Japanese Learners' Reading Strategies and Oral Interlanguages

Joseleanor M. Magno, Rowanne Marie R. Maxilom

Department of Communications, Linguistics and Literature University of San Carlos, Cebu, Philippines

Email address:
jmmagno28@yahoo.com (J. M. Magno), rmmaxilom@gmail.com (R. M. R. Maxilom)

Abstract: This study described and analyzed the reading strategies and interlanguage of EFL learners. Four Japanese subjects were tasked to read aloud, think aloud, and make comments to two short expository articles. Recorded oral reading activities, informal interviews, observations, and teachers' progress reports were used as instruments. Results revealed that monitoring strategies predominated among the reading strategies employed. Furthermore, first language phonological transfer evident in the phonological processes such as substitution, deletion, and addition of sounds were observed in the utterances. Consequently, Nihongo as the first language of the subjects affected their ability to accomplish their oral reading tasks with ease. These strategies and evidences of interlanguage reflected EFL learners' ways in understanding and articulating reading materials in English as a foreign language by using electronic dictionaries and asking the teachers for verification.

Keywords: English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Interlanguage, L1 and L2 Learners, Phonological Processes, Reading, Strategies

1. Introduction

Learning English as a foreign language (EFL) can be very challenging for the learners since they predominantly use their 1st language (e.g. Nihongo) in their home country like Japan. Learners are only exposed to English in schools when they have English courses as part of their curriculum in schools, language academies, ESL Language Centers, Online Tutorials, etc. The learners' exposure to the English language is very limited compared to countries that consider English as the medium of instruction. Consequently, these learners are evaluated to have low proficiency in the macro-skills, especially reading. Since reading, particularly reading aloud in the second language (L2), reveals influences of L1 and provides evidences of interlanguage, this activity plays an important role in second language acquisition.

So far, there have been many studies on reading strategies, think aloud, and interlanguage. Studies on reading focused on the effect of think aloud to reading comprehension [1]; investigated the reading activities using think aloud protocol among Dutch students who are good and weak readers [2]; examined the various factors that affect the students' reading activities by using think aloud protocol [3]; investigated think aloud with participants who are weak readers [4]; and used think aloud protocols in investigating the role of the first language in second language reading [5]. On the contrary, no local studies have focused on the reading skills of foreign language learners who are enrolled in a language academy located in the Philippines in general and Cebu in particular despite the influx of language academies for Koreans and other foreign language learners who have been in the Philippines for language learning.

Moreover, studies on interlanguage utilized oral reading [6] and oral narratives [7] in illustrating evidences of interlanguage in oral production; explored the influences of L1 in the Japanese learner's written production in L2 [8]; focused on Japanese speakers' perception of English nasal segments [9]; and looked into the learners' pronunciation and oral skills and identified phonological processes which reveal influences of L1 in second language acquisition and learning [10].

On the one hand, there has not been any study that combined the reading strategies of the learners of English as a foreign language and their interlanguage. Although there have been two local studies on interlanguage such as studies of Delfin [6] and Magno [7], their participants were Filipinos, not foreign language learners. Hence, there is a

need to conduct this study on reading strategies employed by four Japanese learners whose English is considered as their foreign language including their interlanguage as they read aloud and think aloud the two selected expository texts.

1.1. Reading and Think Aloud

This study adapted the reading strategies identified by Pressley and Afflerbach [5] which are classified into three types: (i) identifying strategies, (ii) monitoring strategies, and (iii) evaluating strategies. First, the *identifying strategies* include identifying and learning text content strategies which could be exemplified in two ways such as a) looking at related words and concepts and using these words to summarize the text and b) figuring out which information is important. Second, the *monitoring strategies* refer to the metacognitive processes used by readers to check comprehension. These strategies can be demonstrated through repeating the text and figuring out when the text is also read in other sources. Lastly, the *evaluating strategies* are evident as the readers make evaluations of the text. These strategies can be manifested when the readers express their approval or disapproval of the content, arguments, etc. Hence, recognizing these three categories of reading strategies is very essential to the readers.

McKeown & Gentilucci [1] examined whether the think aloud strategy affected the reading comprehension of the twenty-seven learners of English through administering pre-test and post-tests to the English learners. As shown in the results, only those students who are early advanced learners found think aloud effective. Those who belong to the intermediate subgroup were stuck in the word level while the participants who were early intermediate subgroup did not find the think aloud effective since they were short-circuited. Further, they used tests to determine if think aloud protocol contributed to the reading comprehension of the learners in English.

Moreover, Janssen, Braaksma & Rijlaarsdam [2] investigated the reading activities of Grade ten Dutch students who were known to be high achievers in literature categorized as good students and those who were unsuccessful in literature classes classified as weak students. The participants were tasked to read literary texts with specific genres such as fairy tale, science fiction, and realistic/psychological stories. Each story was divided into 1015 segments and each segment of episode was presented to the participants through a power point presentation for the purpose of employing think aloud. Based on the results of this study, good students frequently engaged in evaluative and emotional responding. These were activities that reflected a personal and subjective engagement with the stories. On the contrary, the weak readers frequently engaged in retelling and making inferences such as activities that were directed towards a reconstruction of the text.

