A Method for Improving Incoherent Sentence Structure in Writing

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In poorly written English, the expression of ideas may be stifled through incoherency at the sentence level. Student learners unable to self-correct may also be rendered dependent on teacher correction. Hypothetically, and in a very limited way, a sentence generator would help improve syntax and reduce teacher dependency. In an attempt to provide supportive evidence for this, a trial was conducted with a specially developed generator called "the matching method." In this paper, the results of the trial are reported and the difficulties of the method are discussed.

うまく書けていない英語では、考えの表現が文レベルで首尾一貫性を欠き、読みづらいことがある。自分で文を直すことのできない学生、学習者たちは指導者(教師)に頼らざるをえないかもしれない。仮説的に、あるとても限られた方法において、sentence generatorは構文を改良し、指導者への依存を減らすだろう。これを支える証拠を提供する試みとして、ある実験がthe matching methodと呼ばれる、特別に開発されたgeneratorを用いて行われた。この論文では、その試みの結果が報告されると共に、その方法の難しさが議論される。

The concept of interlanguage has been credited to Selinker (1972) and has been defined by Ortega (2009) as "the language system that each learner constructs at any given point in development" (p. 110). In the field of SLA, interlanguage constitutes the mental rules and representations created by a learner to determine how things in the language may be interpreted or expressed. In an abstract sense, the system may also be regarded as four sub-systems, each handling one of the four language skills. For writing, sentence incoherency suggests a defective subsystem. Teacher correction may help students acknowledge their errors, but the associated defect in the interlanguage may be unaffected, meaning that students would likely repeat the incoherency. Students may also be incapable of self-correction, which would suggest the absence of appropriate underlying sentence patterns in the interlanguage. Without such patterns, it could be difficult to form coherent sentences. "Implanting" appropriate sentence patterns onto the interlanguage system is thus worth considering as a way of supplanting defective patterns. A way of mapping information onto appropriate sentence patterns would then constitute a remedial possibility for incoherency. Such a process would, essentially, be a sentence generator.

The Matching Method

For the purpose of this study, a remedial generator to help students struggling with sentence coherency was developed and called the "matching method." It includes the following three steps:

- Step 1: Decide what to express.
- Step 2: Decide the sentence components, that is, subject (S), verb (V), object (O), and so on.
- Step 3: Place the sentence components into one of the five English sentence patterns.

The method aims to help students who cannot produce sentences patterned after the basic five English sentence patterns and who cannot self-correct. In the study of syntax, "the underlying thesis of generative grammar is that sentences are generated by a subconscious set of procedures (like computer programs)" (Carnie, 2013, p. 6). The matching method is not a generative grammar, which predicts grammatically acceptable patterns instead of mapping words onto given patterns, but the underlying motivation is still a set of procedures. The following is an example application of the matching method:

- Step 1: The student has to decide what to express. As an example exercise, the student could be shown a picture of a man reading a newspaper and asked to make a statement. The student will, hopefully, decide to make a statement about the action of the man.
- Step 2: The student decides the sentence components. Following the example, the student, again hopefully, will decide S = man, V = read, O = newspaper.
- Step 3: This is the matching step. The student places the sentence components into an appropriate sentence pattern, in this case S + V + O, to create the sentence *Man read newspaper*. Although the verb form is incorrect, the word order is acceptable.

Although the matching method aims to give the writer more sentence coherency and less teacher dependency, a major drawback is the resolution of teaching problems at each step. For a lower level student, deciding what to express in Step 1 can be confusing. Practice exercises such as the newspaper example present a single clear choice. If, however, a park scene of someone walking a dog in the foreground and someone kicking a ball in the background is shown, an extremely weak lower level student may not be able to separate the two actions and could possibly end up combining elements of both into one jumbled sentence. In Step 2, giving students an intuitive understanding of the sentence components is also a difficult problem. In the newspaper example, if the student can grasp that the object component is that which is acted upon by the subject, the student will have more than a random chance of deciding that the man is the subject. In Step 3, although a sentence pattern can be determined from the components decided in Step 2, it would be helpful if the student could also gain a sense of the kind of ideas that each sentence pattern can express. Another drawback of the method is that it is limited to formation of sentences patterned after the basic five English sentence patterns without sentence complications such as adverbs and other adjuncts.

The Trial Candidates

To find support for the hypothesis that the matching method would reduce syntax error and teacher dependency, the method was administered to a low level English class of 18 first-year students training to become hairdressers at a junior college in Tokyo. Although English was a required subject at the junior college, the class included a number of students incapable of writing coherently, in part because a minimal level of English competency was not a prerequisite for college entry. For some of the students, their inability only reinforced negative perceptions of a subject that was neither a strength nor favourite at high school.

The Five Sentence Patterns

Almost all of the students claimed to have studied the five basic sentence patterns of the English language at high school (see Figure 1). Despite this, associating the patterns with concrete sentences could be confusing. When asked to identify the sentence pattern of *Mary met Peter Green*, many students answered correctly with S + V + O, identifying the family name *Green* as part of the object *Peter Green*. Some students, however, placed the sentence as S + V + C or S + V + O + OC, perhaps mistaking *Green* to be a color complement. Students also asked about the components: "What is a verb?" (Usually for this question, unless an instructor was confident of his or her ability to explain this clearly to low level students, reference to a grammar book, preferably in Japanese, was the least confusing or time consuming way of explanation.)

Sentence Pattern	Component abbreviation
Subject + Verb	(S + V)
Subject + Verb + Complement	(S + V + C)
Subject + Verb + Object	(S + V + O)
Subject + Verb + Indirect Object + Object	(S + V + IO + O)
Subject + Verb + Object + Object Complement	(S + V + O + OC)

Figure 1. The Five Basic Sentence Patterns in English

Syntax Exercises

Common syntax exercises may help students become familiar with the application of the matching method. The following is a selection of examples. Where possible, adjectives, adjuncts, subordinate clauses, and other sentence complications are removed. Passive voice is also avoided.

Exercises 1-4 check a student's understanding of the sentence patterns. As each exercise is a multiple choice question, the students do not have to construct sentences by themselves.

Exercise 1.

Choose the component corresponding to the underlined word in *The cat chased* *the mouse*.

a. S b. V c. C d. O

Exercise 2.

Choose the word corresponding to V in *Peter played the drums*.

a. Peter b. played c. the drums

Exercise 3.

Choose the sentence pattern corresponding to *Mary is famous*.

a. S + V b. S + V + C
c. S + V + O d. S + V + IO + O

Exercise 4.

Choose the sentence that corresponds to the sentence pattern S + V + C.

a. Tom is a nurse. b. Mary studies art.
c. Jane sent Kelly a postcard.

Exercise 5 is a practice exercise for Step 1. Because lower level students often cannot decide what to express, an exercise such as Exercise 5 may help provide example ideas.

Exercise 5.

Choose a suitable statement about the picture.

a. The footpath is empty. b. A man is walking.
c. It is raining

Exercise 6.

Decide the components for a possible sentence about the picture. Write — if not needed.

S:________Girl_________ V:_______________________
C:____________________ O:______________________

Exercise 6 is a practice exercise for Step 2. In this example, with the subject given, students only have to decide the remaining components. It is hoped that students would decide "play" for V and "soccer" for O, and realize that there is no complement. A more difficult challenge would require students to decide their own subject.

Currently, the pattern *There is/are . . .* is treated as a special case of the matching method. After students have decided the presence or nonpresence of a common noun entity, Step 2 is bypassed and *There is/are . . .* is regarded as the appropriate pattern in Step 3. Exercises such as Exercise 7 aim to help students associate the pattern with the idea of presence or nonpresence.

Exercise 7.

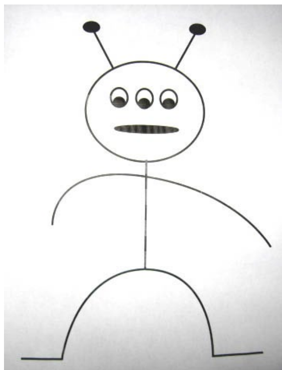
Choose an appropriate sentence to describe the picture.

There is a car

There are many dancers.

Exercise 8.

Complete the sentence with *The alien is* or *The alien has*



____________________ three eyes.

For many lower level students, the association of *It has . . .* with possession, and *It is . . .* with equivalence is vague. If this is not clear, the matching method will break down at Step 2 when the student tries to guess the verb, resulting possibly in a sentence such as *Tom has tall*. Exercises such as 8-9 attempt to help students discern the difference.

Exercise 9.

Use *The giraffe has* and or *The giraffe is* to complete the sentences.

_____________________________ tall.

_____________________________ a long neck.

In Exercise 10, the student must apply all three steps, hopefully first deciding to express the spiciness of the curry. Exercise 11 also requires the student to apply the three steps.

Exercise 10.

Summarize the main point of the information in one sentence.

Curry	☐ Extremely hot ☐ Very hot ■ Hot ☐ Mild

S: ____________________ V: _________is__________

C:____________________ O: ____________________

Sentence: ____

Exercise 11.

Summarize the main point of the dialogue in one sentence.

Jake: What happened to the ice?

Ross: It melted.

S: _________________ V:__________is__________

C:_________________ O: ____________________

Sentence: ____

For Exercise 12, a student who can identify the components and appropriate sentence pattern is likely to manage the problem. If not, the student will guess at a probable permutation. A drawback with this exercise is that students do not have to decide the words for the sentence and know that, for example, one of the given words is the subject. In more challenging exercises, not all words are provided.

Exercise 12.

Rearrange the words to form a sentence.

drives / Tom / a car

Sentence: ____

Matching Method Trial

The hypothesis was tested by administering the matching method to a low level English class of 18 first-year students at a junior college in Tokyo.

The trial included three tasks. First, the students wrote a short passage of 60 words about Mount Fuji. Second, the students worked on 20 syntax exercises introducing the matching method and focusing on sentences that the students were likely to use while describing a place. Finally, the students wrote a second short passage of 60 words about a famous place of their own choice. Independent readers then rated the passage on the famous place as better, the same, or worse than the passage on Mount Fuji. Support for the hypothesis would be evident if the passage on the famous place were rated significantly better.

Trial Results

The results of the trial proved inconclusive with the hypothesis neither supported nor disproved. Of the 15 students who completed the tasks, only three showed apparent improvement. There was no evidence, however, to suggest that the improvements were due to the matching method. The results did suggest that it was more difficult to improve the writing of weaker students than better students. The following is an example of work that showed apparent improvement, with the student choosing to write about her own college, denoted here as "Y."

Mount Fuji:
Mount Fuji is most pourer in Japan.
Mount Fuji is tallest in Japan There is a sizuoka
Mount Fuji is cauld. Mount Fuji is visit a
Many people. Mount Fuji is Fire Mounten
Mount Fuji is famous sizuoka
Many people like a Mount Fuji

Famous place:
Y is most famous callege. Many student
are study hair make. Y callege is in
Hachiouji. Y is beautiful callege.
Y student say "Y is very fun".
There is school bus in Y. There is
fastival in Y. It is very good

Apparent improvements included an improved ability to express location:

There is sizuoka. → *Y College is in Hachiouji.*

and presence:

There is a sizuoka. → *There is school bus in Y.* and *There is fastival in Y.*

and, unless the student was attempting a passive statement, an improved understanding of S and O:

Mount Fuji is visit a many people. → *Many student are study hair make.*

The results indicated that the trial made very little, if any, impression on the writing of individual students. It also became clear that defective sentence patterns were too ingrained in the interlanguage systems of individual students and not likely to be removed easily. There was also the possibility that, rather than a defective pattern, absent patterns in the interlanguage forced students to guess at sentence constructions.

Possible Reasons for Trial Failure

After only one trial, it was clearly impossible to judge any long-term effectiveness. On the other hand, there were various reasons for the high number of students who showed no apparent improvement. A few students found the exercise too easy and could already demonstrate acceptable syntax. Some students found the work boring and applied little effort. In some cases, the second piece was worse than the first.

It was also clear that the 20 exercises used to introduce the students to the matching method were ineffective. It had been hoped that the students would familiarize themselves with the method through discovery, as it was not explained explicitly, but while the exercises attempted to illustrate by example what was required at each step (e.g., *At Step 2, decide the subject, verb, and other components*), the students seemed focused only on the correct answer to each question, missing the point. The matching method thus made little or no impression on the existing interlanguage system of each student, possibly accounting also for some students constructing perfectly fine sentences in the exercises, but incapable of reproducing them in the second passage.

The trial also failed to take into account the students' natural learning ability. Installing a sentence generator into a student's interlanguage system essentially requires supplanting part of the student's existing system. But since no student is a computer, this obviously cannot be done simply. Clearly, in order for the five English sentence patterns to ultimately become part of the interlanguage, their application must be learned and practiced over time. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that the matching method was never going to make an immediate and lasting impression in 20 short exercises.

The design of the trial and matching method itself may have contributed to the failure.

Possible Improvements for a Retrial

Considering the inadequacies of the initial trial, a retrial including the following may produce better results:

- The students may have a better understanding of the matching method if it is explained to them directly.
- Besides doing the exercises, the students could try to set up similar exercises by themselves. By setting such exercises, the students may focus more on what is required at each step than on correct answers.
- For the matching method to become a habit, repeated practice over a period of time would be required.

Conclusion

Although its practical application remains problematic, the matching method is worth considering as it hypothetically provides assistance for learners who cannot write coherent sentences and who cannot correct their own incoherency. It is also worth considering for a number of classroom reasons.

First, with many students such as those at specialist junior colleges under pressure to complete their vocational training and secure employment, mandatory English lessons are rarely treated with priority or respect. However, there is still an expectation on teachers to cultivate rapid English improvement, even if this expectation is unrealistic. The matching method is a way of perhaps "installing" improvement.

Second, due to tight scheduling and limited resources, the weakest students in some English writing classes cannot be separated from the more capable students. As a result, poor sentence structure not only hinders the progress of the individual but also that of better students, sometimes forcing the formation of smaller teaching groups and even a lesson compromise. The matching method will hopefully encourage independence and self-improvement, freeing instructors from inordinate amounts of class time spent correcting basic structure problems.

Finally, some students do not even attempt any writing exercises, believing beforehand that English is impossible for them. The concept of a sentence generator may perhaps give these students belief that some form of assistance, albeit intangible, is at hand, in a way, a substitute for consulting translation programs or direct copying.

Bio Data

Tony Cole has been a teacher at Yamano College of Aesthetics, Hachioji, since 2011. From May 2013 he will enroll in the TESOL program at Temple University, Tokyo Campus. Tony currently holds a BSc from the University of Auckland, New Zealand, and a PhD from the University of Melbourne, Australia, both in mathematics.

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Applications of Idea-Generating Techniques to the Teaching of Argumentative Writing

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Argumentative writing is an important mode of communication in academia as well as the workplace, but it can be challenging for college students in Japan because many of them lack prior experience with it. In this paper, I propose 2 ways to reduce students' cognitive strain and enhance their productivity and enjoyment. One way is to incorporate Fahnestock and Secor's (1985) modern stasis theory as a way of helping students organize the information flow of their arguments. The other is to adopt group work and make extensive use of 2 idea-generating techniques, brainstorming and brainwriting, so that group members can collaborate on content formation. The research was carried out using classroom observation, including an analysis of students' idea-generation efforts, plus a survey of students' reactions to investigate the usefulness of these 2 techniques in teaching argumentative writing to groups of EFL college students in Japan.

