Articles

INSTRUCTIONAL INTERVENTION FOR PUPIL'S WRITTEN COMPOSITION BY RELATING PHASES OF PLANNING TO REVISING [1)]

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In the present study, an instructional intervention was given which intended to make it relate revising to planning in writing composition. In the planning phase a teacher stressed importance of four important points: contents to be written, purpose, syntax, and readers. In the revising phase 32 fifth graders in a public elementary school were asked to revise their written composition in terms of the four points. After seven lessons, quality of written composition and motivatinal aspects in experimental and textbook groups were tested according to pre- and post-test design. As results, the experimental group showed superior quality of written compositions to ones of textbook group in the post-test although there were no differences in quality of written composition in the pre-test between the two groups. In addition, The experimental group also indicated motivation better than the textbook one. These results were discussed in terms of relationship between planning and revising.

Key words : writing, instructional intervention, revising, planning

Writing is a task in which very complex process is involved. That is, writers first make a plan about meanings to be produced, retrieve information related with such meanings, then translate them as written language, and finally revise written composition (Hayes & Flower, 1980). In their model there are further some sub-processes for each one. It was suggested that in writing writers did not necessarily proceed sequentially from planning, translating, and revising but work in consideration of these processes simultaneously (Lumbelli, Paolette, & Frausin, 1999).

Although writers are engaged in very dynamic and complex processes during composing sentences, traditional teaching on written composition in Japanese schools little pay attention to this complex process. A guideline for composition in Ministry of Education of Japan, in fact, recommend to teach as following: that is, lessons should be proceeded at first deciding a topic of written composition, then retrieving materials related to the topic, sequencing them, drafting, and

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writing final version.

The present study is not interested in this kind of linear model but in intervention based on the dynamic and complex model suggested by Hayes & Flower (1980). However, because pupils in elementary school followed to knowledge-telling model in which people retrieve content from memory and write draft (Bereiter & Scadamalia, 1987), linear process in their writing may be natural. In a sense, the Japanese guideline might correspond to their developmental condition. However, in fact, elementary school pupils in Japan show a great difficulty to lesson on written composition (Oosaki & Yoshida, 1999). Teachers also have no efficient ways to teach pupils because almost of them show strong fear on written composition.

Instructional intervention in the present study stressed two important points: The first was to introduce research-based results on a planning phase. It was found in the previous investigations that experts were effectively utilizing on constructive planning by moving freely within domains of topic, audience, content, or rhetoric (Flower et al., 1992). So, we instructed pupils to be aware of this kind of constructive planning during writing (galbraith & Rijlaarsdam, 1999). The second was to relate planning phase to revising one in revising draft. It might be considered that these framework in this study let pupils of fifth grade in elementary school change from the knowledge-telling strategy to the knowledge-transforming one to some extent. Therefore, it would be assumed that this instructional intervention promoted quality of written composition compared to pupils under traditional ways of teaching on composition. Thus, the purpose of the present study was to confirm this hypothesis.

Method

Participants

63 fifth graders of an elementary school in Japan participated in the study. 32 pupils of one of the two classes were assigned to the Experimental group (E group) and 31 of the remaining class were taught based on the textbook (T group).

Experimental program

The present study dealt with the unit of “Make clear what you want to tell” in the textbook of the fifth grade. The unit consisted of seven lessons. In the first three lessons, planning was mainly discussed. In these lessons, teacher first instructed importance of contents, purpose, or audience during planning. Then, pupils retrieved materials to be written, organised them, discussed their own planning in small group, and revised their planning after such discussion. In the fourth, pupils wrote draft. In lessons from the fifth to seventh, pupils were engaged in revising the draft. They were given two written compositions which were intentionally made better and worse and compared reasons why one was better and another was bad. And they were also given typical strategies for revising. When revising the draft, pupils were instructed to remind important points stressed in the planning. In addition, the teacher required not to give mere impression about written composition but to make comments

based on such points. While T group spent four lessons for planning, the E one did three lessons.

In revising, two lessons were given in the E group although only 30 minutes done in the T one. The teacher gave examples of revising strategies found by Uchida (1989) and asked pupils to revise their draft according to these strategies. She also gave examples of both better and worse composition and let pupils to compare which is better and to think why so is.

The textbook class

The teacher followed ways of teaching recommended in a teacher's guidebook. She first let pupils to think what they want to tell after reading an example of the textbook. Then pupils discussed in which sentences the composition was devised. Then they collected materials to write, sequenced them, and discussed their own planning. After these four lessons, each pupil wrote down draft in the fifth lesson. Then, after re-writing the composition and being given some comments their composition, pupils finished to write on a sheet of formal paper. In the final lesson, they read their own composition in a small group and gave some comments each other. All lessons in both classes were filmed.