Their study is related to the present study since both studies used think aloud protocols in examining the reading activities of the learners. However, this study used literary texts as materials for think aloud and used a power point presentation for the think aloud protocol.

Gaerlan's [3] study investigated how factors such as reading ability, interest, schema, and text types affect strategy choice as well as use. This study used think aloud protocols, Barnett questionnaires, and semi-structured interview in gathering the data. Results demonstrated that word monitoring was the commonly-used strategy in a narrative text while various strategies were used in reading an expository text. However, the present study focused on the reading strategies employed by the learners in expository texts only.

Berne [4] explored the think aloud protocol to fourteen adult learners who were considered as lowest readers in her class. The data were collected through field notes and audiotapes. Aside from the observations and audio-recorded data, this study also used follow-up interviews to validate the data results. Results revealed that college students still need to monitor their understanding of the text they read.

Furthermore, his study investigated the text-processing strategies of post-secondary students who were first year law students of the University of Oslo during learning from expository texts through a longitudinal research design. The instruments used in this study were think aloud protocols, videotapes from different reading sessions, and interviews concerning the readers' perceptions of the texts and their reading habits. The participants self-selected the texts that they were reading. Results illustrated that memorization, elaboration, organization, monitoring as well as evaluation were evident in the think-aloud protocols in each of the three reading sessions. The results also revealed that the students increased their use of organization and comprehension confirmation, however, decreased their use of problem detection and problem solving over the three reading sessions. The participants in Berne's [4] study used their own selected texts unlike the present study where the two expository texts were chosen by the first author.

Finally, Upton and Lee-Thompson's [5] study outlined how the L2 readers used their L1 in the L2 reading process. Specifically, their study aimed to answer the following research questions: (i) How do university-level L2 readers with different L2 proficiencies use their L1 as an aid to understanding an L2 general expository text? and (ii) In what contexts does the cognitive use of the L1 facilitate L2 comprehension? In this qualitative study, there were 2-participants who are native speakers of Chinese and Japanese enrolled in a Midwestern U. S. University. The gathering of data was performed through think aloud verbal protocols and retrospective interviews for clarification purposes. The results revealed that L1 was surely activated and used when the participants made sense of the L2 text. Also, the reliance of the first language declined as the participants' proficiency in the second language increases. Their study is very relevant in the present study since the methods used such as think aloud protocols and interviews were used.

Overall, the reviewed studies on reading and think aloud are quite related to the present study through the method used such as think aloud and analysis of the reading strategies

employed by the participants of the study. Most of the results demonstrated that learners tend to use monitoring strategies. However, learners with high proficiency tend to apply evaluating strategies.

1.2. Interlanguage

Selinker [11] defined the term interlanguage (IL) to refer to learner's mental grammar (i.e. neither the L1 nor the L2). This system occurs when the 'focus of the second language learning is on the learning process and the active part of the learners' [7]. He proposed four learning strategies that learners utilize to facilitate acquisition of another language: 1) *language transfer*, where the learner uses the L1 as a resource to facilitate acquisition/learning; 2) *overgeneralization (overuse)*, where an L2 rule is used inappropriately by learners; 3) *simplification*, where learners reduce or drop certain elements; and 4) *avoidance*, where learners hardly use certain structures. Since the present researchers can only address and assess the production that learners chose to show, the phonological transfer of L1 in L2 was particularly looked into in the present paper.

Zhong-yuan & Shu-yuan's [12] paper bridges the relationship between reading and interlanguage. They assert that as learner's input activity in studying another language, reading aloud reveals the 'construction' of interlanguage which evidently supports the acquisition and learning of second language. Specifically, Delfin [6] and Magno [7] supported the evidences of interlanguage in the learners' utterances through reading and narratives. Consequently, other studies [8-10] also demonstrated the Japanese and Korean learners' interlanguage in written data, pronunciation, and enunciation of words.

In a study conducted by Delfin [6], oral reading performance of pupils was assessed and analyzed using the framework of McGinnis & Smith [13]. Fifty Grade 1 pupils from Cebu were purposively and conveniently selected to participate in the oral reading activity. The children were instructed to read a Cebuano folktale in Cebuano and in English. Results indicated that among the seven errors in oral reading, substitution was preeminent in both languages but higher in English than in Cebuano, especially in terms of segmental substitution. This was followed by mispronunciation, omission, and insertion, respectively.

Segmental substitution refers to the replacement of a phoneme with another phoneme to form a new word (e.g. *jawgon* /'ʤaʊgən/ for *jargon* /'ʤɑrgən/) while mispronunciation refers to incorrect pronunciation of words (e.g. *bidness* /bɪdnəs/ for *business* /bɪznɪz/). Meanwhile, omission indicates omitting a sound or syllables (e.g. *enclo* /ənklo/ for *enclosed* /ənklozd/) while insertion indicates an addition of sound (e.g. *commong* /k^m∂ŋ/) for *common* /k^m∂n/). These findings revealed the existence of interlanguage as evident in the learners' oral production of the L2 text. Likewise, the present study aimed at identifying Japanese learners' oral interlanguage through an oral reading task.

