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Developing English Language Skills and Learner Autonomy:
A Writing-Based Approach in the Lower Secondary School Classroom

ライティングに基づくアプローチによる日本人中学生の英語スキルと
学習者オートノミーの育成

A Dissertation
Presented to
the Department of English
Graduate School of Education
Hirosaki University

In Partial Fulfillment of
the Requirement for the Degree of
Master of Education

By

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January2010

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Abstract

The New Course of Study for English will be institutionalized beginning in 2012. With this reformation, the goal of the English departments of junior high schools will shift from fostering authentic communicative competence focused on listening and speaking to communicative competence based on the four integrated skills: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The background of language instruction along with reasons for this decline in thinking abilities will be discussed.

This study aims to develop language skills and learner autonomy through a writing-based approach (WBA) among lower secondary school students in Japan. Whether this approach based on paragraph construction enhances students' thinking abilities will be analyzed. The ability of a writing-based approach to develop students' language skills and learner autonomy is also discussed.

The writing-based approach was carried out with effective strategy uses as the basis for daily writing assignments and cooperative learning based on the four integrated skills. The students continued to edit their assignments and present their completed writings through the activities in class. By gradually increasing the difficulty of the students' assignments and class activities based on a WBA, the students were able to progress and develop their English skills as evidenced by achievement test scores. If there was more instruction of paragraph writing based on a WBA, students elsewhere might show similar development. Finally, future implications were considered in order to develop on effective approach to foster students' thinking abilities based on a WBA.

CHAPTER 1   INTRODUCTION

In recent years, it is widely claimed that most Japanese students' thinking abilities or their abilities to express themselves have unfortunately declined. Their preferred style for learning is passive and typically lacks autonomy. There could be many reasons for this phenomenon. However, there is no doubt that the educational environment has a direct influence over this and is partly responsible for this change. Do we teachers effectively encourage our students to develop their thinking abilities? Are the classes constructed to inspire an autonomous attitude toward learning?

Beginning in 2012, the year the New Course of Study will be implemented with the proposed changes, the purpose of the English department of junior high schools will also be altered. It will shift from fostering authentic communicative competence which focuses on "listening" and "speaking" to that of communicative competence based on the four integrated skills - listening, speaking, writing, and reading. In real life, we use these skills simultaneously. Brown (2007) suggests that "production and reception are quite simply two sides of the same coin. Most of our natural performance involves not only the integration of one or more skills but connection between language and the way we think, feel, and act." This means instruction for language teaching is effective through using comprehensible skills in a meaningful context.

The Course of Study of the English Department has been based on concepts from Communicative Language Teaching (CLT). CLT regards meaningful communication as the most important goal of language learning. Savignon (2002) states that communicative competence is

the ability to interpret sentences or utterances in order to form a meaningful whole and to achieve coherent text that are relevant to a given context. In Japan, it is true that some teachers have tried to create authentic communicative activities using a target sentence structure in the classroom. However, most of their attempts have been fragmentary; they introduce a new sentence pattern or grammar point without reviewing previously learned grammar or encouraging past knowledge to be combined with new knowledge. The students look active at first glance, however, they repeat the sentence structure automatically. This behavior also occurs with the instruction of writing. Usually, after completing an activity, the students write a few sentences using a new sentence structure. They focus on the form of the sentence, but they are not likely to be aware of the contents. They do not have a truly meaningful purpose to speak or write. This may be one of the reasons that the students become passive learners. Further, as they are not affected by this style of learning, their autonomous attitude is not fostered.

It is essential to think logically, imagine, predict, and analyze when we communicate properly in a society. Instruction of paragraph writing is an effective way to foster these abilities because it requires the author to think for themselves. Through construction of paragraphs, the students can carefully and creatively create a well-known composition. If this paragraph instruction is effectively connected to the four integrated activities, I am sure that the learners will have a purpose and responsibility for what they write. This means that they will have to write in a manner in which the listeners or readers can clearly understand the contents.