Test

Pre-test: Two kinds of data were taken as the pre-test. The first was written composition which all participants finished to write one month before beginning the unit. The other was questionnaire about confidence, motivation et al. for class of written composition.

The written compositions were evaluated 13 items, which were referred from Scadamalia et al. (1984) and Uchida (1989). The items on content and structure were (1) Relation between sentences was connected each other by using a conjunction, (2) Contents and structure were clear according to a topic, (3) Sentences are appropriately divided into paragraphs, (4) The beginning of composition was represented nicely, (5) Feeling and description of situation were appropriate, (6) Relation between subject and verb was appropriate, and (7) Sentences or words were smooth and easy to read?. Items on surface structure were (1) Japanese characters (hiraganas) were used appropriately, (2) Chinese characters (kanjis) were used efficiently, (3) Symbols and periods were used correctly, (4) A particle and auxiliary verb were used rightly, (5) The last part of composition was appropriate, and (6) Sentences were visually beautiful.

A questionnaire with six rating items asked pupils about confidence or delight on writing et al. Each item was rated on 4-point scale.

Post-test: The final version of the composition which pupils wrote down in the unit was used as part of the post-test. The same questionnaire in the pre-test was also used in the post-test.

Results

Interaction during lessons

Interaction between teacher and pupils in the two groups were fairly active during lessons. We did not think that there are big differences between the groups. However, we

found a big difference between both groups in interaction among peers. In order to indicate such difference, we introduce protocols in group discussion. The followings were excerpt from protocols during discussion after completing the final version of composition. We are able to compare them on similar standpoint.

(E group)

A : FShall we discuss now. This time, we do about revising. Does someone speak at first?

B : FYes. (read his composition) Although I wrote "it was hard", I changed it to "it was challenging." I though this expression was better than that. I thought such change according to the strategy 1. What I wanted to tell was that it was challenging when I first used personal computer.

A : FDo you think this sentence suggest what he wants to tell clearly? Did you think also that reader realized his intention clearly?

All : Fyes

A : FAre there other questions or comments to it?

C : FI think his wonderful point was that he changed from just "music flow out from personal computer" to "merry music flow out from it"

(T group)

Here all members of the group read their own composition and then begun to discuss among the group.

A : FWhen I heard B's composition, I thought it suggested B's feeling appropriately. So I want to learn B's nice point in my composition.

C : FI though A was tired of climbing mountain after I listened to the A's composition.

D : FI understood her feeling of mortifying when I heard B's composition.

B : FI understood that A worked hard although he could not reach a peak of the mountain.

As can be seen in these excerpts, discussion of the T group seems to active. However, each member of the T group just gave their impression to other pupils and no interaction between pupils. On the contrary, discussion of the E group indicates deep interaction among pupils.

To make clear this impression, we divided contents of interaction into six categories: (1) was there elaborated explanation as well as simple one? (2) did he/she gave reason after their thinking? (3) did he/she gave reason when they compared two compositions? (4) were there question or new proposal? (5) did he/she explain clearly about changing their mind in composition?, and (6) did he/she gave general impression?

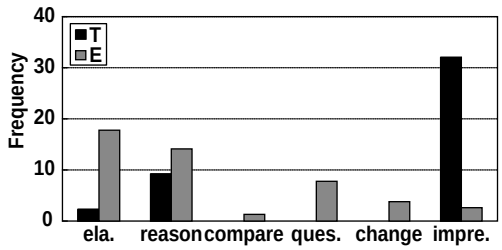

Figure 1 Frequency per a lesson of each categoryn the two groups during interaction.

We analyzed protocols in the two groups according to these criteria. A basic unit for

analyzing was sentence with one subject and verb. Two raters separately divided each protocol into six categories. Correspondence between two raters was .891. Group discussion among pupils was observed four times in the E group and three in the T one. We counted mean number of frequency in each category for these lessons.

Figure 1 indicates mean number of frequency in both groups. There were clear differences between the groups. As you can see, pupils of the E group gave elaborated explanation, concrete reason for their thinking, questions or new proposal more than pupils of the T group. However, the T group mentioned highly general impression for peer's composition more than one of the T group.

Quality of written composition

Two raters independently assessed all compositions according to the above mentioned criteria. There were no differences between the E and T groups for all items in the pre-test. Figure 2 shows mean rating points in each item on content and structure in the two groups for the post-test. There were significant differences between the two groups for the items on 2 (content and structure), 4 (beginning of composition), 6 (relation between subject and verb), and 7 (easy to read).