On the other hand, instead of an oral reading task, Magno

[7] utilized oral narratives in studying multilinguals' interlanguage. Whether the learner's interlanguage conforms to or deviates from the norm of the target language was one of the major objectives of the study. Twenty 3rd year Communication Arts major in English and Filipino students who have been formally and informally exposed to English, Filipino and Cebuano for more than a year were purposively selected for this study. Aside from the elicited recorded narratives in English and Filipino, which served as the main research instrument, a structured interview was also conducted to establish the Cebuano participants' language background and language preference. As evident in the results, the oral interlanguage proficiency in a linguistically related language (Filipino) is higher than that in a language belonging to a different family of language (English). Correspondingly, although both researches reflect oral interlanguage, the present study only focused on L1's influence on one L2 whereas Magno's research involved two L2s.

Moreover, a study by Davies [8] elaborated the concept of interlanguage. He examined three instances where Japanese students' L1 will likely influence the written production in L2 Particularly, these categories include: 1.) items present in L1 but not in L2; 2.) items present in L1 and L2; and 3.) items present in L2 only. Moreover, specific areas were identified for each category. For item 1, inflection of adjectives for tense; for item 2, prepositions; and for item 3, English definite and indefinite articles. Fifteen original letters of the same length and four assessed written work composed by former students were used as materials for analysis. Results revealed that the most frequent type of error evident in the written discourse is made with English articles supporting Davies' claim that L2 only items prove more difficult for learners [8]. Although this study focused on the learners' written interlanguage, both Davies and the present study focused on Japanese learners as participants.

Related to the preceding study, Aoyama [9] also investigated Japanese learners of English but in a different context. Specifically, the study examined Korean and Japanese speakers' perception of English nasals and explored how learners' L1 influences the perception of L2 segments. Further, the perceived relation between English /m/, /n/, and /ŋ/ and Japanese categories were also looked into to determine the Japanese learners' difficulty of producing final /n/ and /ŋ/.

Two experiments were conducted to provide insights on the perception of English nasals and Japanese learners' difficulty of syllable-final production, specifically the /n/-/ŋ/ pair. For the first experiment, 20 native Korean speakers and 20 native Japanese speakers who have studied English in their countries but with limited exposure to an English speaking country participated in the study. Twenty English speakers also participated as a control group. Their ages ranged from early twenties to mid-fifties. The participants were individually tested in their respective countries: Seoul, Korea; Osaka, Japan; and Honolulu, Hawaii. Twenty pairs of monosyllabic English words, 5 pairs each for 4 various contrasts (i.e. syllable-initial /m/-/n/, syllable-final /n/-/ŋ/,

syllable-final /m/-/ŋ/, and syllable-final /m/-/n/) were utilized. Participants were tasked to listen to the tape-recorded target pairs, which were repeated twice, and to indicate the words they heard on the provided answer sheet.

Results revealed that both English and Korean speakers found the syllable-final /n/-/ŋ/ and /m/-/ŋ/ contrasts easier to distinguish than the syllable-initial and syllable-final /m/-/n/ contrasts. Conversely, Japanese speakers have particular difficulty in differentiating syllable-final /n/ and /ŋ/ than in other paired (final) contrasts. Given the initial findings, the second experiment was then conducted to give additional insights to Japanese learners' difficulty of /n/-/ŋ/ production. It was then found that in using Katakana, two or more classifications were used in syllable-final /n/ and /ŋ/. This study plays a significant role in the present study since segmental substitution is also looked into as evidence of interlanguage. However, instead of listening discrimination activities, read aloud and think aloud protocols were employed to elicit the phonological processes.

In addition, Keys' [10] longitudinal research project on English learners in Brazil contributed a number of valuable insights of first language influence on L2 acquisition particularly in the fields of pronunciation and oral skills University students who have more than 300 hours of EFL classes on a humanities course were the participants of the study. Reading aloud task and 5-minute recordings of impromptu dialogues were used as data. Findings showed that phonological processes were evident in the learners' production of the L2 text. In the same manner, the present study also investigated the phonological processes evident in the learners' reading aloud activity.

However, the latter employed Williamson's [14] phonological simplifying processes (structural) and categorize accordingly: *segmental substitution* of vowels and consonants (e.g. *leflain* /lI'fren/ for *refrain* /rI'fren/) and *syllable structure* inclusive of final consonant deletion (e.g. *bran* /bran/ for *brand* /brænd/, cluster reduction (e.g. *sight* /saIt/ for *straight* /stret/*)* and syllable reduction (e.g. *enclo* /In'klo/ for *enclosure* /In'kloʒɚ/)*, and further included sound changes such as epenthesis (e.g. e*cosperience* /Ikə'spirIəns/ for /Ik'spirIəns/) and elision (e.g. *oman* /'Umən/ for /'wUmən/).