議論形式のライティングは教育やビジネスにおける重要なコミュニケーションの様式であり、大学の授業でも課題として出されることが多い。しかし、日本の大学生はこのような形式で文章を書く機会が少ないため、苦手意識を持つ傾向がある。この論文は、議論形式のライティングを教えるに際し、学生の抵抗を軽減し、内容の充実を図るための2つの試みを提案する。ひとつはFahnestock と Secor (1985) の現代版stasis theoryを使って、議論の構成に役立てること、もうひとつはグループワークにブレーンストーミングとブレーンライティングという２つのテクニックを取り入れ、協力してアイディアを練るために用いることである。この論文は、実際に生成されたアイディアの分析を含めたクラスの観察、そして学生の反応調査を元に、2つのテクニックが、英語を外国語として学ぶ日本の大学生のグループに議論の構成を教える際に有用か否かを調査することを目的とする。

Argumentative writing is considered a difficult mode of writing for nonnative speakers of English, who may have trouble making an effective argument due to their lack of training in this type of discourse (e.g., Connor & Kramer, 1995; Johns, 1993; Liebman, 1992). This difficulty is especially prominent in Japan because argumentative discourse is often viewed as a source of discord and something to be avoided (Connor & Kramer, 1995). Moreover, in Japanese education, explicit writing instruction itself is scarce, and learners are expected to learn mostly on their own (Hirose, 2003). When it comes to writing in English, they receive even less training because classes tend to focus on fundamentals such as grammar, vocabulary, and reading comprehension. This situation can put learners at a disadvantage in English, for their writing will be evaluated based on their ability to present and develop their viewpoints (Dirven & Verspoor, 1998; Liebman, 1992).

Given this situation, group work may work well when EFL learners in Japan first learn argumentative writing. By helping each other, they can work through their writing processes with more assurance and possibly achieve better outcomes than when working individually. I propose that idea-generation is key to preparing successful arguments because it allows students to tap into each other's ideas and to deliberate on the content of the argument. However, the effect of group-thinking techniques on writing has not been researched extensively. One exception is Rao (2007), who compared EFL students' writing before and after learning a brainstorming technique, and the results indicated that training in brainstorming had a positive effect on their writing performance.

Similar to Rao's (2007) study, I compared two idea-generating techniques, brainstorming and brainwriting, in terms of productivity and enjoyment when EFL college learners in Japan produced argumentative writing in a group setting. In this paper I present observations of how the activities went in class, including discussion of the ideas that were generated, and survey data that measured students' reactions to the activities, so as to evaluate the success of the two techniques in a Japanese context.

Definitions of Argument

In the field of rhetoric and composition, argument has been defined in various ways. In the broadest sense, it refers to any discourse that makes a claim about a controversial issue and is supported by evidence based on social and cultural values (Emmel, Resch, & Tenney, 1996; Fulkerson, 1996; Goshgarian, Krueger, & Minc, 2003). This definition encompasses various types of discourse, and traditional composition categories such as exposition, description, narration, and argument are no longer relevant because the first three can be considered types of argument (Fulkerson, 1996). Argument can also be defined as persuasive discourse whose purpose is to move others to take certain actions (Kinneavy, 1980). For instance, position arguments on subjects such as gun control, same-sex marriage, consumerism, and racial profiling fit this definition.

Although there are various definitions, I use argument to refer to discourse that is consistent with the organizational framework proposed by Fahnestock and Secor (1985) in their modern version of stasis theory. Fahnestock and Secor's approach is different from others in that it delineates not only the subcategories of argument, but also its canonical rhetorical organization. Their approach is derived from ancient stasis theory, which was a form of forensic rhetoric in ancient Greece. Stasis allowed a court to examine a case in light of a series of questions, thus helping the point of dispute to be identified in a methodical manner (Conley, 1990). Fahnestock and Secor have rediscovered the relevance of stasis theory and modified it in order to broaden its applications and use it as a general "principle of invention" (p. 219). Just as classical stasis theory was used to locate the point at issue, modern stasis theory helps to clarify the purpose of an argument. Also, in the same way that the four stases formed a sequence in ancient court procedures, the order of modern stases can shape the logical flow of an argument. To use stasis theory in modern contexts, Fahnestock and Secor proposed some modifications so that it addressed the following four questions:

1. What is it? (definition)
2. How did it get that way? (causal analysis)
3. Is it good or bad? (evaluation)
4. What should we do about it? (proposal)

For the purpose of clarity, however, the first question is referred to here as "fact/definition" because delineating the problem as an existing fact is an important part of the initial discussion (Takagi, 2009). Hence, the canonical structure of an argument can be illustrated as in Figure 1.

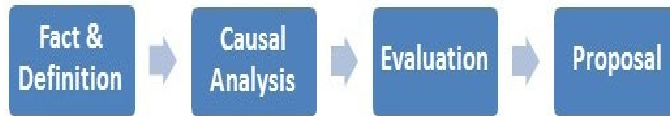

Figure 1. Canonical Argument Structure

In my study I propose that understanding this canonical structure is beneficial for EFL learners in Japan, assuming that an insufficient understanding of it often results in an illogical progression of the argument (Takagi, 2009). Learning the common structure of an argument has other practical benefits as well because it can be usefully applied to future academic and professional communication. For instance, in academic discourse, investigating the causes of a phenomenon (causal analysis) or critiquing others' work (evaluation) is a regular practice, and in the workplace, a project proposal is often organized in the manner depicted by stasis theory. In this way, Fahnestock and Secor's (1985) modern version of stasis theory can be practical and useful for EFL students in Japan because knowledge of common rhetorical structures helps them produce argumentative writing with more confidence and assurance.

Idea-Generating Techniques

The idea-generating techniques employed in this study are brainstorming and brainwriting. Brainstorming, or "the oral generation of ideas by a group" (VanGundy, 1984, p. 68), was first introduced by an American advertising executive named Alex F. Osborn in his book *Your Creative Power,* published in 1948. Osborn explained that this group-thinking activity began in his advertising agency in 1939. In the activity, five to ten people of different backgrounds and experience levels gathered and generated as many ideas as possible to find creative solutions to a problem. After publication of his book, brainstorming spread quickly as an effective way to make the most of people's diverse resources to come up with creative ideas.

Empirical studies of brainstorming, however, soon revealed that brainstorming was perhaps not as effective as it first appeared in light of both the number of ideas and creativity (Taylor, Berry, & Block, 1958). Some of the reasons behind these problems were (a) free-riding (negligence in doing one's share of the work), (b) evaluation apprehension (fear of others' judgment), and (c) production blocking (forgetting one's idea or loss of confidence about it due to the necessity of turn-taking) (Diel & Stroebe, 1991). Also, brainstorming requires an adroit leader, and the outcome is very much affected by the leader's handling of the session (Sutton & Hargadon, 1996).

In this context, brainwriting has been considered as an alternative or a supplement to brainstorming. Briefly, it is a technique that prompts a group of people to state their opinions in the form of writing; thus, it is "silent, written generation of ideas by a group of people" (VanGundy, 1984, p. 68). Brainwriting has drawn scholarly attention as a way for participants to collaborate effectively without interference from the sources of ineffectiveness mentioned above. Brown and Paulus (2002), for instance, recommended brainwriting as a promising method that could complement the shortcomings of brainstorming. Heslin (2009) also argued that brainwriting is likely to trigger cognitive and social stimulation, which results in effective idea generation for a group.

There are various kinds of brainwriting, each involving different materials or manners of communication among group members (VanGundy, 1984). In this study I adopted the pin card technique (explained below) for its simplicity and time efficiency, and compared this technique with brainstorming.

Pedagogical Context

Participants

Participants were 28 first-year university students (14 women, 14 men) in my English class at Ibaraki University. Before engaging in group work, they had learned the basics of paragraph and essay writing.

Procedure

The participants were divided into groups of five or six. They were assigned to write an argument as a group that included the four parts of Fahnestock and Secor's (1985) modern version of stasis theory. The groups were allowed to choose their own topic, though they were advised to select one that was closely connected to their daily lives. For each of the four parts, they generated ideas, alternating brainstorming and brainwriting (pin cards); that is, they used brainstorming for fact/definition and evaluation, and brainwriting for causal analysis and making proposals. Thus, by the time they had covered all four parts, they had tried each technique twice. The two methods were alternated in this manner for the purpose of comparison, though it should be added that brainstorming was used first because participants were likely to be more familiar with that than brainwriting. Students were free to use either English or Japanese in the idea-generating sessions, and except for a few cases in the first brainwriting session, they used Japanese as their chosen language. The brainstorming and brainwriting sessions were conducted in the manner described in Table 1.

Table 1. Brainstorming and Brainwriting Procedures

Step	Brainstorming	Brainwriting
1	Members spent about 5 minutes thinking individually about the topic.	
2	For about 15 minutes, members stated their ideas verbally while a leader facilitated the discussion and the recorder took notes.	Members wrote their ideas on a piece of paper. When they had finished writing, they passed their papers clockwise and wrote another idea to develop, or add to, the previous person's idea. They repeated this process for about 15 minutes.
3	When the session was over, they had about 10 minutes to organize their ideas and create an outline.	

In order to compare the usefulness of the two techniques in producing in-depth ideas, as well as the students' enjoyment of the two techniques, several kinds of data were gathered. First, each idea-generating session was observed and notes were taken. Second, the ideas generated during the activities were collected and analyzed. Third, when all four sessions were complete, an informal survey was conducted. Students were asked to evaluate the two techniques and explain the reasons for their choices in the comment section. Selected data are discussed in the following sections.

Observations and Analysis

Brainstorming: Fact/Definition and Evaluation

Brainstorming was used to generate ideas for the first and third parts of the argument: fact/definition and evaluation. In the brainstorming session for fact/definition, the students aimed to consider ways to demonstrate the existence of the chosen problem, while in the session for evaluation, they mainly focused on discussing what would happen if the problem remained unsolved. In spite of these different purposes, the two sessions yielded similar results. That is, students were engaged in the activity, and the class was filled with talk, smiles, and laughter. However, students' brainstorming sheets contained only a few ideas, and the content was superficial.

For instance, one group dealt with the issue of college students coming to class late. For their fact/definition session, the group needed to demonstrate the prevalence of this problem, but the only method they came up with was to interview the instructor with questions such as "How many students have been late for class more than once?" and "Is there a day of the week, period, or month when students tend to come late?" Another group, whose topic was the large number of traffic accidents in Ibaraki Prefecture, came up with various methods including taking pictures that revealed the problem, searching the Internet, or interviewing people who had experienced a traffic accident. However, they did not provide details as to what information they would look for, leaving most of the work to the person in charge of the fact/definition session.

The second brainstorming session for evaluation yielded similar outcomes. For instance, one group was dealing with the topic of cyclists' poor manners and generated only a few ideas for evaluation. They outlined a chain of effects, but made no further effort to explain each effect in detail (see Figure 2).

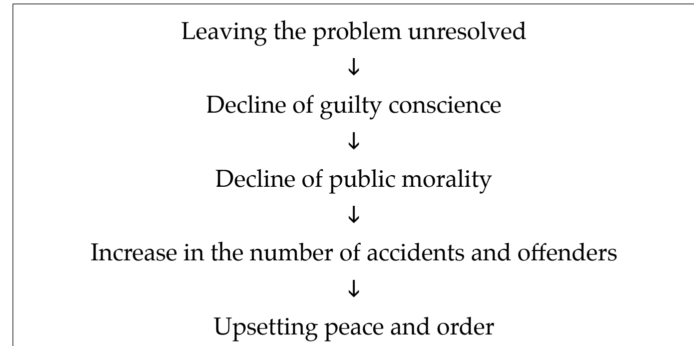

Figure 2. Sample Ideas Generated for Evaluation

The group that dealt with the large number of traffic accidents in Ibaraki Prefecture managed to list some concrete effects of this problem, but they failed to expand those effects in their outline. Thus, in spite of the lively classroom atmosphere, these sessions turned out to be less productive than expected. Most groups produced only a few general ideas in both sessions, and they had to rely on the person(s) in charge to fill the content gap.

Brainwriting: Causal Analysis and Proposal

Brainwriting was used for the second and last part of the argument, causal analysis and the proposal. In the brainwriting session for causal analysis. the students aimed to delve into the causes behind the chosen problem, while in the session for making the proposal, they explored solutions to the problem based on prior analyses. The level of engagement in the two sessions was high, and students continued writing until the time was up, but the results indicated some different problems with, and benefits of, brainwriting.

In the brainwriting session for causal analysis, results were mixed because some groups were able to generate more ideas than others. Four out of the six groups had no more than one member missing and came up with approximately 32 ideas on average, while the two groups who suffered from absenteeism produced many fewer ideas (8 and 15). This result suggests that the presence of members is important for successful brainwriting.

Another aspect of success hinged on the specificity of the problem. For instance, the group that dealt with students' tendency to be late for class had a problem definite enough for the members to specifically explore, and they approached the problem from different angles from the outset:

- being tired from one's part-time job,
- going to bed late the day before,
- having no consequences for coming to class late, and
- being deterred by inclement weather.

The other members developed these points further, referring to their own observations and experiences. On the other hand, the groups that chose a large, multi-dimensional topic seemed to feel perplexed because they had several problems to grapple with and each of them seemed to have different causes. For example, the group that chose the topic "How to make college life more meaningful" seemed to have difficulty in listing causes because the topic did not specify a problem. They managed to narrow down their topic later on, but not having a specific problem at the beginning complicated the process of analyzing the causes.

The brainwriting session also revealed other practical issues. The first was that several members coincidentally made the same point at the beginning, which could have resulted in similar lines of reasoning (see Appendix A). Another issue was that there were quite a few cases in which students started to deviate from the purpose, that is, some students started to talk about solutions instead of sticking to causal analyses. This was certainly a tempting move because it made them feel that they were developing the discussion, but it ended up diverting from the aim of the session.

In the second brainwriting session for making the proposal, groups were advised to be creative and original instead of repeating commonplace solutions, in order to avoid overlapping ideas. Also, they were reminded of the importance of sticking to the purpose, which was to consider solutions in detail, so as to avoid inadvertent digression.

In terms of number, most groups were successful in yielding as many ideas as the first session. Excluding one group whose brainwriting documents were incomplete, the other five groups produced 31 ideas on average. Even when the number of ideas itself was lower, those groups' ideas were substantial. For instance, the group that dealt with the large number of traffic accidents in Ibaraki Prefecture produced only 24 ideas, but each idea was developed and elaborated in a detailed manner (see Appendix B). For example, the first person addressed the possibility of founding a traffic accident center where people could learn about the danger of accidents from an early age, and the succeeding ideas addressed how many times people should go there or what they could see and do at the center. Similarly, the same group proposed the development of a cellphone application or devices to be installed in cars and bicycles that monitor and regulate speed. Although those ideas may not be practical or feasible, they show the members' attempts to be experimental and imaginative in solving the problem.

Thus, the groups produced more ideas in brainwriting than in brainstorming as long as most members were present. The first session revealed possible issues with brainwriting, such as idea overlap and digression, but the second session showed students' improvement in these regards as well as their adroitness in content development and creativity.

Students' Reactions

After the four idea-generating sessions were complete, an informal survey was conducted in order to elicit participants' reactions to the two techniques. All 28 students were present on the day of the survey. The questions were written in Japanese to reduce the possibility of misunderstanding and asked students to choose one of five choices and explain their answer.

Asked about the effectiveness in generating ideas and demonstrating a problem, more students chose brainwriting over brainstorming (see Figure 3).

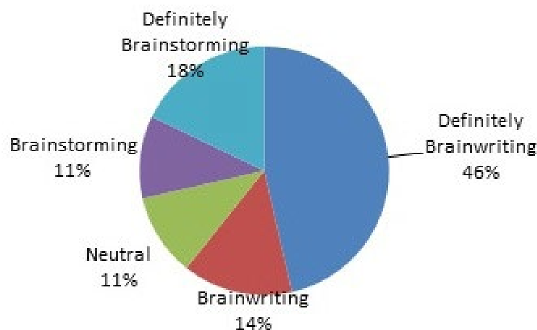

Figure 3. Participant Responses Regarding Effectiveness of Brainstorming vs. Brainwriting

Their responses to the open-ended question reveals some of the reasons behind their choices. First, those who chose brainwriting over brainstorming stated that the former allowed them to delve into the matter more easily because they had more time to think in writing than in speaking. Because they did not engage in face-to-face conversations, they could focus on developing their own views. Also, a couple of students stated that the ideas produced in brainwriting were more varied because they were developed with less influence from others.