Figure 3 indicates mean rating points in each item on surface structure in the two groups. There were significant differences between the E and T groups for the items on 2 (Japanese character; kanji), 3 (symbols and periods), 4 (particle and auxiliary verb), 5 (the last part of composition), and 6 (visually beautiful).

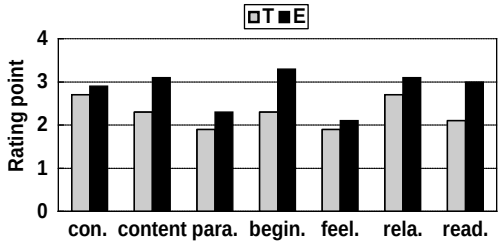

Figure 2 Mean rating point of each category in composition for the two group: Content & structure

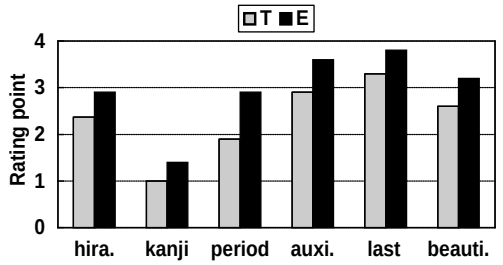

Figure 3 Mean rating of each category in composition for the two group: Surface structure

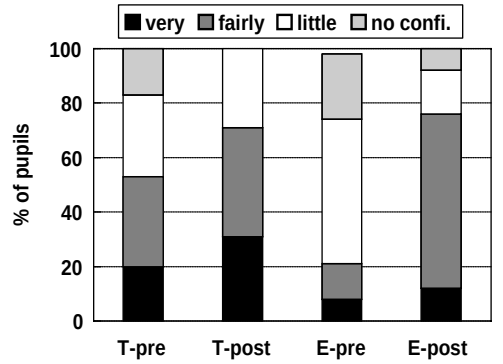

Figure 4 Percentage of pupils classified into categories on confidience for the two group.

Thus, the E group indicated superior performance to the T one for almost of elements in written composition. Interestingly, the E group mainly focused not on surface structure in written composition but on

planning and revising during lesson compared to the T group. Nevertheless, the E group wrote down composition with better surface structure.

Motivational aspect

We found improvement on motivational aspect from the pre-test to the post-test. Here I show the result in the item on confidence for composition. In this confidence scale, pupil rated from very confident to not confident. Figure 4 shows change of ratio who responded on each category in the both tests of the two groups. As seen from Figure 4, only 20 % of pupils in the E group indicated confident (combined "very" with "fairly") to composition. However, after finishing this unit, 80% of pupils showed confidence to composition. The similar tendency was found in item on delight for writing. These results suggested pupils with confidence improved in the post-test four times more than the pre-test.

Discussion

The present study was conducted to examine an effect of experimental instructional intervention on written composition of pupils. As results, although there were no differences on interaction between the teacher and pupils in the E and T groups, we found qualitatively big differences on interaction among pupils for the both groups. As indicated in Figure 1, pupils of the E group explained elaborately their plan or revising, added reasons for their statements more, asked questions, or gave comments more than pupils of the T group. Results in interaction found in the E group would suggest sprout of changing from knowledge-telling to knowledge-transforming strategy. On the contrary, although interaction among pupils in the T group was active, quality of discussion was fairly superficial because contents of their discussion were just to say general impression about the peer's plan or composition. As suggested from the excerpt of the E group, many pupils tried to make a constructive planning during planning or revising. This kind of coherent monitoring about their own cognitive processes would lead higher quality of composition in the E group.

Here, I would like to say about the teacher of the T group. She has been eager teacher on composition education. In fact, she sometimes joined research meetings on composition education. So, level of pupil's confidence in her class was higher than ones of normal classes in Japanese schools (Oosaki & Yoshida, 1999). Nevertheless, pupils in the E group acquired greater confidence for writing composition than ones of the T group. This high confidence in the E group would be related to deep interaction among pupils.

In addition, pupils in the E group produced qualitatively higher composition compared to the T group. This desirable effect was due to framework adopted in the present study. That is, the teacher of the E group emphasized importance of awareness to audience, contents, or purpose during planning. She also let pupils to remind this constructive planning in revising phase. This kind of intervention would be assumed that pupils have been monitored about semantic coherence of their composition during all

aspects of writing. We postulated that these processes would promote the E group's composition qualitatively better than the control group. Further, such intervention reduced fairly time of her direct teaching in class. Instead of direct teaching, pupils performed by discussing their own without relying the teacher. Thus, the framework in this study would serve as strong help for improving composition activity (Bruer, 1997).

Finally, the present study has theoretical suggestion as well as practical one. That is, the framework in this study was regarded as one of strategies to let children develop from knowledge-telling strategy to knowledge-transforming one.

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