1.3. Objective of the Study

This study attempted to describe and analyze the reading strategies and interlanguage evident during the think aloud reading activities of expository texts of four Japanese students who were learners of English as a Foreign Language. Specifically, this study sought to answer the types of reading and learning strategies employed by the Japanese learners in reading expository texts, and the phonological processes evident in the oral reading.

2. Method and Data

2.1. Subjects

A case study was used in this study. Two Japanese

students, an 18-year old female and a 19-year old male participated in the study. Both were university students in Japan taking up health and tourism courses, respectively. They have had at least a formal English learning experience particularly in college and were exposed to English environment. The female participant indicated that she used both Nihongo and English in speaking while the male only used Nihongo.

Both students attended a two-week English class at the Language Academy of the University of San Carlos. Specifically, each had a total of 6-hour one-to-one classes with the second author in the Reading and Writing class. They communicated using words and phrases and found it difficult to speak or converse in English. Generally, they possessed the same level of proficiency in English language based on the Assessment/Level test results and were classified as low beginners. Aside from this class, they were also enlisted in other group classes: Pronunciation Class, Speaking Class, Listening Class, and Presentation Class.

Moreover, two other Japanese students who were currently studying in a Philippine university were also asked to participate in the study. This allowed the researchers to compare the findings of the first pair of subjects and developed a more concise interpretation. Both subjects were first years taking up Communication Arts 1 (English 1) and have been staying in Cebu for more than 2 years. The female was an Applied Linguistics major while the male was a Business Administration major. They were asked to read orally the same texts and encourage to think aloud as well.

2.2. Design and Procedure

2.2.1. Instrument

For the main instrument used in this study, the read aloud and think aloud activities were employed. Two expository texts titled *What's in a brand name?* and *Words and phrases you're using wrong* were utilized. These two articles were chosen based on the following criteria: (i) the reading material should contain words with clusters, many simple and few difficult vocabulary words; (ii) should be interesting; and (iii) should be relevant to the foreign language learners. Moreover, informal interviews, observation, and teachers' progress reports aided in the analysis and interpretation

2.2.2. Procedure

Initially, the subjects were asked for their willingness to participate in the study. With their approval, they were tasked to read aloud and at the same time think aloud while reading the two expository texts. These activities were recorded with their consent. Informal interviews were also conducted after the subject read the expository text to verify the reasons in verbalizing their thoughts. The recorded data and interviews were transcribed, tabulated, and analysed using the International Phonetic Transcription (IPA) and Gail Jefferson's transcript notation. Moreover, a transmittal letter was given to the head of the USC Language Academy to ask permission for the use of the recorded reading activities, assessment exam result, and the teachers' progress reports.

Pressley and Afflerbach's [5] categories of the reading strategies were used in analyzing the reading strategies and activities, while Williamson's [14] phonological processes were used to support evidences of Selinker's interlanguage.

Finally, a Doctor of Philosophy in Applied Linguistics was consulted for the reading strategies to make the research process more reliable and valid.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Reading Strategies and Think Aloud

Table 1. Reading Strategies.

| Reading Strategies | Academy Students | | | | | University Students | | | | | Total |
| | Male | | Female | | | Male | | Female | | | |
	Text 1	Text 2	Text 1	Text 2	Sub-Total	Text 1	Text 2	Text 1	Text 2	Sub-Total	
A. Identifying Strategies											
Identifying the meaning of words	3	1	1	6	11	-	-	-	-	-	11
Using Long Pauses	7	-	3	5	15	-	-	-	4	4	19
Total	10	1	4	11	26	-	-	-	4	4	30
B. Monitoring Strategies											
Repeating the words	8	9	9	2	28	5	6	19	11	41	69
Asking a Question to verify	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	8	9	9	2	28	5	6	19	11	41	69
C. Evaluating Strategies											
Making a comment	-	-	4	1	-	-	-	-	-	-	5
Other Strategies											
Using Filler	10	2	1	3	16	-	-	-	-	-	16

Table 1 shows that the foreign language learners employed various reading strategies to mediate their reading comprehension. Among the reading strategies, *monitoring strategies* such as repeating the words predominated. This study supports the studies of Janssen, Braaksma & Rijlaarsdam [2], Gibbons [15], and Lee [16] that students employed various monitoring strategies which include repetition or retelling of words. As a matter of fact, McGinnis & Smith [6] identified repetition as an error made when readers utter a syllable, word, a part of a word, a phrase or a sentence repetitively.

Concerning the similarities and differences between the academy students and university students, they all used long pauses and repeat the words for emphasis and clarification purposes. However, the academy students used fillers which imply that they were not so proficient, fluent and fast in reading texts compared to the university students.

For the extracts, those labelled with JM or JF represent the subjects while T1 or T2 represents the text read. As for the transcription, those indicated first represents the subjects' pronunciations while the second transcription, after the arrow, represents the correct IPA version.

