Compiling a List of Terms and a Glossary

Whenever you embark on a new area of research you will need to learn the specialized vocabulary of the discipline. It doesn't matter whether you are studying Kabuki plays in Japanese or Shakespeare's plays in English, you will come across lots of terms that are unfamiliar to you in the beginning. In addition to learning new vocabulary, some words have different meanings when you use them within a particular academic discipline. Specialist dictionaries, glossaries, and word lists help to define terms within disciplines and allow a shared understanding of the terminology used in academic discourse. As an aid to learners, authors of textbooks will often include glossaries of specialized terms so that readers won't have to go elsewhere looking for explanations.

The use of dictionaries and glossaries become even more important if you are undertaking a new field of research in a foreign language. A Japanese-English or kokugo dictionary may be sufficient to help you quickly scan a text, but careful reading of texts requires more specialized dictionaries. Older Japanese dictionaries can appear very daunting to the uninitiated, but if you don't learn how to use them correctly you may find yourself handicapped in your research. If you take the time to look up the means of the terms and to see if there are any special connotations within the framework of your discipline, you will be able to understand the texts better and to utilize the terms correctly in your own research.

One of the skills that we want you to learn in this course is when it is necessary to go to a specialized reference tool and when a simple definition is sufficient for your purposes. It is also important for you to take the time to determine which dictionaries are helpful to your field of research and where to turn when you require something more in depth. For the purpose of this course, we are asking you to be hypersensitive to the sources of information that you include in your glossary, both for your citations and also for your glossary. While it may seem like a lot of work to cite sources for simple kanji compounds that you couldn't read, it will serve as a reminder to you which dictionaries proved helpful and reliable.

List of Terms

Keeping an organized list of terms that you have already investigated will save you time later on when you encounter them again in other documents. There is nothing more frustrating than having to look up kanji over and over again or flipping back through your notes to find the page you wrote it on. For your own purposes you will want to keep a word list (Japanese terms that you had to look up) that contains the term, its romanized reading, English definition, and source. As you go through the course and are introduced to a lot of specialized reference tools, it is a good idea to check your list of terms against these tools to see if there are other definitions or explanations that supplement your knowledge and provide a better source of information for you. You may want to copy down the Japanese definitions as well to lessen the chance of misinterpretation.

ROMANIZED TERM 漢字 meaning (source, p. #)

KASHIHONYA 貸本屋 Rental library (Iwanami, p.182)

http://www-unix.oit.umass.edu/~jpn570h/glossary.pdf
Glossary

A glossary takes the process of compiling a list of terms one step further to include a more detailed explanation of the term and its significance to the topic being discussed. Glossaries, from the verb "to gloss" had their origins in the medieval times, when teachers create glossaries to help their students understand difficult concepts and terms in the Latin texts they were attempting to read. More often than not, a glossary differs from a specialized dictionary or encyclopedia because it is intended to supplement and assist the interpretation of a particular text.

A glossary provides a reader new to your subject a chance to become familiar with the specialist terms you employ in your paper. This is particularly important when you are doing research in Japanese and presenting your findings in English. The terms you choose to include in your glossary reflect terms that are important to your topic and defy simple translation. It also provides you with the opportunity to prove to your professors that you understand the specialist terms in your paper and are using them appropriately. As you do your readings and compile your list of terms, certain terms will stand out as needing more explanation or difficult to render into English. If you want to include these terms in your paper, you should include a glossary.

ROMANIZED TERM 漢字 English translation
Definition in English (citation). You may find other variant explanations in other dictionaries or sources and will want to list them here too (citation 2, etc.).

KUROHON 黒本 Black-covered books
Popular illustrated stories, named for the color of the cover, began to appear in 1744 at the same time as aohon and following akabon (Kawase 1982, p. 95). Popular between 1744-1751 (Princeton Companion, p. 286).