

## *Silence is Golden*

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*When you sit down to read the newspaper in the morning, do you read it aloud ? I suspect not. Why then are students asked to read aloud from their textbooks in English class ? People do not usually read aloud in their native language; therefore, students should not be asked to read aloud in a second language. It is difficult to concentrate on speaking and reading at the same time.*

*This example shows how the skills students have developed to read Japanese are not being used to read English. Students need to be taught how to transfer good reading skills from Japanese to English.*

*Preparation is one way to help students transfer these skills. Prepare them for what they are going to read before they read it. Decide in what way the topic is interesting to them. Think of a way to present it on their level.*

*For example:*

- ask students to read the title and predict the topic of the passage*
- use pictures*
- bring real objects into the classroom*
- discuss in Japanese what the students know about the topic*

*The goal is to get the students ready to read the English passage by eliciting and establishing the information they already know about it in Japanese. They do this automatically when reading Japanese, but they need to be reminded of this step when reading English.*

*Guidance is another way to help students transfer good reading skills. Give them a reason to read the text before they read it. Tell them why they are reading and what information they should look for.*

*For example:*

- give the students a few questions about the most important information in the passage, and tell them to find only the answers to these questions*
- ask the students to read for only the main idea*

Students will be more successful at reading English if they can use the good reading skills they have already developed. Teachers can help students transfer these reading skills from Japanese to English through preparation, guidance, and creative comprehension checks that help students see a connection between the textbook and their own lives—and no more reading aloud!

Such activities also help students make a connection between the textbook and the real world. They can better understand how the text is relevant to their lives. They can make these connections more easily when reading Japanese than they can when reading English. Such

The point here is to give students a chance to show they have comprehended what they have read, even if they don't have the ability to express that understanding in English. Such

show the results to the class

—have students interview each other using questions generated by the text and show they understand what they have read

—depending on the text, instruct students to draw charts, pictures, or graphs to the text

—help groups or pairs of students make a short comic strip (manga) based on

—ask the students to summarize the passage in their own words in Japanese

—tell the students if they correctly predicted the topic of the passage

For example:

an English text. There are, however, many ways to check comprehension.

check their understanding. Students usually answer a list of questions after reading

For this reason, after preparing and guiding her students, a teacher will want to

Comprehension will result if students are transferring reading skills to English.

is similar to the way they read Japanese.

while reading in English instead of worrying about the meaning of every word. This

The aim here is to train students to look for important information and main ideas