

Enhancing JFL Learner Reading Proficiency Through Writing: The Effects of Analytical Responses to Text

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Introduction

- ◆ SLA research is commonly carried out within a single category of four proficiency skills (i.e., speaking, reading, listening, & writing).
- ◆ It is not common to look at how development in one proficiency skill affects the concurrent development in another three.



Reading and Writing as Constructing Meaning

- Research in L2 reading and writing has progressed independently.
- “Writing, because of its heuristic, generative, and recursive nature, allows students to write their way into reading and to discover that reading shares much in common with writing, that reading too is an act of composing.” (Zamel, 1992: 463).



Writing Responses to Text

- Writing responses to the text promotes increased involvement with text.

Instructional techniques:

- a) Reading journals or logs: Lay, 1995; Mlynarczyk, 1993; Spack, 1993
- b) Open-ended comprehension questions:
Kasper, 1994, 1995
- c) Analyzing the issues and themes in a text:
Chi, 1995; Flower, 1979
- d) Prediction: Kasper 1995



Research Questions

- RQ1: Do different types of writing responses (i.e., traditional and analytical writing) have facilitative effects on reading proficiency of intermediate-level JFL learners?
- RQ2: Does traditional or analytical writing responses have differential effects on the development of learners' reading proficiency?

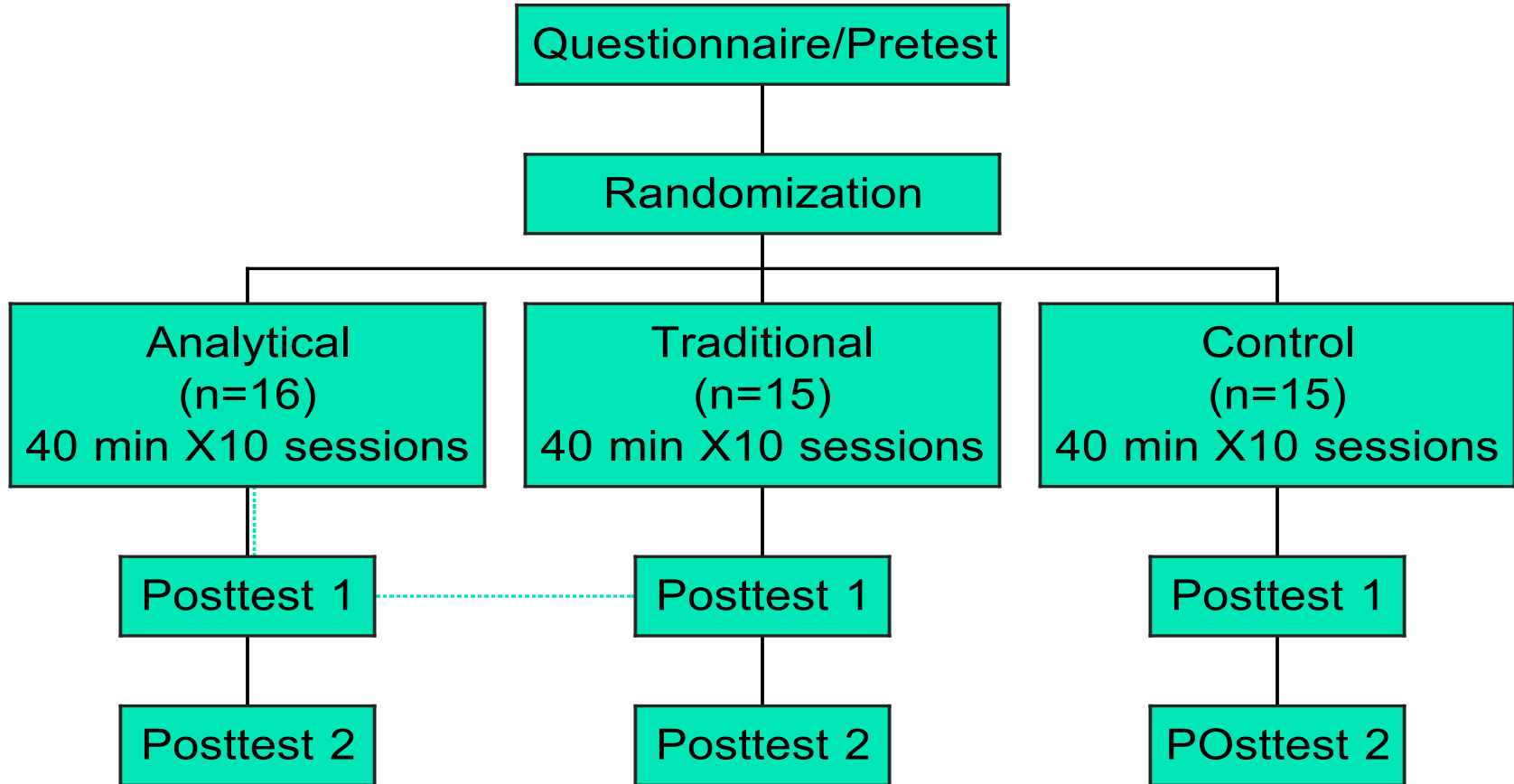


Methodology: Subjects