Extract 1
26JMT1: ah simple and avoid the these
　　　/k^m∂n/ /k^m∂n/
　　　common hmph.. *common* day (8s) uhm.. ms, ms?…(5s) ah.. I can't read this

Extract 2
　　　/frez/　　/fez/
9JFT1: *phrase, phase* you are using all.. uhm is clear for aking you sounding the regent this commong, com, com peace- shown. Mistakes actually to the.. op (8s)

Extract 1 illustrates that the Japanese male subject read the word 'common' repeatedly while the word 'phrase' was repeated in Extract 2, but the female subject was not able to produce /r/ in the second word.

Aside from repetition, the learners also asked a question to verify that the words were correctly read. To support these data, Berne [4] considered questioning (i.e. asking questions) as one of the categories of reading strategies, specifically the monitoring strategies. In this manner, repeating words as well as asking questions for verification are common strategies that help the readers monitor their own comprehension of the text. In this study, however, only the female learner asked a question for verification.

Extract 3
　　　/k^m∂nt/
35JFT1: *comment*?
36MRT1: yes you can

Extract 3 provides an interaction between the instructor and the Japanese female participant when the latter verified if she would express her comment while reading the text. Then, the instructor answered for confirmation.

Extract 4
43JFT1: ((giggles))
44MRT1: OK you can continue
　　　/k∂ntInIU/
45JFT1: *continue*? Ok. Continue

In Extract 4, the Japanese female subject asked again if she would continue reading after she had giggled about the length of the text she was reading.

Both subject also employed *identifying strategies*, namely, identifying the meaning of the words through the aid of their electronic dictionaries as well as long pauses when they were doubtful of the pronunciation of the encountered words while reading. As observed, the two learners of English as a foreign language who came from a technologically-advanced country like Japan tend to use gadgets such as their electronic

dictionaries to aid them about the meaning of the words they encounter as they read the text. When they were interviewed why they used their electronic dictionaries, they explained that they looked for the meaning of words and the correct pronunciation of words.

Long pauses were also evident in the data since the students paused while they were looking at the meaning of words in the dictionary. Braten & Stromso [17] considered this as a way to monitor comprehension which was evident when the readers demonstrated evidences of recognition of successful comprehension. In this manner, the reader's assessment of text comprehension had produced a good result (e.g. "This is all right", "I know this", "I understand this", and "I remember this from before").

Extract 5

            /aI dont no/

34JMT1: Ah *I don't know* – this one ah little huh

Extract 5 shows that the Japanese male subject applied the identifying strategies by accepting that he was not familiar with the word he was reading.

Extract 6

97JFT4: unique (35s) ((looking at the dictionary for the meaning of unique))

98MRT4: ok so what do you understand about unique?

99JFT4: unique. Ok. A

One way also to apply the identifying strategies was to check the meaning of the words in the electronic dictionary which was demonstrated in Extract 6. This was performed by

3.2. Interlanguage

the Japanese female subject as she checked the meaning and pronunciation of the word 'unique'.

On the contrary, only the female student from the academy was able to use the evaluating strategies by commenting on the length of the assigned texts. The data suggest that since the reader-learner in this study is a female who only provided evaluations of the text, she must be expressive compared to the male reader/learner. Koyabashi's [18] study on "The role of gender in foreign language learning attitudes: Japanese female students' attitudes towards English learning" emphasized the positive attitudes of females in terms of learning English language [17]. This could probably be the reason why the female subject tends to ask questions and comment regarding the length of the text compared to her counterpart.

Extract 7

28MRT3: yes

29JFT3: ((giggles))

30MRT3: Ok, that's a good comment. ((laughs)) question?

In Extract 7, the subject was giggling upon looking at the text she was reading. She actually commented that the text was so lengthy.

In sum, the reading strategies that were evident in the data were monitoring strategies such as repeating words and asking a question, and identifying strategies specifically identifying words in the electronic dictionary for the meaning and pronunciation, and evaluating strategy.

Table 2. Learning Strategies.

Strategies	Academy Students					University Students					
	Male		Female			Male		Female			
	Text 1	Text 2	Text 1	Text 2	Sub-Total	Text 1	Text 2	Text 1	Text 2	Sub-Total	Total
Language Transfer	77	42	70	45	234	10	19	45	29	103	337
Overgeneralization	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Simplification	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Avoidance	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-

As presented in Table 2, language transfer, manifested in consonant and vowel pronunciations, is the only strategy that is observable given the type of task given – oral reading. These findings were reinforced by Delfin [6] and Magno [7] where segmental substitution is evident in L2 learners' oral production as exemplified in Extract 8 where /θ/, /ɔ/, and /r/ are replaced with /t/, /a/, and /j/, respectively. Since the participants were merely reading the text and did not need to formulate sentences, the other strategies were therefore not activated. Even during interviews, their responses were limited to careful articulation of words or phrases, repeating the interviewers' last word, or giving non-verbal communication.

Extract 8

          /tI'saIəs/ -> /θI'sɔrəs/

20JM: tisayus

21MR: thesaurus

Learners who are more exposed to English language and

are even studying in mainstream classrooms (e.g. university students), compared with those in language academies, tend to lessen their L1 transfer as they aimed to achieve competence in the target language seen in the disparity between Japanese in different contexts, 234 utterances from the academy participants and 103 from the university participants. Several factors such as different backgrounds, length of exposure to and use of target language, and learning environments might be accounted for these influences and transfer.