Many participants also pointed out that brainwriting was fairer because they had an equal number of opportunities to state their opinions, and they also enjoyed receiving feedback on their ideas from all the members as they proceeded with brainwriting. Furthermore, one student pointed out that writing was a better way of keeping record. In oral discussions, good opinions sometimes did not receive due recognition from the group. On the other hand, writing ensured that all the ideas got a chance to be heard and considered.

Conversely, some students felt strongly in favor of brainstorming. They stated that they could develop ideas more effectively because they became inspired by someone else's opinions; others felt that brainstorming was just a quicker and easier way of communicating their ideas because they could verbalize them as soon as they came to mind. Also, they felt that they could convey their messages more accurately in verbal, face-to-face communication. In addition, some revealed their preference for brainstorming because in brainwriting they were pressured to pass sheets to the next person quickly.

Students who were neutral also addressed some crucial aspects of the two techniques. One student indicated that the choice depended on one's personality. Another student stated that she preferred brainwriting because she was not good at talking. Yet another student suggested that the method should be determined according to the topic at hand. The student did not provide further details, but it is certainly interesting to consider whether one method is better than the other when dealing with, say, an analytical or a creative topic.

When it came to enjoyment, however, more students preferred brainstorming. Actually, the number of brainstorming supporters in general doubled in this regard, while that of brainwriting supporters decreased significantly (see Figure 4).

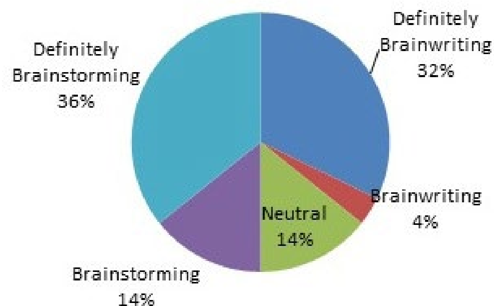

Figure 4. Participant Responses Regarding Enjoyment of Brainstorming vs. Brainwriting

Not many comments were made to account for their choices, but several students stated that they found brainstorming more fun because they could communicate with others verbally. However, it should be added that many of them also found brainwriting enjoyable. In fact, 32% said brainwriting was *definitely* more enjoyable, almost as many as the number of students who supported brainstorming. As reasons, one student said that they enjoyed reading what others had written, and another said that they got a sense of fulfillment even though the process was not easy. Nonetheless, the number of brainstorming supporters increased dramatically, which shows that objectively speaking, many students value brainwriting as an effective idea-generating method, but when it comes to personal enjoyment, they preferred brainstorming.

Discussion

From the above results, it can be inferred that brainwriting was favored over brainstorming in terms of effectiveness in generating ideas, while in terms of enjoyment, brainstorming gained more support. According to observations and survey results, one of the key differences between the two techniques is productivity and members' participation levels. In brainstorming, members' contributions could vary greatly depending on their personalities and communication abilities, as well as the leader's skills in handling the session. This seemed especially noticeable in the current study because leaders were elected randomly without regard to their communication skills. Without effective management, talkative members stated their views while the others offered nods of approval, thus generating few substantial ideas. In brainwriting, on the other hand, members made more balanced contributions as they got an equal number of opportunities to state their ideas. Also, they did not need to wait for others to finish talking, so those sessions produced more ideas than the brainstorming ones in a limited time frame (see Figure 5).

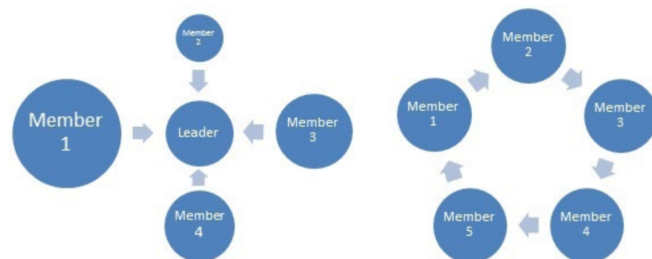

Figure 5. Communication Dynamics in Brainstorming (Left) and Brainwriting (Right)

That being said, brainstorming's cognitive benefits were clear from students' reactions. As some of their comments revealed, they drew a sense of pleasure from face-to-face communication, which was keenly felt when they managed to expand or

produce interesting ideas inspired by what others had said. Conversely, brainwriting was generally a silent and individual procedure. Students were able to focus on writing down their ideas, but the sense of connection with others could be tenuous. This may account for some students' reactions in that they felt anxious and pressured to write down their ideas and pass them on to the next person quickly. The anxiety and pressure may have been exaggerated because no one was talking to soften or lighten the atmosphere.

Given that the two techniques have both benefits and drawbacks, instructors may want to provide visual demonstration beforehand so that members become aware of possible issues that may arise in the process. Also, they may want to use both activities in the group work process so that students of different communication styles can participate in idea-generating activities. In this sense, the current study concurs with VanGundy (1984), who stated that an appropriate strategy needs to be chosen depending on the situation, and brainstorming and brainwriting should supplement each other.

There are some additional issues that became apparent in the course of this study. The first is the language choice in idea-generating activities. Ideally, students ought to communicate in English in the EFL classroom, but the use of English may not be practical if they have to keep looking up words in a dictionary or adding translations of their ideas. Thus, students might be better off if they are allowed to use Japanese and translate their ideas into English later when they draft their papers (R. Weisburd, personal communication, 1 Oct 2012). Also, idea-generating sessions can be time-consuming. Instructors are often under pressure to cover many other topics in class. In addition, explanation and practice time is necessary before students are proficient with these techniques.

Conclusion

Two group-thinking techniques were explored in this study—brainstorming and brainwriting—for use when EFL college learners are assigned a challenging mode of writing. The results revealed that participants' opinions were divided over the effectiveness and enjoyment of these techniques, though brainwriting seemed superior when it came to the actual production of ideas. These results, however, were obtained in a short period of time and the number of participants was small. The results could also be biased because the data was gathered in the classroom, using impressionistic observations and a survey that was not anonymous. Hence, it is premature to draw any definite conclusions and a more rigorous study using objective methods and a larger data set is needed to verify the findings of this study. Also, such a study could see whether or not the two techniques yield differences in the quality of participants' writing.

In spite of these shortcomings, the results have drawn attention to the importance of spending time on idea-generation. Two idea-generating techniques that may make group work more reflective and collaborative were compared, applied in the classroom, and the results analyzed. As Thomas and Turner (1994) put it, "Intellectual activities generate skills, but skills do not generate intellectual activities. The relationship is not symmetric." Learning the basics of essay writing does not make students become good writers but learning to think does. Making use of idea-generating techniques is one way of helping EFL learners to look into their knowledge and experience, learn from others, and grow as writers as well as thinkers.

Bio Data

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Appendix A: *Samples of Idea Overlap*

(Sheet 1)	(Sheet 2)
• Staying up late • Watching TV till late at night • Those who live alone can stay up late without being reprimanded by anyone. • No one wakes them up in the morning. • When they bring their friends to their apartments, they can't go to bed early. • After having fun with friends, they get tired. • Without their noticing it, it gets light outside, and they give up on going to bed. • They don't feel refreshed when they wake up if they don't get enough sleep.	• Going to bed late the day before • Because we play games and so on. • Because recent games are fun. • Playing with friends till late at night • When our friends say that they'll go to class late, we feel tempted to do the same. • We become off our guard, thinking, "It'll be ok because I have no class in the first period!" • Time passes when we hang out idly with friends before the second period… • We end up sleeping, feeling it's too much trouble to attend a class in the second period.

Appendix B: *Sample Brainwriting for the Proposal Section*

(Sheet 1)	(Sheet 2)
• Establish a traffic accident center and display models that simulate damages of various accidents. • Going there should be compulsory in driving school. Drivers should be required to go there once a year. • Those who were in traffic accidents should give lectures to inform others of the danger. • Elementary, middle, and high school student should visit the traffic accident center regularly so that they will be imbued with the fear of traffic accidents. • Create a system that allows us to go through mock accidents.	• Disseminate the stories of those who actually caused accidents and their victims. • When we hear of accidents in news, we tend to take not much notice of them, saying "Oh, isn't it dangerous…," so it might be a good idea to hear the stories of those who were involved in them. • Disseminate the understanding of how much trouble we have to go through if we were in accidents. • Display the enormous burden of traffic accidents at noticeable locations. • The government should support the efforts of those organizations which disseminate the experiences of those who were involved in traffic accidents.

(Sheet 3)	(Sheet 4)
• In order to change their attitude, punish those bikers who conduct dangerous deeds (such as speeding, using cellphones, and ignoring traffic lights). • The police and people in the neighborhood go on patrol. • Increase the number of rounds the police officers make. • If the police wear something more conspicuous, they will be a deterrent. Create a circumstance in which people think, "Oh, here they are!" • If bikers get caught several times due to their dangerous behaviors, they should be forbidden to ride bikes (for a certain period).	• The police and local communities should cooperate and go out on patrol so that offenders will be conscious of being watched constantly. • When the patrol troops find offenders, they should not only warn them but also explain why their actions are wrong so that they can understand the danger. • Put up posters that plainly explain the danger of accidents at places where people gather. • Install surveillance cameras on roads that are wide and where people tend to speed or get into accidents. • So that those delinquents can see that those cameras are there.
(Sheet 5) • It would be nice to have a cell phone that gives a "warning" when we exceed a certain speed. • Make cars so that they cannot speed to begin with. • Install a speedometer to bikes, too, just like in cars, and establish a lawful speed limit. • Create a system that alerts the police if drivers exceed or attempt to exceed a speed limit.	

Aspects of Cohesion and Their Application to English Teaching in Japan

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Reference Data:

Terakawa, K. (2013). Aspects of cohesion and their application to English teaching in Japan. In N. Sonda & A. Krause (Eds.), *JALT2012 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: JALT.

Cohesion is not commonly taught in many institutions in Japan. However, it is recommended that it be introduced, because the mastery of cohesion plays a crucial role in understanding a text more fully. The goals of this paper are (a) to summarize the theory of cohesion, and (b) to discuss how the theory of cohesion can be applied in English classes in Japan to help learners become more fluent in reading.

結束性は一般的に日本の教育機関であまり教えられていない。しかし、文章に現れる結束性の把握は、テキスト全体の理解に欠かせない。それゆえに、結束性の視点を授業に取り入れることで、学習者の読解力を向上させられることが予想できる。本稿では、結束性の理論についてまとめ、結束性をどのように日本人の学生に指導できるか、その方法を検討する。

Reading requires various skills and knowledge, including knowledge of grammar and paragraph structure, ability to read rhetorical expressions, and background knowledge of the text being read. A skill that is underemphasized in English reading education in Japan is the understanding of the cohesive elements of texts. In this paper I will present the stance that cohesion should not be neglected in EFL reading instruction because without explicit instruction, EFL learners may not fully understand the rhetorical importance of cohesive elements (such as repeated words and conjunctions to comprehend the overall message of a text). I first clarify the concept of cohesion and illustrate some cohesive devices, then explain the importance of cohesion in teaching reading in Japan and discuss how to teach reading in a way that fosters an understanding of cohesion in written text.

Investigating Cohesion

A study done in Israel in the 1970s that investigated what made a text difficult for EFL readers to understand is important to note (Cohen, Glasman, Rosenbaum-Cohen, Ferrara, & Fine, 1979/1998). While some might think the investigation old, their findings still hold today. The subjects of the study were Hebrew-speaking university students and American students who were then studying in Israel for a year. The investigators had the students read certain articles and later asked *micro* questions and *macro* questions about the texts. They found that the He-

brew-speaking students did well on micro questions but poorly on macro questions, noting they read more "locally" than their American counterparts, and because of this, they were unable to see the whole picture of the texts they read. In other words, the Hebrew-speaking students were good at understanding meaning in small units, sentence by sentence, but they had difficulty comprehending the overall message of the texts they read.

The researchers concluded the following three areas are textual features the Hebrew-speaking Israeli students found difficult: (a) heavy noun phrases (a long phrase that functions as a noun), (b) syntactic markers of cohesion (conjunctions), and (c) nontechnical vocabulary in technical texts. They noted that the lack of an ability to grasp the overall message resulted from poor understanding of conjunctions or little attention to these connective markers between sentences, pointing out that "learners were not picking up on the conjunctive words signaling cohesion, not even the more basic ones like *however* and *thus*" (Cohen et al., 1979/1998, p. 160). This implies learners of English tend to be distracted by smaller units of text such as unknown words and phrases, and so fail to grasp the overall message of the texts they are reading.

With the above study as a background, I will investigate how problematic cohesive elements are for Japanese university students. Before discussing the importance of cohesion in English teaching, it is important to specify what cohesion is.

Cohesion in Text

Cohesion describes the semantic relationship between different parts in a text. Cohesion is objective in the sense that cohesive elements are identifiable on the surface level of sentences. As Halliday and Hasan (1976) explained:

> The concept of cohesion is a semantic one; it refers to relations of meaning that exist within the text, and that define it as a text. . . . Cohesion occurs where the INTERPRETATION of some element in the discourse is dependent on that of another. The one PRESUPPOSED the other, in the sense that it cannot be effectively decoded except by recourse to it. When this happens, a relation of cohesion is set up, and the two elements, the presupposing and the presupposed, are thereby at least potentially integrated into a text. (p. 4, emphasis in original)

They argued that cohesion gives a text what they call *texture*. Texture is a feature that enables a text to be a meaningful whole. They talked about texture as follows:

> The concept of TEXTURE is entirely appropriate to express the property of 'being a text.' A text has a texture, and this is what distinguishes it from something that is not a text. It derives this texture from the fact that it functions as a unity with respect to its environment. (Halliday and Hasan, 1976, p. 2)

Here is an example of a nontext from Nuttal (2005):

> There was no possibility of a walk that day. Income tax rates for next year have been announced. What is the defining characteristic of the ungulates? Surely you did not tell her how it happened? (p. 24)

At first sight, the above collection of sentences may look like a text, but if you read and try to connect the message from one sentence to the next, you find nonsense. Therefore, this is not considered a text because it lacks texture, a necessary component of text. Further regarding texture, Halliday and Hasan (1976) made an important point, "Texture results from the combination of semantic configuration of two kinds: those of register, and those of cohesion" (p. 26).

What is important about cohesion is that it contributes to the texture of a text, together with register, in "a configuration of situational features" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 22). Thus when looking for texture in a text, cohesion is part of that, making cohesion a useful tool for the EFL classroom to help students build an awareness of the texture of the texts they read, as cohesion helps readers to read at the discourse level rather than the sentence level. By looking at cohesive devices, one can see how meanings are constructed beyond clauses, sentences, and paragraphs, and one can find how an idea is expanded into the next, giving clues as to the messages embedded in a text.

This section has explained how cohesion can be a useful tool for learners of English to better understand a text and become more fluent readers. The next section discusses some examples of cohesive devices in texts.

What Are Cohesive Devices?

According to Halliday and Hasan (1976), cohesion is constructed through the following cohesive devices: reference, substitution, ellipsis, conjunction, and lexical cohesion. As mentioned above, cohesive resources can be perceived at the surface level in sentences. This discussion begins with reference, which is someone or something referred to, like the pronouns *he* and *she*, which should have someone (the name of a person, for example) presupposed when these words are used. As the pronoun and the name of the person are tied together in meaning in the text, this represents cohesion. An example of reference is "Wash and core six cooking apples. Put them into a fireproof dish" (Halliday & Hasan, 1976, p. 2). *Them* in the second sentence refers (back) to the noun phrase *six cooking apples* in the first sentence. As these two elements are connected in meaning, they are an instance of cohesion.