- 46 NS of English enrolled in a content-based Japanese class “Readings on Japanese Culture” (24 males, 22 females).
- Studied various topics on Japanese civilization and current affairs: Education, history, foreign policy, religion, business, pop-culture, & literature.
- Typical classroom activities: Lectures, reading comprehension exercises, oral summary, debate, and essays.



Procedure





Instructional Treatment

Traditional writing group:

Reading text (1200-1500 characters)



Providing an appropriate title and key words

Comprehension questions

Summarizing the content

Predictions



Instructional Treatment

Analytical writing group:

Reading text (1200-1500 characters)



Writing narrative writing (relating to their experiences)

Comparison/contrast principles presented in other sources

Expository compositions (analyze, interpret, and synthesize information)



An Example of the Reading Text (Japanese History)

なぜ徳川家は 260 年もの間一ファミリーによる統治をし得たのか。ペリーが浦賀湾に現れ開国を迫るまで幸運にも外国からの脅威が無かった事が大きな理由であるがそれ以外に江戸幕府の徹底した民への圧政が理由に挙げられる。徳川家康は「我慢の子」「忍耐の将軍」としても知られ、幼少時は敵大名の人質になるなど様々な迫害を経験。(中略)

士農工商とは江戸時代の社会を構成した主要な身分の武士、農民、職人、商人を指す。武士は武器の携行を許され、扶持という給与を得て生活できた。商人の下にはエタ、非人という身分があり、皮職人、死刑執行人など動物、人間の死に関わる人々が虐げられていた。これは今現在も存在する日本の差別問題の発端である。(後略)



Sample of Writing Responses: Traditional Writing Group

Summary:

徳川は差別をしました。その差別は今の日本にも沢山あると言います。一番上はさむらい、次は商人、一番下は非人です。全部で階だんは5つあるんですが、職業によって差別しました。これは国のためです。



Sample of Writing Responses: Analytical Writing Group

あなたの国には身分制度は存在しますか／しましたか。あなたは今までに差別を受けた事がありますか。

アメリカは身分制度で有名だった。1800年頃にたっくっさん黒人を連れてきます。リンカーンのおかげですので今はない。女の人もなかなか自由がありませんです。今は大丈夫ですけど、祖母は大変だった！今の私達はいいいですねえ。アメリカは差別は世界の中で全然ましだと思います。ヨーロッパの方は問題が沢山ある。