As briefly discussed, the task involved oral reading which means the stimulus, written language, was already provided; thus, forming mental grammatical rules, which might elicit overgeneralization or simplification, is out of the question. On the other hand, the difficulty of identifying what the learners avoided in the utterance was taken into consideration thus one of the limitations of the present study. However, given the ample data one can explore in the

process of describing evidences of interlanguage, the phonological processes illustrated in Table 3 present learners' attempts and strategies to produce sounds in the target language.

Table 3. Japanese Learners' Phonological Processes and Sound Changes.

	Academy Students					University Students					
	Male		Female			Male		Female			
Phonological Processes & Sound Changes	Text 1	Text 2	Text 1	Text 2	Sub-Total	Text 1	Text 2	Text 1	Text 2	Sub-Total	Total
A. Syllable Structure											
Final Consonant Deletion	6	3	14	7	30	3	5	1	-	9	39
Cluster Reduction	4	1	4	7	16	-	-	-	-	-	16
Syllable Reduction	3	3	3	3	12	-	-	-	-	-	12
Total	13	7	21	17	58	3	5	1	-	9	67
B. Segmental Substitution											
Vowel	20	7	16	10	53	3	4	12	6	25	78
Consonants	57	35	54	35	181	7	15	33	23	78	259
Total	77	42	70	45	234	10	19	45	29	103	337
C Epenthesis											
Vowel	7	2	9	7	25	-	1	-	-	1	26
Consonants	11	5	18	9	43	6	6	1	-	13	56
Total	18	7	27	16	68	6	7	1	-	14	82
D. Elision											
Vowel	3	-	-	2	5	1	-	1	-	2	7
Consonant	6	3	2	6	17	4	2	6	4	16	33
Total	9	3	2	8	22	5	2	7	4	18	40

Data in Table 3 reveal the occurrences of phonological processes and sound changes in the learners' oral reading of L2 texts particularly in segmental substitution with a total of 337 transfers from L1. Results support the investigation of Japanese learners' difficulty of pronouncing segmental sounds in English which are absent in their L1 phonetic inventories [18]. Specifically, consonant substitution overwhelmingly prevailed over vowel with a total of 259 utterances. Moreover, as illustrated in the data, Japanese learners studying in the university have lesser instances of vowel and consonant transfers since they have become familiar with the use of English language given this is their means of communicating with their teachers and peers in the local context.

Consonant substitutions observed were the following: /d/ for /θ/ and /ð/, /b/ for /v/, /p/ for /f/ and /b/, and /t/ for /d/, among others. The most notable finding in the Japanese speakers' L2 production, however, is the /l/ and /r/ distinction which is exemplified in Extracts 8 and 9:

Extract 9
53JF1: bodily functions gets it how are you typing that/'spɑlɪŋlI/-›/'spɛrɪŋlI/ /lI'flen/ -› /rI'fren/
email if your dit use it *spellingly* or *leflain* from using it all.

Extract 10
/'lidɝ/ -›/'ridɝ/
31JF1: …He's a good *reader* because he did people well…

In Extract 9, *spellingly* and *leflain* were produced instead of the words *sparingly* and *refrain*, respectively. As observed, the subjects tend to replace /l/ for /r/ at certain contexts only since this occurrence was not consistent throughout the entire reading activities. On the contrary, instances of replacing /r/ for /l/ were also noted as shown in Extract 10. The notion that Japanese learners of English have difficulty distinguishing /l/ and /r/ is still apparently evident. This complement the

findings of Riney, Takada, and Ota [20] where they found that Japanese college students replaced English liquids with the Japanese flap at certain contexts particularly in phonetic environments when the flap occurs in Japanese.

Extract 11
/'ʤaUgən/-›/'ʤɑrgən/
14JM1: at.. at to the endless *jawgon* I knew nothing about

Further, substituting /r/ with the use of /aU/ was also evident as shown in Extract 11 when the speaker produced *jawgon* instead of *jargon*.

Extract 12
119JF2: proprietors decide decide to com, comsun,
/'kansantrat/ -› /'kansɛntret/
comsantrate, consantrate

Extract 13
/'bIgIŋ/ -› /'bɛgIŋ/
32JM1: Descartes I think therefore I am he was bigging
/'kwIstʧən/-› /'kwɛstʧən/
the question. It doesn't mean that its like a *quistion*.

In like manners, substitution of vowels was also apparent, such as /a/ instead of /ɛ/ and /I/ instead of /ɛ/, as shown in Extracts 12 and 13, respectively. Similar to the study of Magno [7], non-native speakers of English experience some levels of difficulties in pronouncing certain English sounds, consonants and vowels, due to distinction between their L1 and their L2. This finding is also supported in Carruthers' [19] contrastive analysis of Japanese and English sound inventories to explain the pronunciation difficulties of Japanese speakers of English. Given the disparity, learners refer to their L1 phonological inventories to facilitate the pronunciation of the target L2 sounds as they attempt to produce intelligible oral output.