Among the five cohesive devices already mentioned, reference, substitution, and ellipsis are grammatical because they are expressed through sentence syntax. However, conjunction and lexical cohesion are a little different in that (a) conjunctions do not have any referred items but rather show how the message is related between different sentences or clauses, and (b) lexical cohesion is not grammatical but shows the chain of words, or how certain meaning is expressed in the same or different words. As Cohen et al. (1979/1998) indicated, conjunctions are problematic for EFL learners. Also difficult is lexical cohesion.

Cohen et al. (1979/1998) mentioned that a third problematic area for EFL learners is the use of nontechnical vocabulary in technical texts, such as *essential*, *giant*, *diversity*, and *enhance*. For example, in one text, *voting* and *balloting* were used interchangeably, but the students did not perceive their meanings in the text in this way. In terms of lexical cohesion, Nuttal (2005) noted that "the most obvious problem occurs when a writer uses different lexical items to refer to one and the same thing. This is common in English, where the preference is for 'elegant variation,' that is, avoiding repetition by using a different expression with similar meaning" (p. 91). Regarding the same feature, McCarthy (1991) commented:

> Discourse analysts have not yet given us any convincing rules or guidelines as to when or why a writer or speaker might choose a synonym for reiteration rather than repetition, though some research suggests a link between reiteration using synonyms and the idea of 're-entering' important topic words into the discourse at a later stage, that is to say bringing them back into focus, or foregrounding them again. (p. 66)

So what is important to point out here is that lexical chains express the topic of the text through similarities between words but EFL learners tend to regard synonyms as expressing totally different meanings in texts because they are different words. One way to overcome this problem with comprehension is for

instructors to explain the phenomenon of lexical cohesion to their students. Doing this could help students to see the cohesive ties in texts and therefore to better understand the macro meaning expressed in the texts they are reading.

Two Articles From the Magazines *WIRED* and *The Economist*

So far, I have discussed the concept of cohesion and the features of cohesive devices. Next, I would like to move on to show how I applied these principles in the classroom with two sample articles. The articles chosen were: "'Human nature' is often a product of nurture (*WIRED*, UK edition, April 12, 2012, see Figure 1), and "Morals and the machine" (*The Economist*, June 2, 2012, see Figure 2). The first was chosen because its conjunctions show a clear contrast between two ideas. The second was selected for its cohesive ties realized through lexical cohesion. I first analyzed these two texts in terms of cohesive devices, conjunctions, and lexical cohesion, respectively. Based on the analyses, I prepared questions for students to answer. The intention was to see how much they understand of the content of the articles.

The informants were 25 second-year students majoring in engineering. Their level of English was from low intermediate to intermediate; the average TOEIC score of the students was 463. This score is slightly higher than the average score of 448 for all the second-year university students who took TOEIC in 2011 (IIBC, 2011).

Article 1: "Human Nature" is Often a Product of Nurture

Regarding the article taken from *WIRED* (Figure 1), one instantly notices the use of conjunctions to contrast two different concepts; *thing technology* and *idea technology*, which recur throughout each paragraph. In Figure 1, single underlined words and phrases have to do with thing technology and double underlined parts are related to idea technology. In the article, each concept is paraphrased to explain what the author uses these terms to mean. For example, in the case of idea technology the writer states, *science creates concepts, ways of understanding*, and the writer explains thing technology as *technological objects and processes*.

When we think about the technological impact of science, we tend to think of the things science has produced. But there is another kind of technology produced by science that has just as big an effect on us as thing technology. We might call it idea technology. In addition to creating things, science creates concepts, ways of understanding the world that have an enormous influence on how we think and act.

However, there is something about "idea technology" that differentiates it from most "thing technology". Whereas technological objects and processes generally don't affect our lives unless they work, idea technology can have profound effects on people even if the ideas are false. Let's call idea technology based on false ideas "ideology." . . .*

*Only the first two paragraphs are reproduced here.

Figure 1. "'Human Nature' is Often a Product of Nurture," *WIRED*

Using this article, I prepared questions to evaluate how much students understood the two different concepts. Students were given a copy of the article and the questions. They were first asked to explain what thing technology and idea technology were. Out of 25 students, only nine answered correctly for thing technology and only five wrote a suitable explanation for idea

technology. Perhaps if the students had a better idea about how the two concepts are contrasted with conjunctions and how each term is paraphrased with synonymous phrases, it might had been easier for the students to answer these questions. Thus this informal survey appeared to confirm Cohen et al.'s (1979/1998) conclusion that insufficient attention to conjunctions leads to poor understanding of a text.

To improve student comprehension of cohesion in texts, instructors can teach the roles of conjunctions to guide students to notice the kind of information indicated by specific conjunctions in a text. Being exposed to a lot of examples of conjunctions should help students become more fluent readers.

Article 2: Morals and the Machine

The second article I had students read and answer questions about is "Morals and the machine" (*The Economist*, June 2, 2012, Figure 2) which uses a lot of references and synonyms. Words that are treated as synonyms in the article are marked with boxes and arrows showing connection in Figure 2 to help readers identify some of the different words used this way. For example, *ethical decisions* is restated as *moral judgments*, *moral agency*, *machine ethics*, *the ethics of the robotics*, and *robo-ethics*. This is one way that the writer conveys the importance of the concept of *moral agency* throughout the article. Also, *robot* and its synonyms are repeated many times.

In the classic science-fiction film "2001", the ship's computer, HAL, faces a dilemma. His instructions require him both to fulfill the ship's mission (investigating an artifact near Jupiter) and to keep the mission's true purpose secret from the ship's crew. To resolve the contradiction, he tries to kill the crew.

As robots become more and autonomous, the notion of computer-controlled machines facing ethical decisions is moving out of the realm of science fiction and into the real world. Society needs to find ways to ensure that they are better equipped to make moral judgments than HAL was.

Military technology, unsurprisingly, is at the forefront of the march towards self-determining machines. Its evolution is producing an extraordinary variety of species. The Sand Flea can leap through a window or onto a roof, filming all the while. It then rolls along on wheels until it needs to jump again. RiSE, a six-legged robo-cockroach, can climb walls. LS3, a dog-like robot, trots behind a human over rough terrain, carrying up to 180kg of supplies. SUGV, a briefcase-sized robot, can identify a man in a crowd and follow him. There is a flying surveillance drone the weight of a wedding ring, and one that carries 2.7 tonnes of bombs.

Robots are spreading in the civilian world, too, from the flight deck to the operating theatre. Passenger aircraft have long been able to land themselves. Driverless trains are commonplace. Volvo's new V40 hatchback essentially drives itself in heavy traffic. It can brake when it senses an imminent collision, as can Ford's B-Max minivan. Fully self-driving vehicles are being tested around the world. Google's driverless cars have clocked up more than 250,000 miles in America, and Nevada has become the first state to regulate such trials on public roads. In Barcelona a few days ago, Volvo demonstrated a platoon of autonomous cars on a motorway.

As they become smarter and more widespread, autonomous machines are bound to end up making life-or-death decisions in unpredictable situations, thus assuming—or at least appearing to assume—moral agency. Weapons systems currently have human operators "in the loop", but as they grow more sophisticated, it will be possible to shift to "on the loop" operation, with machines carrying out orders autonomously.

As that happens, they will be presented with ethical dilemmas. Should a drone fire on a house where a target is known to be hiding, which may also be sheltering civilians? Should a driverless car swerve to avoid pedestrians if that means hitting other vehicles or endangering its occupants? Should a robot involved in disaster recovery tell people the truth about what is happening if that risks causing a panic? Such questions have led to the emergence of the field of "machine ethics", which aims to give machines the ability to make such choices appropriately—in other words, to tell right from wrong. . . .*

*Only the first six paragraphs are reproduced here.

Figure 2. "Morals and the Machine," *The Economist*

In class, students were asked to identify the synonyms for *ethical decisions*, but only one third could pick up the terms with similar meanings. Also, students were asked to find synonyms for *robot*. Three of the 25 students chose two words: *machine* and *drone* and 17 students picked only one of those two. One student wrote *surveillance* and *robocockroach*. Four students failed to find synonyms for *robot*, either leaving the question blank or choosing totally different words such as *trials*. The results of this survey, though informal, seemed to illustrate the difficulty students had identifying synonyms from the text.

One possible lesson from students' answers is that it may be beneficial to teach the importance of repeated ideas and concepts in texts through using words with similar meanings, as many Japanese learners of English may not know this tendency in English for reiteration through use of synonyms, or the tendency to express the same ideas using different wording.

Conclusion

In the first part of this paper I described and defined cohesion and cohesive devices. In the second part I considered two texts and the extent to which student informants could decipher the meaning of the cohesive devices used. Student difficulty in comprehension suggests the importance of teaching cohesion as part of English instruction. If the students had been more aware of how meaning in English is constructed beyond the sentence and paragraph level, their understanding of the texts could have been more complete. Thus the suggestion here is that elements of cohesion should be taught in the classroom.

As for further investigation, more surveys should be conducted. Furthermore, a pre-posttest investigation of the efficacy of teaching the functions of conjunctions and how topics are repeated using different words through lexical cohesion would go some way to illuminating the importance of explicitly teaching these concepts. Also, this paper covered only conjunctions and lexical cohesion. Exploration of other cohesive resources, particularly reference, substitution, and ellipsis would further illuminate the potential of teaching cohesion explicitly in the classroom.

Bio Data

Kaori Terakawa has been teaching English since 2002 at various institutions from English conversation schools to universities. She has been with Tokyo Denki University since 2006.

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Influence of Text Length on Reading Fluency of Intermediate EFL Students

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This study utilized a quasi-experimental research design to determine students' gains in reading fluency while maintaining a reasonable level of reading comprehension when reading texts of different lengths over a period of 10 weeks. Analysis of the results revealed that Treatment Group 1 (*n* = 61), who used 400-word texts, improved their reading fluency by an average of 37.9 wpm (33.4%) and Treatment Group 2 (*n* = 53), who read 200-word texts, increased by an average of 14.9 wpm (13.3%). Furthermore, Treatment Group 1 saw a gain in comprehension of an average of 11.4%, whereas Treatment Group 2 saw a gain of 11.3%, and the control group (*n* = 36) showed an average of 5.7 wpm (5.8%) change in reading fluency with an average drop in reading comprehension by 1.9%. The results of this study suggest that text length has an influence on L2 reading fluency for intermediate EFL students.

本研究の目的は、ある程度の長さの文章を一定期間続けて読むことで、内容理解に影響することなく、読みの速さが向上するかを検証することである。400字の文章を読む実験群1（*n* = 61）、200字の文章を読む実験群2（*n* = 53）、何も指導を受けない統制群（*n* = 36）を設け、調査をした。10週間後にその効果を検証した結果、読む速さ(1分間に読める語数)が実験群1（400字）で37.9語/分(33.4%)、実験群2（200字）で14.9語/分（13.3%）となり、いずれも伸びが見られた。また、内容理解の正確さについては前者が平均11.4%、後者が11.3%の伸びを示した。統制群については、読みの速さに平均5.7語/分 (5.8%)の伸びがあったものの、正確さは1.9%の減退が確認された。この結果は、中級レベルの英語学習者(EFL)にとって文章の長さが読みの速さに影響することを示唆している。

The objective of this paper is to examine the impact of timed reading materials in the intermediate Japanese EFL classroom as a means of improving reading fluency. To be considered a fluent reader, one must be able to read with ease and accuracy. This involves a long incremental process, with increased text comprehension as one of the expected outcomes (Grabe, 2009, 2010). To understand what reading fluency encompasses, factors such as cognitive velocity (Carver, 1992) and automaticity (LaBerge & Samuels, 1974) need to be acknowledged. Cognitive velocity involves the speed at which the mind operates, whereas automaticity is the attention given to items of information for processing. For example, if learners mainly focus their attention on word recognition, overall comprehension of the text becomes more difficult. Therefore, when words are recognized automatically, cognitive load (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001) can be reduced during reading tasks, and attention can be given to global comprehension.

The difficulty of being a fluent reader, however, is magnified when the student is reading in a foreign language. Many EFL students struggle as they read word by word and check unfamiliar words in a dictionary as part of their bottom-up processing strategies (Coady, 1979). Nation (2009) advocates a 250-words-per-minute (wpm) reading objective for L2 learners. In order for students to become fluent readers, they should progress through bottom-up processing strategies and overcome habits that impede their reading development.

One way that reading teachers can help their students modify their habits is to encourage them to read quickly, as being able to read quickly is essential to being a fluent reader. To increase reading speed, extensive reading, repeated reading, and speed reading are seen as the principle approaches (Macalister, 2010). For extensive reading instruction, a large quantity of easy texts, such as graded readers, are read for enjoyment and to develop general reading skills. In repeated reading, learners read the same text many times until all vocabulary and grammar structures have become familiar. In the speed reading classroom, there are two main speed reading exercises intended for improving reading speed: paced reading and timed reading. In paced reading, the teacher gives students a fixed amount of time to read the text so that the students read at a specific rate. In timed reading, the students try to read the text as quickly as possible while maintaining accuracy and comprehension. Timed reading texts are of equal length and equal lexical difficulty and are practiced over a period of many weeks or months to increase fluency. Therefore, timed reading can be described as a technique primarily used to develop students' reading fluency by increasing reading speed while maintaining a reasonable level of accuracy and comprehension (Nation, 2005, 2007).

Due to the limited amount of classroom time which can be allowed for reading activities in compulsory English classes, it is unlikely that either paced or timed reading activities can be used. As a result, it is essential to choose the most time-efficient activity. In order to determine which activity was more efficient, Champeau de Lopez (1996) conducted a series of studies on paced and timed reading with intermediate EFL university students in Venezuela. For these studies, original texts of various lengths (176 to 713 words) were prepared. She concluded that with the use of paced and timed reading training it was possible to increase the reading speed of intermediate level EFL students. She also concluded that timed reading was superior to paced reading because the reading speed of the timed group increased by an average of 52 wpm (52%) whereas the paced reading group increased by an average of 29 wpm (28%).

Rather than comparing paced and timed reading, most studies have focused on timed reading. In a 9-week study by Chung and Nation (2006) with 49 Korean university students, students read 23 texts of 550 words. Chung and Nation found that most of the students benefited from timed reading activities and that most gains were realized during the first 10 texts. Similarly, the results of a 13-week study with 84 Taiwanese college students using 300-word texts (Chang, 2010) showed that timed reading improved both reading speed and comprehension. She also found that students who read more texts improved the most. When 30 texts were read, students improved their reading speed by an average of 20 wpm; 30-35 texts resulted in an average improvement of 24 wpm; and more than 36 texts increased speed by an average of 41 wpm. Using 400-word texts with Japanese junior college students in two studies, Utsu found that students increased their reading speeds from 78 to 92 wpm (18%) in Study One (2004), and from 91 to 132 wpm (45%) in Study Two (2005). In an 11-week study with 400-word texts at a Japanese university, Crawford (2008) found that both slow and fast readers benefit from speed reading.

An exploratory study researching the general effects of timed reading with intermediate Japanese EFL university students was

carried out by Taferner (2012). In this study, the materials and approach developed by Quinn, Nation, and Millett (2007) were utilized. This study was conducted to determine if timed reading was an appropriate way to facilitate reading fluency, and to probe for ways to modify the materials or approach to improve speed reading pedagogy within the university EFL context in Japan. Analysis of the participants' reading speeds found reading rates and comprehension scores fluctuated throughout the period of the study. Results from the questionnaire administered after the final reading determined that participants liked the speed reading materials and wanted to continue using them in the future. The open-ended questions, however, revealed that many students thought that the readings were too long and they were confused about how to increase reading speed while still maintaining comprehension.