Sample of Writing Responses: Analytical Writing Group

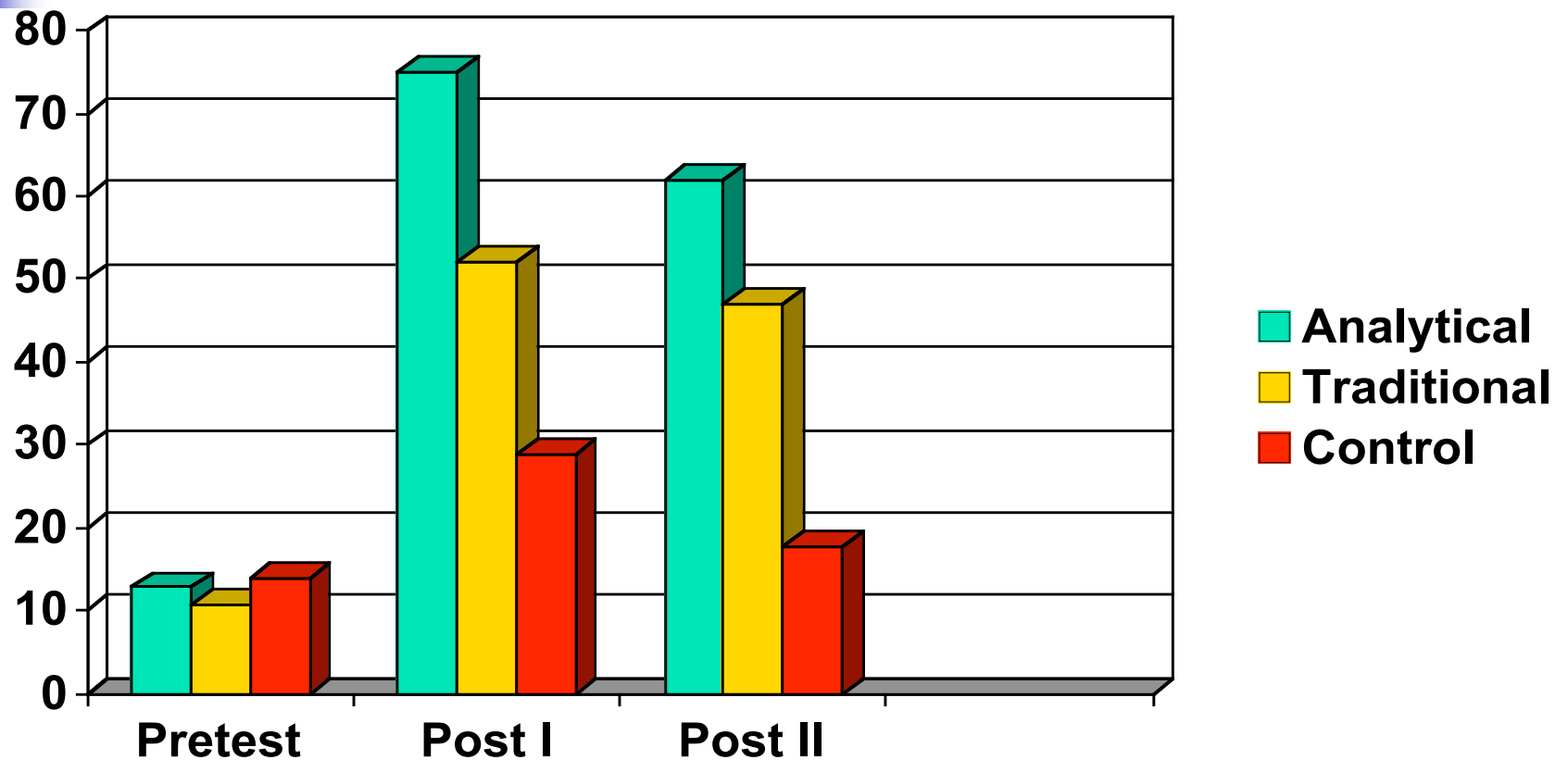
私は自分の国で身分制度をうけた事があります。大体3回ぐらいです。一番新しい事を書きます。スーパーに行った時お店の人が英語が出来ますかと聞いた、インディアナでの経験です。私は顔は中国人ですけどニューヨークで生まれましたって言いましたよ。ちょっと信じられない！あの店にはもう行っていません。顔が中国人なのでアメリカ人じゃないんです。先生はどうかしら？



Reading Comprehension Test

- The texts were taken from newspapers and magazine articles.
- The topics of the texts were about Japanese cultures and current affairs.
- But they did not overlap with the topics during the instructional sessions.
- Three articles, 25 questions/test

Results: Means of the Reading Comprehension Test





Statistical Analyses

- Results of between-group comparisons:

Pretest $A = T = C$ n.s.

Post 1 $A > T^*$ $A > C^*$ $T > C^*$

Post 2 $A > T^*$ $A > C^*$ $T > C^*$

- Results of between-test comparisons:

Analytical Post 2 = Post 1 n.s. > Pretest*

Traditional Post 2 = Post 1 n.s. > Pretest*

Control Post 2 = Post 1 n.s. = Pretest n.s.

A= Analytical; T= Traditional; C= Control



Conclusion

- Analytical writing activities required students to incorporate key ideas and relevant facts, to integrate background knowledge, and to reinterpret their experiences.
- Analytical writing activities helped learners to develop and elaborate schemata that enhances reading comprehension.
- Through analytical writing activities, students become more involved in the text, and view the text as a source of knowledge, as something truly relevant to their lives.



Conclusion

- The traditional writing group did improve, but the activities did not enhance comprehension as much as the analytical writing activities.
- Writing activities requiring students to focus on specific elements on an individual text are not using writing to its best advantage. They may not facilitate overall reading performance.



Pedagogical implications

- Instructors must design activities that will encourage students to engage intellectually with the text and to construct meaning.
- Traditional writing activities such as reading logs and comprehension questions can be followed by analytical writing activities.
- Instructors must redirect students' priorities from simply finding the main idea of a specific text to discovering the global significance of the ideas expressed in the text.