Aside from vowel and consonant substitution, final consonant deletion was likewise predominant, especially in the female speaker's production. Extracts 14 and 15 show

this particular phonological process where /d/ from *brand* and /st/ from *enclosed* are omitted, respectively.

Extract 14

/bran/ -› /brænd/

57JF2: entrepreneur last cause *bran* name.
((whispers 'chotto matte'))

Extract 15

/ɪnˈklo/ -› /ɪnˈklozd/

59JF1: attached inste, instead of *inclo* for your information. /ˈbeskUrɑ/ -› /ˈbesɪklɪ/

When you are – using *bascura, bascura* ((refers to basically))

In addition, tendencies of cluster reduction and syllable reduction were also apparent. It would seem that the participants inadvertently skip some clusters, syllables, words, or even phrases which looked obviously foreign and deemed difficult to comprehend.

Extract 16

/saɪt/ -› /stret/

55JF2: an only search with *sight* to the business. This no

/prən/ -› /ɑntrəprəˈnɝ/

mistaking only in that __ *pren* ((refers to entrepreneur))

Extract 16 illustrates two instance of cluster reduction. The word *straight* is pronounced as *sight*, omitting the cluster 'tr' and *entrepreneur* is simply pronounced as *pren,* omitting the syllables *entre* and *neur*.

Extract 17

6JM1: phrases you are using long (3) instead of making

/ˈɪntɛdʒənt/ -› /ˈɪntɛlədʒənt/

you sound *integent* this common comp composition. mistakes uhm actually do the opposite. dis so muchjawbon in business

As presented in Extract 17, syllable reduction /li/ is evident in the word *integent*. With respect to both signs of reduction, this may be one of the strategies of the learners to cope with the difficulty of pronouncing words which have clusters, absent in their L1, and long syllables. Evidently, university students have very less trouble with syllable structures as they have minimal final consonant deletion, compared with those studying in the academy, as well as absence of cluster or syllable deletions.

Moreover, sound changes such as epenthesis (i.e. addition of sounds for ease of pronunciation) and elision (i.e. omission of sounds for ease of pronunciation), were manifested in the participants' production of L2 texts. Succeeding examples illustrate these findings:

Extract 18

IkUˈspIrɪəns / -› /Ikˈspɪrɪəns/

23JF1: But the *ecosperience* wasn't very different. People
/ˈbazInɪz/ -› /ˈbɪznɪz/

in *baziness* tend to use a auto time, times to inf, infl, influ what they, theyre saying or in some case makethem lot more - intelligent the they seemed When was my ah. *Baziness* and if you have to use a (3s) s, sa, sa, sasa, sasa, sasa sasaurus

Extract 19

10JM1: resign, resign (1-s) I silently resigned myself to

the part I was never getting job. Here was a
/kəmjunɪˈkeʃəŋ/ -› /kəmjunəkeˈʃən/
communicationg major (3s) hunched over the
/ˈslolɛst/ -› /ˈslolɛst/
slowlest computer on the floor, floor planning.

Extracts 18 and 19 reveal instances of vowel and consonant epenthesis, respectively. As shown in Extract 18, insertions of vowels are evident in the words *experience* (i.e. ec<u>o</u>sperience) and *business* (i.e. baz<u>i</u>ness). These strategies were employed by the subjects to come up with ways of accommodating their difficulties in pronouncing the consonant clusters such as 'exp' and 'zn'.

In contrast, Extract 19 presents the addition of the consonant 'g' after /n/ in the word *communication*. Other examples which were found in the male subject's utterances indicating similar instances include *con<u>g</u>clusion, common<u>g</u>,* and *composin<u>gk</u>*. As proven in Aoyama's [9] research, Japanese have two or more classifications of their syllable-final /n/ and /ŋ/, hence, the reason why there is a tendency of adding /g/ after /n/. Another sound added in Extract 18 is /l/ in the word *slowest*. These data support Keys' [10] study where epenthesis was also observed.

Subsequently, findings revealed elision of both vowels and consonants. As illustrated in the extracts below, certain letters are omitted probably for ease in production.

Extract 20

27JF1: … When composing an email, go stayt, stayt, to the point. Keep it simple. And avoid, avoid thes, these
/misˈek/ -› /mɪsˈtek/
com, commoni *missake* what. (8s)

Extract 21

/ˈUmən/ -› /ˈwUmən/

19JF2: worth it. Just like the *oman* (5s) clothing brand monkey business – monkey business. On facebook monkey business Main *Manla*

Extracts 20 and 21 exemplified the deletion of /t/ in the word *mistake,* and /w/ in the word *woman,* respectively. Unlike final consonant cluster where the consonants found in the final-syllable position are omitted, the circumstance of elision in these examples reveal dropping of a consonant or a vowel, as shown in the omission of /i/ in Manila, sounds in initial or medial position. Further, this instance is contrary to cluster reduction since the latter omit two or more consonants. Skipping sounds in certain contexts may be one of the learners' strategies in pronouncing the target L2 words easier.

