

英語教材としての人文科学修士論文

MA Thesis as an English Teaching Material

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Abstract

As a high school English teacher since 2022, my main concern has been cultivating students' intellectual curiosity. Therefore, I have been striving to identify the most effective approach to teaching English, particularly for students who lack interest in the subject matter. In this regard, I have discovered one promising solution - utilizing my Master's thesis, written in English as a requirement for my graduate studies at the University of Helsinki, as teaching material. This article explores the challenges of selecting appropriate educational materials for high school students based on my ongoing experiences as an English teacher. Also, I focus on how my academic background and job experience can help broaden students' point of view for their future plans. Besides, I have an ongoing problem; what topics should be chosen to teach English in my stories? I would be very grateful if you could provide me with some tips about it (contact: hayashi-yo@hs.hus.ac.jp).

1. Introduction (Purpose)

As a high school English teacher, I have been contemplating how to cultivate students' intellectual curiosity. In ancient Greece, Aristotle states at the top of *Metaphysics* that we by nature ask for knowledge; I totally agree with his viewpoint. Attaining wisdom can contribute to our overall well-being. Therefore, I believe that one of the critical factors in motivating students is to provide learning materials which can stir the interest of students. To that end, as an instructional resource, I have chosen my own dissertation, which covers a diverse range of topics such as linguistics, art, philosophy, history, and chemistry.



(a) Location of Kucha.

2. Method

In my English lecture, I incorporated my MA (Master of Arts) thesis, which I wrote at Helsinki University, as educational material. I presented a PowerPoint slideshow in both English and Japanese, and projected it onto a screen for students.

I can provide additional information and a detailed explanation of the content as an author of the thesis. The thesis underwent reviews by several researchers including my supervisor. In this respect, the quality of English must be assured. Furthermore, I can utilize my academic background to influence students' career planning.



(b) Location of the Kizil Grottoes.

In particular, as evidenced by my work on, I possess considerable experience in both academic and business. I sincerely hope that my stories can help students with their future planning.

3. My Background

I was born and raised in Japan, and obtained my first degree in Ancient Greek Philosophy from Hokkaido University. The subject of my final thesis was *Philia in Aristotle's Nicomachean Ethics*, under the supervision of Professor Kei Chiba (千葉恵). I also focused on issues of cultural relativism. In 2010 as a scholarship student, I conducted research on Aristotle's Philosophy at Oxford University in the UK and Sorbonne University in France and participated in a Japan and China Youth Group for Friendship Student program, where I visited China.

After graduating from Hokkaido University, I joined Mitsubishi Rayon, which is currently a major division of Mitsubishi Chemical Holdings Group. I was involved in a corporate-wide project to establish a common IT infrastructure system, SAP, for all departments. In 2008 Mitsubishi Rayon Co. acquired the Lucite International group (previously part of ICI), and this project was a major challenge to create synergies.



(c) Outlook of the Kizil Grottoes (the western area).

Then, I moved to Finland and pursued a degree in Comparative Linguistics at Helsinki University under the guidance of Professor Juha Janhunen. Additional areas of study included Ethnics, Folklore, Cultural Relativism, Chinese language, and Fine Arts Studies. As a master's degree student at Helsinki University, I had an opportunity to visit several countries for research and conduct fieldwork with research grants including China (Beijing University in 2017-2018 and Minzu University of China in 2018-2019) and Japan (Kyoto University in 2018).

In 2019, I graduated from Helsinki University and returned to Japan, before moving to Sapporo in 2022 for my current career.

4. MA Thesis⁽¹⁾

From August 2018 to July 2019, I was awarded the Chinese Government Scholarship and conducted research on ethnic and art studies at Minzu University of China in Beijing. During my research, I conducted fieldwork on art techniques and painting materials used in Kizil grottoes murals of Kucha in Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region.

My MA Thesis was written in English, and focused on blueness of lapis lazuli used in the Kizil Grottoes in China. The main purpose of the thesis was to investigate the role and origin of the lapis lazuli used in the caves, including how it was used, where it came from and who used it.

The dissertation started by exploring the techniques used for purifying lapis lazuli and its different uses. Then, I analyzed the different shades of blue present in the Kizil Grottoes Murals and their layout and how the different shades were used to emphasize the importance of motifs.

The purification of lapis lazuli, used to produce different types of blue color, has a long history and has evolved with the development of new chemicals. This paper aims to shed light on how the different variations of the concept of "blueness", expressed by three different Japanese kanjis (Chinese characters), 青(ao), 碧(ao), and 蒼(ao), influenced the roles and use of these different types of blue in the murals found in the Kizil Grottoes.

In my research, I also explored the origin of the lapis lazuli in the Kizil Grottoes. While Lapis lazuli used along the Silk Road has traditionally been believed to be exclusively produced in Afghanistan, the findings presented in my thesis cast doubt on this commonly accepted theory. Lapis lazuli was present in significant amounts only in the 224th cave in Kizil. As a result, the hypothesis is proposed that the lapis lazuli used in the 224th cave was not from Afghanistan but from a much closer location, namely, the Tibet and Qinghai regions of China.

In order to prove the hypothesis, while the study of art techniques and painting materials provides the primary theoretical background for this paper, other studies are also consulted. Specifically, archaeological and historical studies of the Silk Road, studies of the Kizil Grottoes, and other studies from linguistics, Buddhist studies, and art history are also extensively consulted.



(d) Svayamprabhā of the 205th cave.

5. Conclusion (Result)

I was able to capture the interest of students and around half a dozen of them asked me about my MA paper. Their inquiries were not only related to my study but also to other topics such as making friends with foreigners in Sapporo, establishing relationships with foreign universities, studying abroad, obtaining visas and scholarships, why I quit Mitsubishi, and more. I did not anticipate that they would ask about more complicated financial and legal issues.

However, I also found that the topic I presented may have been too challenging for them to fully comprehend without a more detailed explanation. This raises the question of what topics would be the most effective for teaching English and stimulating students' intellectual curiosity. I would greatly appreciate any tips or suggestions you could provide on this matter (contact: hayashi-yo@hs.hus.ac.jp). That is why I provided a detailed background of my thesis and its content in this paper.

My sincere hope is that my lecture will enhance students' language skills and stimulate their intellectual curiosity. By further improving their language skills and broadening their international perspective, I believe they will be keen to seek out roles involving multiple stakeholders in a global context and better understand their role in society.

With their enterprising spirit and ambition, I am confident they will be ready to actively participate in various endeavours anywhere in the world, not just in Japan.

6. Reference

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