Using the JACET 8000 Word List to Evaluate L2 Vocabulary and Reading Difficulty

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In 2003, the Japan Association of College English Teachers (JACET) revised its 4,000 word list to include high-frequency vocabulary taken from newspapers, magazines, movie scripts, literature, and standardized tests. The new JACET 8000 word list, whose eight levels correspond to the various stages of learning in Japan, suggests a target vocabulary for all Japanese learners. In this paper the authors investigate the usefulness of the JACET 8000 for determining the reading difficulty of texts. Twelve standard literary works serve as a control group; an equal number of secondary and tertiary textbooks used in Japan are evaluated using the JACET 8000 and compared with the Flesch Reading Ease and Lexile Scores. Practical applications include writing entrance examination questions, selecting textbooks, and writing course syllabuses. Recognizing the potential for international use, the authors compare the eight-level JACET 8000 with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR) and the Common Core Standards for Schools (CCSS).

This paper was presented at the Clute Institute International Education Conference in New York City, August 8, 2015.