As a whole, phonological processes such as syllable reductions, segmental substitutions as well as sound changes such as epenthesis and elision, which are observed in the L2 oral production of Japanese learners, support the idea of L1's influence in L2 oral activity.

4. Conclusion

Review of related studies and analysis of the present data show that aside from prior knowledge and contextual clues in L2, learners conveniently applied strategies to facilitate and

accommodate their reading comprehension and production of L2 expository texts. Further, as learners engaged in the process of developing their skills in their L2, evidences of their interlanguage become obvious which aid in identifying their current proficiency and competence in L2. Thus, reading aloud and interlanguage play important roles in second language acquisition.

Aside from other teaching methods applied in language programs, schools, and ESL/EFL academies, teachers might incorporate reading aloud as one of their approaches in teaching English as a 2nd or foreign language to maximize the learners' comprehension and production of the target language. This strategy does not only contribute to the 'construction' of interlanguage, but also promote the improvement of the four language skills (i.e., listening, speaking, reading, and writing) and enhances communication competencies.

Moreover, designing curriculum and standardized assessment tools, developing authentic teaching and learning materials, consulting ESL experts, and assigning professional EFL/ESL teachers, especially those with background of the learners' mother tongue, that cater to learner's levels and needs must be prioritized to ensure effective language input and output. Once a well-crafted program is fashioned and implemented properly, learners are expected to have renewed interest in learning and to be engaged in an interactive and productive language environment. Future endeavours may consider adding more participants and exploring other learning strategies.

Acknowledgements

References

[1] McKeown, R. & Gentilucci, J. (2007). Think aloud strategy: Metacognitive development and monitoring comprehension in the middle school second language classrooms, *Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy 1*, 136-147.

[2] Janssen, T., Braaksma, M., & Rijlaarsdam, G. (2006). Literary reading activities of good and weak students: A think aloud study. *European Journal of Psychology of Education*, *21*, 35-52.

[3] Gaerlan, M. J. (2005). *Metacognition in ESL reading: strategies used by selected DLSU freshmen in comprehending a narrative and an expository text*. Unpublished master's thesis. De La Salle University-Manila.

[4] Berne, J. (2004) Think aloud protocols and adult learners, *Adult Basic Education*, *14*, 153-173.

[5] Upton, T. A. & Lee-Thompson, L. (2001). The role of the first language in second language reading. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, *23*, 469-495.

[6] Delfin, C. (2014). *Developing oral fluency in the Mother tongue through Pag-asoy*. Paper presented during the PALT International Conference on December 5-7, 2013 at the University of San Jose Recoletos.

[7] Magno, J. (2011). *The oral interlanguages in the L2 (English and Filipino) of education communication arts majors*. Unpublished master's thesis. University of San Carlos-Cebu City.

[8] Davies, S. J. (2010). An analysis of some Japanese students' English interlanguage. *Comparative Culture*, *15*, 63-68.

[9] Aoyama, K. (2003). Perception of syllable-initial and syllable-final nasals in English by Korean and Japanese speakers. *Second Language Research, 19*, 251-265. Retrieved April 9, 2014 from http://webpages.acs.ttu.edu/kaoyama/aoyama13.pdf.

[10] Keys, J. K. (2002). Interlanguage phonology: Theoretical questions and empirical data. *Linguagem & Ensino, 5,* 75-91.

[11] Selinker, L. (1972). *Interlanguage. IRAL*, *10*, 31–51.

[12] Zhong-yuan, R., & Shu-yuan, Y. (2011). Reading aloud and the construction of interlanguage. *US-China Foreign Language*, *9*, 432-436.

[13] Delfin, C. A. J. (2012). Cebuano and English oral reading performance of grade one pupils: Implications to MTB-MLE materials preparation and development. Presented during the Annual Research Forum of the University of San Carlos in 2012.

[14] Williamson, G. (2014). *Phonological Processes.* Retrieved http://www.sltinfo.com/phonological-processes/.

[15] Gibbons, P. (2002). *Scaffolding language, scaffolding learning: Teaching second language in the mainstream classroom*. Portsmouth, NH, Heinemann.

[16] Lee, C. (2010). An exploratory study of the interlanguage pragmatic comprehension of young learners of English, *Pragmatics*, *20*, 343-373.

[17] Braten, I. & Stromso, H. (2003). A longitudinal think-aloud study of spontaneous strategic processing during the reading of multiple expository texts, *Reading writing: An Interdisciplinary Journal*, *16*, 195-218.

[18] Koyabashi, Y. (2002). The role of gender in foreign language learning attitudes: Japanese female students' attitudes towards English learning. *Gender and Education*, *14*, 181-197.

[19] Carruthers, S. W. (2006). Pronunciation difficulties of Japanese speakers of English: Predictions based on a contrastive analysis. Retrieved April 15, 2-14 from http://www.hpu.edu/CHSS/LangLing/TESOL/ProfessionalDe velopment/200680TWPfall-6/-5Carruthers_Phono.pdf.

[20] Jarvis, S., & Pavlenko, A. (2008). *Crosslinguistic influence in language and cognition*. UK: Routledge.