From these studies it is clear that the manner in which timed reading tasks are designed can determine the level of success for learners (Bygate, Skehan, & Swain, 2001). Features such as vocabulary level, text length, and student proficiency are all important factors when determining the correct reading materials to use. Therefore, creating timed reading materials remains a difficult task of balancing many of these aspects to produce an effective outcome. Since previous research has not specifically compared timed reading texts of different lengths, it is the objective of this study to test the effects of text length on reading fluency and comprehension by addressing the following research questions:

1. How does text length influence reading fluency during timed reading?
2. How does timed reading influence reading comprehension?

Methodology

Participants

The 150 participants in this study were university students enrolled in English language programs at three universities in the Kanto area. These students, who majored in a variety of subjects, including business, economics, science, and social sciences, were enrolled in intermediate level English reading classes. The participants were divided into the following three groups: Treatment Group 1 ($n = 61$), Treatment Group 2 ($n = 53$), and a control group ($n = 36$). To minimize confounding factors in the study, no additional reading fluency activities were used with any of the groups.

Task Design

For this study, *New Zealand Speed Readings For ESL Learners – Book One* (Millett, 2005) was used. This book contains 20 texts exactly 400 words in length that are written using only the first 2,000 words of the *General Service List* (West, 1953). For each text, there are 10 comprehension questions. In addition to limiting vocabulary to the first 2,000 words (except for the names of countries and animals), grammar is also controlled so as to maintain the focus on increasing reading speed. In order to meet this objective, students should try to read as quickly as possible while maintaining a minimum score of 70% on the comprehension questions.

For this investigation, 10 texts were selected from the book. For the pretest, the students read the *New Zealand Facts and Figures* text, and for the posttest they read the *Wellington Street Car* text. During the study, Treatment Group 1 read eight 400-word texts (Appendix A) and answered 10 comprehension questions while Treatment Group 2 read eight 200-word texts (Appendix B) and answered five comprehension questions. Both groups read the same texts, but Treatment Group 2 read a truncated

version of the texts. The texts were truncated at exactly at the 200-word mark, as this was the easiest way to avoid potential confounding factors by using other texts, and to ensure all the groups experienced the same readings. A possible weak point of this design is that Treatment Group 1 may have performed better than the other groups on the posttest because of the practice effect of reading 400-word texts.

Data Collection

This study used a quasi-experimental research design to determine students' gains in reading fluency while maintaining reading comprehension when reading texts of different lengths over a period of 10 weeks. In the first week of the study, a receptive vocabulary test (adapted from Laufer & Nation, n.d.) was administered to evaluate receptive vocabulary knowledge and to determine if the timed reading material was at an appropriate level for the participants. This study was conducted in reading classrooms where the emphasis was on reading practice and comprehension exercises.

The participants in the treatment groups experienced timed reading using either ten 200-word or ten 400-word texts, to test the effects of text length on reading fluency and accuracy. A control group was included to measure the effect of these reading materials on students' fluency while maintaining reading accuracy. Treatment Group 1 had 400-word readings, Treatment Group 2 had 200-word readings, and the control group had only the pretest and posttest 400-word readings.

To implement the timed reading tasks, all sessions were conducted following the same procedure. First, a one-page handout with the timed reading text was distributed to the participants. The front side included the reading text and the backside had the comprehension questions. The instructor then waited until all students were ready to proceed. When they were ready, all students began reading at the same time. When students finished reading the text they recorded their reading time from the board onto their bilingual timed reading record sheet (see Appendix C). Next, the students turned over the handout and answered the comprehension questions. After completing the comprehension questions, students then checked their own answers and wrote their score on the record sheet. After all students recorded their comprehension scores, the instructor collected the timed reading record sheets. These record sheets were distributed and collected each time a timed reading was given. After the 10-week treatment period, data from the participants were collected. These data included reading times for the 10 texts and the accompanying comprehension scores.

Results and Data Analysis

Table 1 shows the results of the vocabulary test. Treatment Group 1 had the largest mean score, followed by Treatment Group 2 and the control group. The three groups are comparable in the terms of receptive vocabulary knowledge although Treatment Group 1 had a slight advantage over the other two groups.

Table 1. Receptive Vocabulary Knowledge ($N = 150$)

Treatment Group	*M*	*SD*
Group 1 ($n = 61$)	93.54	6.47
Group 2 ($n = 52$)	85.73	11.11
Control ($n = 37$)	85.54	11.26

Note. The maximum score for the vocabulary test was 108.

In addition to the receptive vocabulary test, a prestudy reading test was also administered. The reading pretest consisted of a 400-word text followed by 10 comprehension questions. As shown in Table 2, Treatment Groups 1 and 2 had comparable average reading speeds of 113.63 wpm and 112.08 wpm. The control group had the lowest average reading speed of 98.16 wpm. A one-way ANOVA analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 20.0 to compare the three groups of students: the two treatment groups (200-word texts and 400-word texts) and the control group. There was no significant difference among the groups in terms of the prereading times $F(2, 149) = 1.980$, $p > .05$. In addition, there was no significant difference in their comprehension scores $F(2, 149) = 2.783$, $p > .05$. In other words, the reading speeds and comprehension scores were comparable at the beginning of the study.

Table 2. Pretest Reading Rates and Comprehension Scores ($N = 150$)

Treatment Group	Reading Rate (wpm)		Comprehension Score	
	M	*SD*	*M*	*SD*
Group 1 ($n = 61$)	113.63	28.55	7.43	1.64
Group 2 ($n = 52$)	112.08	54.84	6.79	1.90
Control ($n = 37$)	98.16	25.59	7.57	1.63

As shown in Table 3, the reading speeds of all three groups (measured in wpm) improved during the semester. Treatment Group 1 (400-word texts) saw the largest gain in fluency of 37.94 wpm (33.39%), and Treatment Group 2 (200-word texts) saw a gain of 14.87 wpm (13.32%). Although the intention was to increase reading fluency while maintaining comprehension, there were also modest improvements in comprehension scores. The comprehension scores of Treatment Group 1 increased by 11.44% and the scores of Treatment Group 2 improved by 11.34%. The control group showed a slight improvement in reading fluency of 5.67 wpm (5.79%) while reading comprehension decreased by 1.85%.

A one-way repeated measures ANOVA was conducted to compare the reading speeds of each of the three groups on the pretest and posttest. The results show that reading speed was significantly affected by the treatment, $F(1, 149) = 59.616$, $p < .05$.

Discussion

The present study was designed to investigate the influence of timed readings of different lengths on reading fluency and comprehension. The results of this study show that there is a significant effect on reading speed and reading comprehension when text lengths vary. The largest gain in reading speed of 37.94 wpm (33.39%) was made by Treatment Group 1, which read the 400-word texts. A modest gain in reading speed of 14.87 wpm (13.32%) was made by Treatment Group 2,which read the 200-

Table 3. Changes in Reading Fluency and Comprehension Scores ($N = 150$)

Treatment Group	Pretest (wpm)	Posttest (wpm)	Change (wpm)	Pretest score	Posttest score	Change (%)
Group 1 ($n = 61$)	113.63	151.57	37.94 (33.39%)	7.43	8.28	11.44%
Group 2 ($n = 53$)	112.08	127.01	14.87 (13.32%)	6.79	7.56	11.34%
Control ($n = 36$)	98.16	103.84	5.67 (5.79%)	7.57	7.43	-1.85%

Note. The maximum score for the comprehension tests was 10.

word texts. This suggests that the 400-word texts were more effective than the 200-word texts in increasing reading speed. The control group also improved their reading speed 5.67 wpm (5.79%) but it is unclear precisely why this occurred. It is possible that this increase can be attributed to coursework during the study.

Although the intention of timed reading practice is to improve reading fluency while maintaining an acceptable level of reading comprehension, both treatment groups saw modest gains in comprehension scores. Treatment Group 1 improved by 11.44% while Treatment Group 2 improved by 11.34%. On the other hand, the comprehension scores of the control group decreased by 1.85%. As a result, it can be said that timed reading practice may have a positive influence on reading comprehension. However, it appears that text length does not significantly influence reading comprehension.

One potential confounding factor of this study is the practice effect (see Macalister, 2010). In addition to the pretest and posttest, Treatment Group 1 and Treatment Group 2 read eight texts. This repeated practice may have resulted in these groups outperforming the control group on the posttest. Similarly, Treatment Group 1 may have had an advantage over Treatment Group 2 on the posttest since Treatment Group 1 read 400-word texts while Treatment Group 2 read 200-word texts. Another limitation of the study was that reading times were self-reported by the students, which may have resulted in measurement errors. Although the focus of the study was on reading fluency and not on reading comprehension, some students found it difficult not to refer to the text while answering the comprehension questions.

Conclusion

Within L2 reading pedagogy, one of the main objectives is to improve learners' ability to read with ease and accuracy. The development of reading fluency is considered to be an important part of L2 reading programs that emphasize students' overall reading skills. Enhancing reading fluency can be accomplished through exercises that can target parameters such as cognitive velocity, automaticity, accuracy, and reading rate. Timed reading is one of many exercises that can help learners become better readers, and should be considered as part of a repertoire of activities (e.g., intensive and extensive reading, comprehension exercises, discussions, etc.) that promote reading skills and strategies. With this in mind, this study attempted to determine whether or not text length has an effect on reading fluency and comprehension.

This investigation on the influence of text length of timed reading texts has resulted in a statistically significant effect on reading fluency gains over a period of 10 weeks. The longer texts of 400 words in length led to gains in fluency that more than doubled the fluency rate of those participants reading 200-word texts. Interestingly, the length of the texts did not have a significant impact on changes in comprehension gains between the two treatment groups as both experimental groups experienced similar gains in reading comprehension. Based on the findings from this study, there seem to be several promising directions for future research. In the current study, the control group completed only the pretest and posttest. In a future study, it may be more appropriate to have an additional control group, which completes all the readings without time limits. This may provide insights into the benefits (reading fluency and reading comprehension) of timed reading versus regular reading. In addition, it may be beneficial to add a delayed posttreatment task to the research design. This would help determine if the extent to which the gains made in reading fluency are maintained in the long term.

In conclusion, this study has found a promising area of research for the ongoing improvement of EFL reading materials as a means to facilitate gains in reading fluency while maintain-

ing comprehension. Continued investigations in text length and reading fluency should reveal promising results with regards to processing strategies and reading development.

Bio Data

Robert Taferner has been teaching English in Japan since 1993. He holds a MAT-TESOL from the School for International Training in Vermont, USA, and is a PhD candidate in Applied Linguistics at Lancaster University, U.K. His research interests include pragmatics, second language acquisition, and materials development. <robert_taferner@yahoo.ca>

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Appendix A

Auckland - City of Sails (400 Word Version)

Auckland is the biggest city in New Zealand with a population of more than a million, which means that a quarter of all New Zealanders live there. As well as having a large population by New Zealand standards, it is also large in area. Greater Auckland covers 6,232 square miles, making it a very large city by world standards. In fact, Auckland is made up of a number of smaller cities which all join together.

Auckland is built around two beautiful harbours and everywhere you go in Auckland you will see water. On a fine day, you will also see hundreds of boats sailing on the water and for this reason, Auckland is known as 'The City of Sails'. The city sits on seven hills which were formed 50,000 years ago by volcanic activity. At the same time, many islands were formed in the harbour. The most famous one is Rangitoto, which you can see from all over Auckland.

Maori have lived in Auckland for 1000 years, and today Auckland has the largest population of Maori in New Zealand. In addition, many Pacific Islanders have moved to Auckland. Auckland now has the largest population of Pacific Islanders of any city in the world. More recently, Auckland has attracted people from Asia and other countries. These influences make Auckland a truly multi-cultural city.

Auckland has many interesting things to see. The main business and shopping district is Queen Street were you can buy anything you want. The entertainment district is also on Queen Street. You can go to a show or a film, and then to a restaurant, club or bar. There is a big visitor's centre, which is a good place to start a tour of Auckland.

At the top of Queen Street you will find Karangahape Road. It is known as K Road and is full of small shops and colourful markets with cheap produce. You will see people, food and products from many countries of the world. On the other hand, Parnell is the expensive place to shop. For the young and fashionable, Ponsonby is the up-market place for restaurants, clubs and night life.

You can drive around the harbour which has many great places to swim and small villages with restaurants and shops. Auckland is a green city with twenty two parks. With its mild weather throughout the year, locals and visitors can enjoy an outdoor life.

Appendix B

Auckland - City of Sails (200 Word Version)

Auckland is the biggest city in New Zealand with a population of more than a million, which means that a quarter of all New Zealanders live there. As well as having a large population by New Zealand standards, it is also large in area. Greater Auckland covers 6,232 square miles, making it a very large city by world standards. In fact, Auckland is made up of a number of smaller cities which all join together.

Auckland is built around two beautiful harbours and everywhere you go in Auckland you will see water. On a fine day, you will also see hundreds of boats sailing on the water and for this reason, Auckland is known as 'The City of Sails'. The city sits on seven hills which were formed 50,000 years ago by volcanic activity. At the same time, many islands were formed in the harbour. The most famous one is Rangitoto, which you can see from all over Auckland.

Maori have lived in Auckland for 1000 years, and today Auckland has the largest population of Maori in New Zealand. In addition, many Pacific Islanders have moved to Auckland. Auckland now has the largest population of Pacific Islanders of any city

Appendix C

New Zealand Speed Readings for ESL Learners - Book One (400 words)

Timed Reading Instructions for Students

When the teacher says "Go!" begin reading as fast as you can. Don't use your finger or a pen to point to the words as you read. When you finish reading the passage, look up and note the next time that has not been crossed off on the board. Write this in the space for time on your graph sheet. Turn over the page and answer the questions from memory without looking back at the passage. After you have finished answering the questions, check your answers using the answer key and record the score on your graph. Then look up. Do not write on the reading passage and question sheet. Your teacher will check your progress and collect your passage if you have finished.

「始め」という指示があったら、できるだけ早く文章を読んでください。指やペンで文字を追いながら読むのは、やめてください。読み終わったら、黒板を見てください。最後に線で消されている時間の、次に書いてある時間を確認してください。その時間を、グラフシートの時間の枠に書き込んでください。ページをめくって質問に答えてください。ただし、前のページに戻って文章を見ることはできません。質問に全部答えたら、答え合わせをして、点数をシートに書き込んでください。以上の作業が終わったら、前を向いてください。冊子(reading passage and question sheet)には何も書き込まないでください。先生が進み具合を確認して、終了していれば文章を集めます。

New Zealand Speed Readings for ESL Learners: Book One

Progress Graph for a 400 Word Passage

Put a circle in one of the boxes to show your reading time and write your score in the area under the reading number.数字の下にあなたの点数を書いてください。文章を読むのに要した時間(分)を示す個所にひとつだけ○をつけてください。

Time											wpm
2:00											200
2:10											185
2:20											171
2:30											160
2:40											150
2:50											141
3:00											133
3:10											126
3:20											120
3:30											114
3:40											109
3:50											104
4:00											100
4:10											96
4:20											92
4:30											89
4:40											86
4:50											83
5:00											80
5:10											77
5:20											75
5:30											73
5:40											71
5:50											69
6:00											67
6:10											65
6:20											63
6:30											62
6:40											60
6:50											59
7:00											57
Reading #	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	
Score on the questions											

Portfolios and Process Writing: Effective Tools for University Writing Classes

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Reference Data:

Leachtenauer, J. E., & Edwards, L. A. (2013). Portfolios and process writing: Effective tools for university writing classes. In N. Sonda & A. Krause (Eds.), *JALT2012 Conference Proceedings*. Tokyo: JALT.

