beautiful cities in Japan and has a long association with the world's biggest mammal. Lying in the extreme southwest of Hokkaido, it was the port where Japanese whalerships would deposit their catches. In 1854, after Hakodate had been visited by US Commodore Matthew Perry and his fleet (who wanted, among other things, to secure safe harbours in Japan for the New England whaling ships then sailing the Pacific), the Japanese government opened their country up to the western world.

Now the city is a popular destination for Japanese tourists, seeking to escape the sweltering summers elsewhere in the country. Shops across the harbour provide them with a vast array of seafood; huge frozen whole salmon, live crabs and a package clearly labeled "whale bacon". Beside it sits a small can of something called "red meat" in Japanese. When asked, a fishmonger says it's a euphemism for whale.

Traditionally in Japan, whale meat was enjoyed mainly by coastal communities. But the foodstuff is also fondly remembered by many older Japanese in the cities - and not just for its taste. In immediate postwar years in Tokyo, when food was scarce, other meat too expensive, and people were starving to death, whale meat kept many alive. In addition, whale oil was given to a generation of Japanese children as a vitamin supplement. In some places, it continues to be served as a staple in school lunch boxes.

It is this combination of postwar memories and a desire to preserve ancient traditions of coastal whaling that is driving much of the public demand for whale meat. But while Lucky Pierrot may be unique in selling it in burger form, whale meat in Hakodate is quite common; the ninth of each month is designated "Whale Day", when shops and local restaurants offer discounts on their usual prices.

Later, I meet with Inge Arnold, a young Australian woman, and her friend Takashige Arai at a local sushi restaurant, the name of which translates as "Squid Festival". Squid, indeed, is one of the many varieties of sushi offered, but so is minke whale. Arnold, who worked briefly in the Hakodate fish market, refuses to touch the whale sushi. But Arai and I dig in. Unlike the whaleburger, this sushi is red, tender and juicy, and has a taste, we agree, that is somewhere between tuna and mackerel.

While Hakodate merchants are well aware of the international controversy over the killing of whales, they are bewildered, and sometimes defensive, when confronted with the protestations of anti-whaling campaigners. After news of Lucky Pierrot's whaleburgers spread, the restaurant's management were inundated with angry letters and emails.

"We're not unique. Whale meat is widely available at many places in Japan," said Miku Oh, a spokesman for Lucky Pierrot. Opinion polls show that the majority of the Japanese public are against a comprehensive whaling ban. A survey of 5,000 people, conducted by the country's Fisheries Agency in 2001, found that only 22.6% of those asked were in favour of a complete whaling ban, including the hunting of minke whales which the Japanese government have claimed are abundant, while 39% opposed such a move.

In truth, much of the meat available in Hakodate, and Japan in general, is not from whales found in local waters but those killed for research purposes in waters as far away as Antarctica. The Japanese government points out that the International Convention for the Regulation of Whaling requires that the by-products of whale research be processed, and that whale meat on the market, whether it ends up as burgers, bacon, or sushi, fulfills the treaty obligation, while the sale of the meat helps to partially offset research costs.

However, whale appears to be something of an acquired taste and, after growing up on a diet of fast food, not many young people seem to be acquiring it. "Right now, I'd say most of my friends far prefer other forms of seafood to whale. Especially here in Hakodate, where salmon and crab are so widely available," said Jun Matsuda, a college student from Tokyo who was visiting with his friends. "Whale meat is what my parents ate when they were young, and they said it wasn't very good. I've not seen the whaleburger, and I don't think I want one."

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