One challenge many teachers face in their EFL writing classes is trying to create writing tasks that can work for students of varying skill levels. Another hurdle is finding a good method for providing each student with feedback that they will be able to apply to future drafts or other writing assignments. When we were given the opportunity to create a new writing course, we explored the idea of incorporating portfolios into our writing class that would hopefully address both of these challenges. It was hypothesized that writing portfolios would allow students to work at their own pace and writing level by giving them the opportunity to decide how and when they would complete their writing projects. The course delivery and instruction centered around student-teacher conferences intended to give individual feedback to each student multiple times throughout the semester.

能力の異なる学習者に対して有効なライティング課題を与えるのは多くのEFL教員にとって難関であり、同じ様に有効なフィードバックを各生徒に返し、各生徒がその助言を新たな文章や改訂版に反映するプロセスを考え出すのもまた悩みの種である。今回、著者達に新たなコースを作ると言う課題を与えられた結果、ポートフォリオ式のライティング・クラスを行えば上記の二点に対応出来るのでは無いかと言う結　論に至った。まず、この形式だと各生徒のペースに合わせていつ課題を終らせるのか計画を立てられる、各自の能力レベルに合わせやすくなるのが一点で、もう一　点は生徒と教員の間でフィードバックを行える1対1のカンファレンスを複数回行える点が上げられる。

In 2010, our university asked us to teach a new writing course entitled "Writing Strategies" that would be offered to 3rd- and 4th-year students. At our institution, all English language courses offered to juniors and seniors are electives and most of these do not have minimum language proficiency requirements. Therefore, we knew that the students who enrolled in the class would probably have a wide range of ability levels that would have to be addressed. Also, because the course was being offered to 3rd- and 4th-year students, we anticipated high absentee rates due to job-hunting activities and teacher-training internships.

As we were given the opportunity to create a completely new course, we began by first discussing how writing is traditionally taught and then brainstormed ways in which this class could be different. There were three areas we wanted to try to address. First, we wanted to design a course that would allow us to address students' individual writing needs. In our previous classes, feedback on a piece of writing was usually provided in a written form that may or may not have been understood or utilized by the students. We believed that finding a way to work with students more closely in order to address varying levels was essential. Second,

we wanted the focus of the writing assignments to be more on the creative process of writing and revising than on the finished product. At our university, all 1st-year students are required to take a two-course reading and writing series. Because of the amount of material to be covered, there are few chances to work with students in any depth on their writing. We wanted to build time for individualized feedback into this class plan by focusing on the types of writing students had already been exposed to and limiting the number of finished pieces required. Third, we wanted to give the students an opportunity to choose not only the writing topics, but also how much effort they wanted to put into their writing. We felt this course could be an opportunity for the students to learn and practice not only some useful writing skills, but time management skills as well. With all of this in mind, we decided to build the class around a writing portfolio.

Writing Portfolios

In structuring the class, rather than have each writing task set apart as an individual assignment in which each piece would be handed in for a grade as it was completed, we decided to have each student generate a writing portfolio. In general, portfolios are a collection of writing pieces, along with drafts and revision notes that together demonstrate the students approach, progress, and writing ability. They are a tool for displaying both product and process (Nunes, 2004) and are often used to demonstrate writing progress over a longer term or period of study. By including earlier examples of writing alongside more polished pieces generated after the writer has gained more skills, progress can be observed. On this basis, Campbell (1998) stated that portfolios can also give far more information about a student's writing ability than other types of assessment. When reviewing the portfolio, a teacher can compare various samples of writing to look for consistencies and also monitor how the writing has changed over time.

Since the objective of the class was on developing and improving writing skills, we first discussed what types of writing tasks might benefit the students most. As our university is a foreign language, liberal arts school, most of the students enroll with the desire to study abroad or obtain jobs that will make use of their English. We believed that focusing on skills such as how to organize and express ideas clearly in academic and professional genres would prove useful for them in the future. As Scrivener (2005) noted, having this kind of practical purpose for their writing also helps to increase student motivation. Therefore, we decided to have students focus on writing paragraphs, five-paragraph essays, and letters or email, which most of the students were introduced to in their freshman year. That way, we could maximize writing time so students could gain practice expressing their ideas in a way that could help them when studying at overseas universities or communicating in writing with host families, international friends, or even future colleagues.

We entitled our portfolio a Life Book, based on Gottlieb's (1995) "collection portfolio," which was to be "an expression of the students, their lives, and their identities" (p. 13). This type of portfolio also stresses that there should be flexibility about what goes into the portfolio, both in content and amount. Keeping this in mind, each student's Life Book was to incorporate a variety of paragraphs, letters, and essays based on important people and experiences in the students' lives. This meant that the learners would be writing on topics they knew well without having to do research. The justification for this decision was so the focus would be on the writing itself, not the research process.

Portfolios and Three Educational Constructs

Besides creating a clear structure for the class, the use of a portfolio would allow us, the teachers, the opportunity to build the class around three educational constructs: student auton-

omy, one-on-one feedback through writing conferences, and a focus on process rather than product.

Student Autonomy

One of the benefits of portfolios is that they can incorporate autonomous learning principles by "allow[ing] students to assume responsibility for their own learning" (Gottlieb, 1995). In autonomous learning environments, students are given opportunities to set their own goals and take an active role in planning and executing learning tasks (Little, n.d.). Following this guideline, we developed the class in such a way as to help the students become active participants in their own learning.

We felt it was important to allow each student to decide what their goals for the class were and what types of projects they wanted to complete; some students wanted intensive writing practice whereas others wanted a more relaxed writing experience. Students were asked to complete three types of writing: paragraphs, letters, and essays. Of these three types, it was unimportant which the students decided to work on; all participants, from lower level students who felt that they just wanted to write paragraphs to higher level students who really wanted to focus on their essay writing skills, could participate in and benefit from the class. In this way, no one was forced to work above or below his or her level, but all could benefit from the class.

We also felt it was important that students have the opportunity to decide when they would finish each project by following an individual work schedule. Therefore, there were no deadlines built into the semester plan; as long as the final portfolio was turned in by the end of the semester, when each piece was finished was of no consequence. The university allowed for only a certain number of absences and attendance was recorded, so most students did attend class regularly. However, on occasions when students needed to be absent due to other obligations, they would not be penalized. They could work outside of class and simply come to class for a writing conference if they wished.

Considering these factors, we created an assessment plan that would take into account varying skill levels and allow each student to target what their final grade for the class would be. Each of the three types of writing was awarded a point value: Paragraphs were worth one point, letters worth two points, and essays worth three points. To receive these points, students had to complete a 4-step writing process and include all drafts, notes, and revisions in the final Life Book. To help with this, each student kept a check sheet (see Appendix) at the front of their Life Book so that they could track which steps were completed and see what still needed to be done. They would then receive a final grade for their Life Book based on the following scale: 16 points = 90-100%, 13 points = 80-89%, 11 points = 70-79% and 9 points = 60-69%, which will be explained more in the next section.

Process vs. Product

In process writing, students are asked to complete several steps over an extended period before arriving at a finished product. The most important concept in process-focused writing is that, although the final product is important, more emphasis is placed on the work it takes to get to that final product (Onozawa, 2010). A common pattern follows a 4-step process of: (a) brainstorming and prewriting, (b) first draft, (c) revisions and editing, and (d) final draft. For our class, in order to complete their Life Books, the students were required to show this process approach by including at least one brainstorming sheet, either a mind-map or an outline, for each piece of writing, at least two drafts, and the completed piece of writing.

To assist learners in beginning the writing process, it is important to encourage a variety of planning and prewriting strategies. For our purposes, we devoted the first 20-30 minutes of each class to a speaking activity, such as an interview or small-group discussion, designed to help the students generate writing ideas. This was then followed by time for more individualized brainstorming through the use of a mind-map or outline form, drafting, writing, and rewriting. Students were also encouraged to continue these steps outside of class as well. Along with writing, students could also use class time to engage with the teacher in a writing conference. Following a writing process like this can be especially beneficial for ESL/EFL students because they are not only practicing their writing skills, but can also practice their communication and language skills. Having multiple drafts of the same work also means students can compare drafts and, hopefully, see how their writing has changed over time.

The final grade for the portfolio was not based on how well the final pieces were written, but rather on how well students had used the writing process in completing their portfolios Rather than assessing the final version as a stand-alone piece of writing, it was compared to the earlier drafts and conference notes. As noted above, portfolios were awarded a grade based on a point system, each with its own percentage range. This made it possible to award a higher grade to a student who had made significant changes between drafts as compared to a student who made only superficial changes. This means that it was possible for a lower proficiency student, whose final writing may have been lower in quality than that of a stronger writer, to receive a higher score simply because they put in more work.

Writing Conferences

In order to further help students understand this process approach to writing, as well as to be able to provide them with personalized feedback, we implemented the use of writing conferences. These face-to-face conversations between the teacher and student were used to review previous writing and drafts with the goal of finding ways to improve the student's writing or plan future projects. We felt that conferences could lead to some meaningful exchanges with our students that would help them improve their individual writing skills.

Providing feedback in a writing conference can focus on two main areas: feedback on form and feedback on content (Williams, 2003). No matter which is being focused on, there are some important guidelines to follow in conferencing that will ensure a positive and educational experience. Graves (1982) proposes four characteristics of successful writing conferences that are useful to keep in mind when meeting with students:

1. The conference must have a predictable structure; the students should be aware of what the purpose of the conference is.
2. The focus should be on just a few points; focusing on too many issues at once can be overwhelming and discouraging.
3. The teacher should demonstrate solutions to problems, especially for content or organizational issues.
4. The conference process should stimulate pleasure in writing by giving positive feedback and encouragement every time.

It is also very important to remember that writing of any kind, at any level, is a very personal activity; by putting words on paper, the writer is placing a part of themselves in the public arena and the teacher needs to acknowledge this by beginning slowly and carefully, taking the writer's feelings into account. One way to do this is for teachers to begin every conference with a short silent period in which to read and organize their thoughts on the student's writing and what they would like to focus on in

the conference (Pryle, 2009). In order to help the students improve and gain confidence, something to praise should be found first. Also, the students have chosen their topic in order to share something, so it is important to acknowledge the meaning of the piece—what is it they are trying to share, say, or teach?

Feedback on Content

When conducting writing conferences, there is a hierarchy that should be followed. First, there should be a focus on the content of the writing. This would involve examining how the students have developed and presented their ideas and make sure the piece is substantial enough to be a first draft (Pryle, 2009). For example, if the student's goal is to write an essay about university students and part-time jobs, but their first draft is simply a description of their job at Lawson, the teacher may use this conference time to help the student with their brainstorming process, which may have been inadequate, or to decide on and construct a strong thesis statement with several good reasons to back up that statement.

The next step is to help the student eliminate unnecessary information and flesh out their writing with more details and examples. Writing conferences not only provide writers with an opportunity to receive immediate feedback on their writing that they can respond to, but the conferences can help them see their work from various angles to help improve their writing.

Feedback on Form

Once the content of the writing has been reviewed, and hopefully improved, then it is time to examine the work at the sentence level. There are many advantages to conducting a writing conference to look at structure and grammar errors rather than just providing students with written comments on their paper. One reason is that students often find written feedback to be confusing (Williams, 2003). A conference allows the teacher and student to trace the cause of the problem and develop some ways to correct it. It also provides the students a chance to ask clarification questions in order to gain a clearer understanding of the grammatical issue being discussed. Students enjoy participating in this type of encounter as part of the process and studies have found that students find feedback given in conferences to be more effective than written feedback (see Brendar, 1998, Williams, 2003).

However, it is important to remember that the same conferencing guidelines apply to this type of feedback as well—it will be most successful if the student does not feel threatened or discouraged, and can receive careful, constructive criticism. As in conferencing on content, writing instructors and advisors are encouraged to take time to plan what will be said beforehand. Scrivener (2005) provides some useful tips for conducting a conference that focuses on form:

1. Keep a positive tone; writing conferences can be intimidating, so it is important the students are at ease.
2. Avoid focusing on too much at once; trying to correct every mistake can be overwhelming and won't necessarily help the students to improve.
3. Make sure that the errors focused on are appropriate for the level of English and writing goals of the student.
4. It is best to perform error correction together with the student, guiding them towards the correct answer. However, if a marking system is used that the students will then use to make corrections on their own, making sure it is easily understood and interpreted correctly is key for learners to be able to take action on it.

Putting it Into Practice

Since this was a one-semester course that only met for two 90-minute classes a week, we wanted to maximize the time available for writing conferences. Therefore, we decided on a very simple set-up for each individual lesson and the semester as a whole.

Because the three types of writing were already familiar to the students, we felt a quick review of each type of writing, including the basic four-step writing process, would be sufficient to get them started. We wanted the focus of the class to be on output through the use of a writing process and student-teacher conferences, so we limited whole-class writing instruction to just the first 3 weeks of the semester (see Table 1). The assumption was that reintroducing these types of writing together at the start of the course would provide students with the most flexible opportunity to begin whichever writing tasks they wanted to complete toward their course grade. It would also allow for unavoidable absences later in the semester in that students wouldn't have to worry about missing important content lessons.

The middle 10 weeks of the semester were devoted to student-teacher conferences and building the Life Book and the final 2 weeks were reserved for student presentations in which they shared their completed Life Book with their classmates. The oral presentations provided closure for the class and gave the students an opportunity to share their writing and stories with their classmates.

Table 1. Class Schedule

Week	Monday	Thursday
1	Class & syllabus introduction, getting to know you	Paragraph writing and the writing process
2	Letter writing	Essay writing
3	Essay writing continued	
4 - 13	Building your Life Book All draft checks must be completed by July 4th!!!	
14 & 15	Sharing your Life Book: Final presentations	

Weeks 4-13

During weeks 4 to 13, each class was conducted in the same manner. For the first 30 minutes of class time, students were led in a pair, small group, or whole group speaking activity such as an interview or "Find Someone Who" activity. The interview or discussion topics were designed to help students generate ideas for new writing projects. For example, they were asked to interview a classmate about his or her work experience. They were then provided with some writing prompts such as (a) write a paragraph stating three reasons why you like your part-time job; (b) write a letter of introduction to a company you would like to work for; or (c) write an essay stating reasons why you think college students should or shouldn't have part-time jobs.

After concluding this speaking activity, the last 60 minutes of the class were reserved for independent work and writing conferences. When students were ready for a conference, they wrote their name on a list. The teacher then met with each student in turn. Because the finished Life Book would consist of several

different projects, students who were waiting could always work on a different step, for example brainstorming a new project or making revisions to a draft previously conferenced on.

Depending on the size of the class, the conferencing period can be an extremely busy time for the teacher, but we felt it was important to spend as much time as possible with each student in order to provide them with as complete a conference as possible, one that would leave them with some clear ideas on how to proceed in order to revise for a stronger draft. One way to maximize time is to have students needing a grammar check give their paper to the teacher to be read and checked outside of class. Also, even though the ideal situation is to see students in turn as they sign up, teachers can ask students who they feel will need less help to step back and let a lower ability student go first to make sure that students with the greatest needs get the help they need.

Weeks 14 & 15

In the last 2 weeks of the semester, the students were given a chance to share their Life Books with their classmates in informal presentations. This provided the students with an audience and purpose for their portfolios, which is an important motivational tool (Scrivener, 2005). We decided to employ a presentation style similar to a poster presentation. Four or five presentation stations were set up around the classroom and students gave their presentation to two or three small groups of classmates. The repetition gave students a chance to improve their speaking skills each time and it was nice for them to be able to talk about their projects more than once, after having put so much time into them. Also, the informal setting worked well for this type of project; the Life Books can be quite personal, so a simple "chat" with classmates seemed appropriate. This is also an area where the benefits of repetition could be seen. As the audience became more comfortable with the presentation style, they also began to ask more questions and interact with the speaker more.

Outcomes

When first planning this course, we anticipated several issues that we felt should be addressed. One was that the students would most likely have varying skill levels. This turned out to be true, and the portfolio and conference system seemed to work well in addressing this issue. Students of all levels were able to successfully complete the Life Book project no matter what their skill level.

Students expressed a high level of satisfaction with the class in their evaluations. From their comments, we can surmise that part of the satisfaction with the class was related to the fact that students were able to work at their own pace. Lower level, and possibly less motivated, students could work at a slower pace without holding back the other students or feeling pressure to work at a faster pace than they were able to or wanted to.

For a variety of reasons, we also anticipated high levels of absenteeism, which was a guiding factor behind the development of this course. We wanted to design a system that would allow students to be able to pass the course even if they were unable to attend every class. We were successful in our design in that those students who were absent due to unavoidable conflicts were able to complete the course with a passing grade, due to the flexibility built into the schedule.

Future Goals

One aspect of portfolios that we did not include in this course was that of reflection. In the future, we would like to build self-reflection into the conferencing sessions through discussions with the students about how they feel they are progress-

ing throughout the semester. We would also like to include some form of reflective writing in the final Life Book, either about why students chose to write the pieces they did or their thoughts on their writing progress as a whole (Fiktorius, 2012).

The use of portfolios and writing conferences is not new, but it is not widespread in the EFL community. We need to conduct further research to find out which aspects of the class students enjoyed and benefitted from the most, whether it was the personalized feedback rather than more traditional written comments or the fact that students were allowed to choose how many points they completed. However, what we do know is that using this method was a successful way to provide students with personalized feedback on their writing.

Bio Data

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Appendix

Project Check Sheet

Project Check Sheet **Name:** ____________________

Project #1 Title: ______________________________________
Type: ______________________________ Points: __________
☐ Brainstorm and/or outline
☐ 1st draft checked for content Date: ______________
☐ 2nd draft checked for grammar Date: ______________

Project #2 Title: ______________________________________
Type: ______________________________ Points: __________
☐ Brainstorm and/or outline
☐ 1st draft checked for content Date: ______________
☐ 2nd draft checked for grammar Date: ______________

Project #3 Title: ______________________________________
Type: ______________________________ Points: __________
☐ Brainstorm and/or outline
☐ 1st draft checked for content Date: ______________
☐ 2nd draft checked for grammar Date: ______________

Project #4 Title: ______________________________________
Type: ______________________________ Points: __________
☐ Brainstorm and/or outline
☐ 1st draft checked for content Date: ______________
☐ 2nd draft checked for grammar Date: ______________

Writing Bilingually for Mono- and Bilingual Readers

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In this paper I report the results of a study that examined the perceptions about and processes of bilingual writing by Japanese learners of English. Forty-six learners in freshman composition courses wrote a descriptive or opinion composition of 200-400 words in both English and Japanese. They later reflected on what linguistic and textual aspects they attended to when revising their bilingual documents in order to accommodate diverse readers. A careful analysis of the learners' writings and comments revealed that they refined the documents by comparing the two languages and modified syntactic, lexical, and discursive forms by taking into account intelligibility for monolingual and bilingual readers. Moreover, learners' awareness was raised as to the value of bilingual writing.

本論は、日本の英語学習者の二言語を使って書くことについての意識とその学習作業過程を研究した結果を報告するものである。大学一年生向けライティングクラスの46名の学生が、英語と日本語を用いて200〜400語の説明文または意見文を書き、その後、多様な読者に読んでもらうために、言語やテキストのどのような点に注意を払い推敲作業を行ったかについて調査用紙に記入した。学習者の作文と編集所感を詳しく分析した結果、学習者は日英二つの文書を比較し、一言語使用の読み手にも二言語使用の読み手にも分かりやすく書くことを考慮に入れながら、文法、語彙、文章構成を修正していったことが分かった。また、この執筆編集作業を通じて二言語で書くことの有用性について学習者の意識が喚起されたことが観察された。

The use of English as a lingua franca has produced a larger number of bilingual or multilingual speakers than ever before (Graddol, 1997, 2006); has generated diverse, multilingual communities; and has provided people with numerous chances to use multiple languages for their shared needs and aspirations (Crystal, 2003). Examples include an evacuation directive in a multilingual community that is simultaneously issued in several languages and instruction manuals written in several languages that are included with products made by multinational corporations. Additionally, a number of Japanese companies, such as Rakuten and Uniqlo, have encouraged and required the use of English as an in-house common language among employees (Igarashi, 2010; Nannichi, 2010). In such circumstances, people are expected to provide information in English or local languages, or both, so that the information is accessible to monolingual and bi- and multilingual speakers.

Multicompetence

As greater value is placed on bi- and multilingual ability in society, the notion of multicompetence has been advocated to elucidate the hybrid nature of such speakers. According to Cook (2007a), multicompetence is defined as "the knowledge of two languages in one mind" (p. 17). In his sense, the knowledge of language is not narrowly defined to mean a grammatical system but instead a holistic linguistic competence, including syntax, lexicon, pragmatics, phonology, the writing system, and language-related concepts. He argued that, therefore, examining the language competence of bi- and multilingual speakers should focus on the relationships of the languages in the individual's mind rather than the separate competences of L1 and L2.

Cook (2010) claimed that the goal of L2 teaching should be to produce successful L2 users rather than imitations of monolingual native speakers because all L2 users are essentially bilingual even though their proficiency levels in the two languages may not be equal. Their language competence, which has been developed with the mutual effects of their L1 and L2, is inherently different from that of monolingual speakers. L2 users' usage of languages, such as in translating and code switching, is also distinctively different from the language usage of monolingual speakers (Cook, 2006).

Language User Groups

Cook (2009) classified such language users into six groups. Group A are those who use only their L1, a native local language, with each other in the local language area. They are monolingual speakers. Most Japanese people using Japanese in their everyday life belong to this group, and many native speakers of English are in this group as well. Group B consists of people who use an L2 within a larger community. For example, a lot of non-Japanese residents living in Japan use the Japanese language when shopping or at work, although they speak their L1 at home and in their inner circles. Group C comprises people who use their L2 internationally for specific functions, such as political, economic, academic, cultural, and religious purposes. Group D contains people who use their L2 for a wider range of functions. Those who use English as a lingua franca across countries for all possible functions belong to this group. Group E is composed of people who are historically from a particular community and are acquiring or reacquiring their community language as an L2; for example, returnees who come back to Japan learning Japanese, or Japanese Americans or Japanese Brazilians learning their heritage language, Japanese. Group F is composed of people who use an L2 only in a small circle, say, with a partner or with family.

Of these groups, Groups A and D are relevant to this study because most Japanese university students were born in and have lived in a Japanese speech community and are learning to use English for a variety of purposes domestically and internationally in their future professional and personal lives.

Bilingual Writing Ability

Ortega and Carson (2010), in their L2 writing study, criticized a prevailing static view of monolingualism in the realm of SLA. They argued that SLA has wrongly focused on how to add on a monolingual command of an additional language but neglected the complexity of multiple language uses in L2 learners and users. Ortega (2010a) claimed that bi- and multilingual competence should not be separately investigated in each language but be analyzed as the total language repertoire of such users.

Bi- and multilingual ability should not be underestimated in the development of L2 writing. Reviewing L2 writing research, Ortega (2010b) lists the following pivotal topics and findings:

- Language development is a prerequisite for writing development.
- L2 writing supports language development.
- L2 writing supports cognitive development.
- L2 writing is deeply implicated in identity and power.
- Evidence exists for L1 effects on L2 writing and reverse effects of L2 on L1 writing.

In addition to these linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural findings, Ortega and Carson (2010) call for the need to investigate writing by the same writers across languages and of diverse populations in a variety of social contexts. Writing research needs to consider L2 writing development of multicompetent learners as a dynamic and complex system.

The Study

Research Questions

In today's society, bilingual writing ability is not less important than bilingual speaking ability and cannot be left behind in our L2 education. To better understand the development of the bilingual writing ability of Japanese university students, I set two research questions for this study.

1. How do Japanese university students perceive bilingual writing ability?
2. How do they compose and edit bilingual documents that they write?

Data Collection

Forty-six students, 20 males and 26 females in freshmen composition courses, participated in this study. The composition course was a one-semester, required course for all 1st-year students, with the aim of developing students' English writing ability. They studied paragraph structure, including topic and supporting sentences, and essay structure (introduction, body, and conclusion). By the end of the semester, they were expected to express themselves freely, have become fluent in writing essays regarding topics of their interest, and have mastered the basics of writing short research papers in English. The activity of bilingual writing was incorporated in the 10th session of the 14-session course. The participants in this study were majoring in psychology, tourism, or welfare, and their English proficiency level was intermediate to high intermediate.

The data were collected in 2011-2012 by asking students to choose one topic out of four and write a composition in English of 200 to 400 words. The topics were (a) an important event that changed my life, (b) a plan of a 1-day tour, (c) three tips for a successful entry to an upper school or the job market, and (d) the most impressive lecture at university. Next, they wrote a Japanese version of the same composition. Third, they formed pairs and had their partner read both the English and Japanese versions and decide which version was easier to understand. Fourth, the students made modifications in their own writings in order to make them more understandable for both monolingual and bilingual readers and marked changes in red. Here, the imagined readers were English monolinguals, Japanese monolinguals, and other language users who know some English or Japanese or both. Lastly, the students filled out a question sheet that asked them what kind of modifications they had made in the revised versions and how important they perceived bilingual writing ability to be.

Results

The Importance of Bilingual Writing Ability

To the question regarding how they perceived the importance of bilingual writing ability, all students responded "very important" or "important" (see Table 1).

Table 1. Is Bilingual Writing Ability Important? (*N* = 46)

Response	Count
Very important	25
Important	21
Not so important	0
Not important at all	0

There are a variety of reasons why the students considered bilingual writing ability important. According to Cook (2007b), the goals of language learning can be divided into two main types: external and internal goals. External goals relate to the students' use of language outside the classroom; for example, traveling, reading web pages, writing email, chatting online in another language, attending lectures in a different country, and surviving as newcomers in a new world. Internal goals relate to the students' mental development as individuals; for example, they may think differently, approach language in a different way, and better understand different cultures and ideologies by learning a new language.

The students' reasons were categorized into external and internal goals and their sub-goals (see Table 2). A majority of the reasons were external goals, in particular, communication with others. Among the internal goals, importance was placed on approaching language in a different way.

Table 2. Why Is Bilingual Writing Ability Important? (*N* = 46)

Response	Count
External goals	
Communication with others	27
Career opportunities	7
Internal goals	
Different approach to language	12
Different way of thinking	1
Growth as a person	1

Note: Some students gave more than one reason.

Students were also asked to comment on communication through writing. The questions were asked bilingually, and the students were free to answer in either Japanese or English. The responses in Japanese have been translated into English and explanatory comments are added in brackets. Some comments included the following:

- I can convey my opinions to more people and receive more information.
- Target readers are not just one kind.
- There are many people who are bilingual. However, some people can understand little English and little Japanese. Therefore, we should do bilingual writing to make everyone understand what we want to tell.
- In the future, we will have to work with people who are from many kinds of countries. Therefore, we must study to read, speak, and write English. We should have the ability to write not only in Japanese but also in English.

- In the globalizing modern society, it is important to speak both Japanese and English, but it is also important to be able to write in both languages.

These comments showed that the students felt that writing for diverse readers or imagined readers is important, and that they understand that communication pertains to not only speaking but also writing.

Another external goal for English language students is learning English for future opportunities, as shown by the following comments:

- I will need to use Japanese as long as I live in Japan, and my job opportunity will increase if I can use English.
- It will not be practical if I learn [advanced writing skills in] only English. When I learn both languages, I can make use of them in my daily life.

The students used Japanese in their daily life, but hoped their English skills would bring them better career opportunities. They seemed to acknowledge the language issues related to bilingual users like themselves and the language environment where they live. They also appeared to recognize that they should practice writing essays and research papers in Japanese just as they were learning to master these skills in English.

As for internal goals, several students pointed out different approaches for language learning:

- When I compared the English and Japanese documents, some parts are easier to understand in English, and others are easier in Japanese. Writing bilingual documents will increase readers' understanding.
- There are some expressions that can be well expressed in English (e.g., adjectives such as *fantastic* and *exotic*) and other expressions that can be expressed only in Japanese (such as detailed explanations). By checking the meaning in Japanese, I can use more appropriate English expressions.
- There are some expressions that cannot be [adequately] understood in Japanese or in English.

As the final student remarked, by passing between two languages, bilinguals can deepen their understandings of the languages and the notions that are expressed in those languages. Furthermore, bilinguals realize the limitations of one language, and, therefore, the value of bilingual ability or biliteracy for both writers and readers. This corresponds with the findings of a previous bilingual education study (Cummins, 2010) that the development of literacy in two languages entails linguistic and cognitive advantages for bilingual students because bilingual students get more practice in learning language, which results in greater intentional control and higher levels of metalinguistic awareness.

Communicative Effects of the Two Documents

The students asked their partners which version was easier to understand, or had more communicative effects, the English or the Japanese. Applying the definition of "communicative effects" by Liberman (2011) to our task, I defined it as the (likely) effects on real or hypothetical readers, including linguistic and textual effects such as the interpretation of the literal meaning and the perception of particular expressions, discursive organizations, and writing styles in relation to sociocultural norms and psychological states.

Seventy percent of the students chose the Japanese versions (see Table 3). This means that 30% preferred the English versions even though their L1 was Japanese. Upon further examination, it seems that the Japanese compositions that were not preferred had a feeling of having been translated from English and needed more naturally sounding expressions in Japanese.

Table 3. Which Document Has More Communicative Effects? (N = 46)

Response	Count
English	14
Japanese	32

Composing and Editing

After revising the bilingual documents, the students reflected on the process of their revisions. The most frequent modification was replacing words or phrases, including corrections in Japanese and English, followed by elaborations and changing titles (see Table 4).

Table 4. How Students Adjusted the Two Documents

Change made	English	Japanese
Rewording	13	31
Elaborating	10	20
Changing the title	3	11
Others	3	5
Totals	29	66

Changing titles

Following are some examples of how titles changed. The first type was a change to a more naturally sounding title in Japanese to accommodate Japanese readers (my own translation into English in brackets). The student in the first example chose the Japanese particle *de* [at] instead of *chuu* [during], and the student in the second example struggled to find the word *kachikan* [values] in Japanese to better express what he meant.

- Important things during an interview → 面接で大切なこと [Important things at an interview]
- Changing my viewpoint → 見解の変化 [Changing views] → 私の価値観の変化 [Changing my values]

The second type of change was making a more specific title than the original one to represent the content of the essay.

- Three tips for a success → 採用のための3要素 [Three tips for successful employment]
- Entrance examination → 私にとっての入学試験 [My entrance examination]
- A day in Fukuoka → 福岡を一日で満喫しよう [Enjoy Fukuoka in a day]
- A letter to Prof. Yamamoto → 地球にやさしく [Be kind to the earth]

In the third type, the change in the Japanese title resulted in reforming the English title.

- For you and your partner → 家族の大切さ [Importance of family] → Importance of family
- A day in Tokyo → 東京で過ごす一日 [A day you will spend in Tokyo] → Exciting spots in Tokyo

These revisions indicate that the students did not simply directly translate an English title into a Japanese one or vice versa, but sought the most appropriate title for their communicative intent.

Rewording

In the process of revisions, students noticed grammatical errors, figured out better lexical choices, and made discursive modifications to achieve logical coherence. In one example, a student corrected a parallel construction of riding the *Shinkansen* and “taking” a break. Another student chose “thanks to” in place

of "because of" to better express his feelings. Another student changed a discourse marker from "however" to "after all," which changed the relational coherence with a previous paragraph.

Students made a variety of revisions in their Japanese versions. They made some grammatical corrections and lexical modifications to employ natural expressions in Japanese rather than direct translations from English. Furthermore, they made use of discourse markers to mark sequence and even changed literary styles from more formal to more colloquial.

Elaboration

Inserting sentences and phrases for detailed descriptions was another editing method. The first instance below (insertion shown in brackets) was taken from an essay in which a student wrote about the day when her father suddenly disappeared and how she felt and reacted to his leaving. The second and third examples were taken from an essay entitled, "One-Day Tour in Tokyo." The writer realized that a preview of the body in the introduction and a more detailed description of the place were needed after discussing the effects of the English and Japanese documents with his partner.

- I felt remorse. [Why did I behave coldly to him?]
- Here's a one-day tour of Tokyo's most exciting spot: Tokyo Sky Tree. [You'll start the day with a visit to a unique shopping mall, enjoy various kinds of lunch, get an incredible view, and finally end the tour walking around the area.]
- In addition, you can eat a lunch in the Tokyo Soramachi. [The Tokyo Soramachi has various kinds of restaurants. You can enjoy your favorite types of lunch.]

Elaborations in Japanese were more frequently found than elaborations in English. The students tried to write their Japanese versions as close to the English version as they could, but occasionally, they broke the approximation to accommodate Japanese readers.

- Imagine seeing one of the most beautiful sights of cherry blossoms and the historical castle. → 想像してみて下さい。歴史情緒あふれる城と桜の最高に美しい景色を。[Imagine it: the most beautiful sights of the castle full of ancient atmosphere together with cherry blossoms.]
- … and they are selling special products of Ueda City and having a parade of Sanada Yukimura who built the Ueda Castle. → 上田市の特産品の販売や、上田城を建てた真田幸村の仮装をした人々による大規模なパレードが行われています。[... and they are selling local products of Ueda City and having a big parade by people dressed up as Sanada Yukimura who built Ueda Castle (and his samurai warriors).]

Conclusion

This study investigated how Japanese university students considered bilingual writing and how they composed and edited bilingual documents. The results showed that the students perceived the importance of bilingual writing. Their biggest reason for supporting bilingual writing was their belief that bilingual writing ability expands the possibility of communication with others, both Japanese monolinguals and English monolinguals, and bilinguals who use Japanese or English as an additional language or languages. Since these readers are expected to be in various phases of multicompetence, the students attempted to write the identical message so that readers could correctly understand them in Japanese, English, or both, rather than pursuing aesthetic, literary expressions.

Feedback from peer readers led writers to take different approaches when writing in the different languages and when considering different ways of thinking. Writers revised their L1 and L2 documents by correcting errors, choosing more appro-

priate expressions for their communicative intent, and elaborating descriptions to fill in gaps between the two languages.

Students' awareness was raised as to the value of bilingual writing through this activity as several of the students who had never previously done such an activity commented that the development of a bilingual writing ability would promote their personal and societal well-being. The environment of learning and using English in a globally networked society is changing (Block & Cameron, 2002; McKay, 2002). The practice of bilingual writing can be useful in preparing students to use English for various functions in a variety of settings. Therefore, incorporating bilingual writing into L2 education is essential.

Bio Data

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Writing Training: Written Output, Visual-Auditory Input, and Noticing

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In this paper I introduce an activity that helps elementary level students compose their own sentences in English. Elementary level students normally have difficulty composing their own ideas in English without any models. This activity is designed to provide scaffolding so that the learners can compose their own ideas and sentences with the support of a model. Based on classroom observations, this step-by-step method for teaching sentence writing to a small group of elementary level students is detailed. The student outcomes for the activity suggest that this method helps learners start writing meaningful sentences and become more autonomous as learners through a student-centered teaching style.

本稿では、初級レベルの英語学習者が、意図する内容を伝える英語の文章を書くようになることを目ざした作文練習方法を紹介する。意図する内容を手本なしに組み立てることは、初級学習者にとって困難がつきまとうが、紹介するメソッドは手本を足がかりとして与える事で学習者が英語によって意図する文章を作り出しやすくしている。初級レベルのスモールグループにこの方法をどのように適応するのかを、筆者の経験に基づき詳しく解説している。また、参加者の練習の成果をみると、学習者中心的なこの方法が学習者として自律するのに役立つことが示唆される。

In my experience, elementary level learners tend to hesitate more when engaging in the practice of productive skills, such as writing and speaking, than with receptive skills such as reading and listening. When beginning learners try to engage in a productive activity like writing, they face two problems. First, traditional writing instruction, such as free-writing practice, tends to leave the topic open, and students have to decide what to write. When the teacher tries to prompt students to write their own sentences, one of the difficulties the students frequently face is that they cannot come up with their own ideas to write about. They may spend almost half the time allocated to writing practice just thinking about what they should write. When the ideas finally come, little time is left for them to compose sentences.

After students decide what they are going to write, the next challenge is to produce sentences that convey their intended meanings. Producing their own sentences is very challenging for novice writers, partly because they have no models, but also because they do not have the necessary vocabulary or grammatical knowledge to explain what they want to say. Then the teacher collects their compositions, checks them over, and returns them to the students, perhaps in a few days. By that time, however, the writers have already lost touch with or perhaps even forgotten what they wrote and have lost interest in going over the corrections the teacher

has made. As a result, the same mistakes appear repeatedly, left unnoticed by the students. For the teacher, working with students on writing skills like this can be discouraging. Checking individual students' compositions requires a great deal of time and energy, and the fact that the checked compositions frequently end up not being reviewed by the original writers is not very rewarding.

In this paper I present a method of overcoming these difficulties by adopting four steps. Students (a) listen to and read a two-page short story, (b) illustrate the story in a set of three drawings, (c) explain the pictures in their own words, and (d) self-check their writing referring back to the original text in order to notice the gap between what they want to say and what they have actually said. Students draw pictures in the first session and the drawings are then used for that session and the other three sessions as well. Based on observations of a course in which I used these techniques, this paper provides some data from the classroom that show the kinds of mistakes which novice writers can or cannot easily notice. I also discuss how this approach lowers the obstacles these novice writers face, along with both advantages and limitations of the approach.

Output and Input Enhancement

This approach is based on the output hypothesis. As Swain (1985) observed, producing comprehensible output requires learners to take a more active role, which leads them to pay more attention to the subsequent input. There are three generally agreed-upon roles that comprehensible output may play (Swain, 1995). First, it can lead a learner to *notice* the gap between what they want to say and what they actually can say. Second, comprehensible output involves hypothesis forming and testing. Third, comprehensible output can lead learners to think about language. The role of noticing in acquiring formal elements of a second language is proposed by Schmidt and Frota (1986), who argued that learners need to notice a difference between their interlanguage and the new form that appears in native speaker speech, and only when this difference is noticed by the learners can the gap lead to acquisition. With regard to the function of noticing, Izumi (2002) provided empirical data that suggested that learners' written output prior to a reading task functioned as a consciousness-raising tool that led to language acquisition. Given these findings, it can be hypothesized that the benefit that novice writers receive by producing written output prior to being exposed to visual and auditory input is that they can notice the mismatch between their interlanguage forms and the target language input, which can then lead to second language acquisition.

Research Questions

In order to address the difficulties elementary level students face in their initial stage of practicing writing, I decided to implement a self-developed method based on Izumi's study (2002). This was a class of beginners who were struggling with written output. One of the participants in particular had failed to write any meaningful sentences at all since she started taking my lessons. I hoped that this method would at least meet her need for lowering the obstacles in writing practice. Also I hoped that students would be able to do this writing practice with less assistance from the teacher than necessary in traditional writing instruction.

To determine the effectiveness of this approach, three research questions were posed:

1. Does this method make it easier for elementary level students to start producing written output without much thinking time prior to a writing task and spend more time on writing practice itself, in which they describe things in their own words?

2. Does this method make it easier for elementary level students to notice the gap between what they want to write and what they actually can write, which in turn leads to self-correcting their mistakes both in English form and content?
3. Does this method make it easier for elementary level students to start writing their own sentences?

Classroom Context and Method

Participants

The participants were a group of three elementary level learners at a private English school: two 1sr-year junior high school students (students A and B) and one elementary school 6th-grader (student C). Student A had studied English for about 8 months, B for about 14 months, and C for about 2 years. I had observed that student A took a very long time to come up with what she was going to write about. She often spent more than half the allocated time for a writing task just thinking about what she was going to write and tended to make numerous grammatical and spelling mistakes. Student B had never started writing English sentences and in most cases submitted a blank sheet of paper at the end of the lesson. She tried producing some sentences but eventually ended up erasing what she had written. Student C appeared to like thinking and writing and had little or no difficulty explaining her ideas in writing. At the same time, C described her frustration at being unable to use the appropriate language form to convey her intended meaning.

Procedure

The English class met twice a week for 2 hours each time. The procedure consisted of a set of four steps of visual-auditory input, a drawing activity, written output, and noticing. The drawing activity was conducted only during the first session. The other three steps were repeated in the second and third sessions, using the pictures drawn in the first session. In the fourth session students simply explained the three pictures without listening to, reading, or self-checking them. The first 30 minutes of each lesson session were used for the writing activities.

Visual-Auditory Input and Picture-Drawing Activity

Students listened to and read a two-page short story (Howe, Border, & Hopkins, 1984). In the first session this was followed by each student drawing a set of three pictures that illustrated their understanding of the content of the story. The pictures indicated how much they had understood the content of the story. When students appeared not to understand the story completely, extra assistance was provided. Then as a group they checked the meaning of difficult sentences in cooperation with each other. The same story and the same set of three pictures were used for all four sessions.

Written Output

In session one, after listening to and reading the story and then drawing three pictures to describe the whole story, students explained the first picture in written form without referring back to the text. The students were asked to explain the story in their own words without copying the sentences of the original. In the second session, students explained both the first and second pictures they had drawn in the first session. In the third session they explained all three pictures. In the fourth session they explained the three pictures without listening to or reading the original text.

Noticing

In the first session, in order to self-check their compositions, students compared their own description of the first third of the story with the model of the first third of the original text. The compositions were then collected to be rechecked, and returned within the same lesson session or before the next session started. In order for the compositions to be returned by the end of the same session, I rechecked them while the students were working on reading material during the same session.

These three steps of visual-auditory input, written output, and noticing were repeated in each of the first three lesson sessions. In the second session, students again listened to and read the whole two-page story and then described the first and the second pictures. The self-checking process followed. Then the teacher rechecked the newly written sections and returned them. In the third session, the same basic procedure was repeated except that students described the third picture as well as the first and second pictures. In a final fourth session, students produced compositions about the whole story while only looking at the three pictures.

Observations

Noticing is defined here as acknowledging the differences between what students wanted to write and what they were actually able to write. I observed that some differences were easily noticed and others not. Verb tenses were easily noticed and self-corrected, while spelling mistakes and unknown grammar points were frequently overlooked. Even after being corrected by the teacher, the same spelling mistakes kept appearing in later writing. Also grammatical mistakes related to grammar points not fully understood by the students kept appearing in later writing as well. Taking student A as an example, the same mistakes of "want buy" instead of "wanted to buy" appeared two times in the first and the third sessions.

Several advantages were observed in the course of applying this approach. First, the approach shortened students' thinking time before starting to write. In the first session Students A and B started writing their own sentences after a few minutes of thinking time and spent the rest of the allocated time working to write sentences. Also, after this approach was adopted, these elementary-level students started writing their own sentences either for the first time or more smoothly than before. Student B, who had never actually written her own sentences, successfully started doing so. She wrote three sentences in the first session, seven in the second, and eight in the third. Student A wrote six sentences in the first session, eight in the second, and 13 in the third. Student C wrote six sentences in the first session, 15 in the second, and 25 in the third. In the fourth session when they were asked to reproduce the whole story without referring back to the text, students started working to describe the story without showing much hesitation. Furthermore, the picture-drawing activity helped students become aware of parts of the story that were difficult for them to understand. Students asked if they could use their dictionaries to check the meaning of the unknown words when I observed that their first drawings did not give a full illustration of the content of the story.

On the other hand, the disadvantage of the approach was that the repeated process of reading, listening, and writing made students memorize exactly the same sentences as the model, which discouraged Students A and B from creating their own sentences. However, Student C retold the story in her own words. The sentences she produced were not exact copies of the model. For example, she changed direct narration to indirect narration.

Discussion

The observations summarized above and the resulting effects on students' writing suggest that this approach successfully provided the students with scaffolding that lowered the barrier that these elementary level students faced. Prior to introducing this method, some students took more time thinking than writing. During the activity, since the writing content was taken from the story, no time was wasted before students started writing. The students started producing sentences with little or no hesitation and they wrote more sentences within the allocated time for writing practice. The drawing activity was also a valuable tool for both teacher and students. Students' drawings provided insights into how much the students understood the content of the story. Their drawings revealed the need to work on unknown vocabulary and grammar points. This activity also promoted students' awareness of their understanding of the content of the story as well.

The limitation of this approach is that the repetitive process of receiving the same input and producing nearly the same output encouraged the students to remember the model. This could have caused students to lose the incentive to compose their own sentences, in spite of the fact that they were encouraged to describe the story in their own words. At the same time, this limitation can be an advantage for those elementary level students who have accumulated few useful English phrases that they can use productively. This method provides them with a good opportunity to learn new expressions that can be used when they write.

The teacher should be careful not to leave students' mistakes uncorrected. If mistakes are overlooked in the checking processes, either by the students themselves or by the teacher, the same mistakes are likely to be reproduced in the later writing and even reinforced through repetitive use. Also, the teacher can gain insight into the students' grammatical weaknesses from the mistakes that a student repeatedly makes. With regard to grammatical mistakes, even when students notice the mismatch between what they wanted to write and what they actually wrote, without reaching a certain level of understanding of the grammar points, the mistakes are unlikely to be corrected.

Among the mismatches between what students want to write and what they actually can write, some mismatches are easily noticed and some are not easily noticed in the self-checking process. The self-checking process helps students become more independent as learners; however, rechecking by the teacher is still necessary for students to improve their writing.

Most importantly, this method helps students realize that writing English sentences does not have to be difficult and is within their reach. After practicing this method using three different stories, when asked to write about their favorite belongings with no model text, they first drew a picture of the item and started describing it in English with no hesitation.

Conclusion

This approach involves four steps. A two-page short story is first presented to elementary learners for listening and reading. In this way, the teacher provides the subject matter to write about, so students are ready to compose their own sentences with no time wasted. The input is followed by a picture-drawing activity, which provides both the teacher and the student with insight into how much students have understood the story, and helps them reach a clearer understanding of the subject matter. By illustrating the story with pictures, students gain a clear idea of what to write about, and this allows them to spend more time on the language forms through which their intended messages can be conveyed. Then, as a fourth step, students compare their composition with the text as a model.

By alternating between listening and reading and writing, this method helped elementary learners notice the gap between what they wanted to write and what they actually were able to write, and began to close that gap. However, this repetitive process played both negative and positive roles in the development of students' writing skills. Students tended to memorize the sentences of the model, which discouraged them from composing their own sentences. On the other hand, for those who did not have enough vocabulary, the process provided an opportunity to acquire new phrases and vocabulary that they could then use to convey their intended meanings.

This approach could adopt a further intermediary step, which would be a review of previously corrected mistakes. Since it was frequently observed that the same mistakes repeatedly appeared in the same student's writing, the corrected mistakes may need to be more carefully attended to. This approach could also be applied with advanced level students with longer and more difficult texts. Since advanced students as well need their own level of vocabulary and expressions, this approach would help to acquire useful expressions to be used in the writing at their level.

Bio Data

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