To evaluate my students' progress in writing, I prepared a variety of writing activities with a final speech as the culmination of their acquired knowledge. Before that, I planned to provide continuous feedback for their writing assignments. By using cooperative learning by with the comprehensive use of the four integrated skills, the students interacted with each other and learned from others. Through a WBA, I aimed to develop their language skills and learner autonomy.

Finally, I will introduce the chapters of this dissertation. In Chapter 2, I review the literature on language learning and its effect on the New Course of Study, communicative language teaching, learner autonomy, a writing-based approach, and learning strategies. In Chapter 3, I provide the background and context of the study. In Chapter 4, the purpose of the present study is summarized. Chapter 5 outlines the methodology of my research. Chapter 6 presents the results and discusses the findings. Chapter 7 summarizes the findings and provides some implications for an effective writing-based approach for future study.

CHAPTER 2   LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter aims to outline the standard thought behind the New Course of Study proposed by the Japanese government which is based on communicative language teaching techniques. One central tenet of this new program is the importance for learners to foster their ability to think in terms of their learning itself as well as their learning processes. In this way, a writing-based approach and the learning strategies associated with it are effective tools to develop English language skills and learner autonomy.

2.1. The New Course of Study

In this section, I will outline the standard thought for the New Course of Study, the standard principles and concrete matters of the Foreign Language Department, and the new points of language use.

2.1.1. Standard thought behind the New Course of Study

Recently in Japan, students are inclined to learn passively and with a decreased thinking ability. Many researchers and educators advocate for instruction that focuses more on individual learning which and fosters the ability to think and express one's own opinions and feelings. The future New Course of Study was taken into consideration with these tendencies in mind.

I focus on three of the seven points of the standard thought behind the New Course of Study.

1) The common ownership principle, or "The Power of Living" (autonomous learning)

2) Fostering the ability to think and understanding the judgment and power of expression
3) Improvement of learning-related motivation and establishment of learning customs

"The power of living" means to learn autonomously and to express yourself clearly. Through a writing-based approach, I would like the students to take responsibility for their learning and to express their feelings or opinions positively. Further, in classes or writing assignments using the four integrated skills, I would like the students to try to write by thinking critically about news articles or the process of making a speech.

2.1.2. Standard principles of the Foreign Language Department

In this revision of the current course of study based on the Fundamental Law of Education, the focus will be on the four integrated skills of language education - speaking, listening, writing, and reading. From the knowledge acquired through listening and reading, it will be possible to transmit messages which are related to speaking and writing by using the students' own experiences and thoughts. In order to enhance the learners' interest and willingness toward foreign language learning as well as to enrich the content required to transmit the foreign language, it is necessary to create learning activities which foster these four skills comprehensively.

2.1.3. Concrete matters of the Foreign Language Department

The concrete matters of the Foreign Language Department are the six characteristics described below. Instruction can be improved by carefully considering each point.

1) Free talk is encouraged to communicate students' own experiences and opinions.
2) By reading, the students are able to put in order not only the information but are able to grasp the writer's real intent.
3) The content of the composition must be coherently understood and the idea and feeling correctly transmitted to the reader.
4) The situation, the function, and the materials of the language are effectively related to the language activity. The instruction of grammar is needed to improve students' understanding of the text. Frequent use of idiomatic phrases in communication must be clearly explained; by doing so, the number of words understood will be increased.
5) By understanding the contrast between the language being learned and the first language of the learner, international understanding as well as an understanding toward the language and culture will be thought about critically.
6) The use of dictionaries, the relationship between sound and its written form, and one's own initiative towards continuous learning are promoted.

In English learning, it is necessary to stress the importance of organized writing and expression. Communication is not a single, fragmentary sentence unit but a communication of feelings and opinions in a meaningful context. This is a fundamental thought of CLT as well.

2.1.4. New points of language use

Along with the concrete matters above, the following activities are added among the four skills:

1) Listening
   ・To listen to coherent English and understand the general outline of main points appropriately.
2) Speaking
   ・To give a simple speech on a given theme or topic.
3) Reading
   ・To understand the content or themes in written passages, in such a manner as to react in agreement or disagreement to the passages or thoughts of the writer, and to state a reason for opinions or thoughts about the passage.
4) Writing
   ・To write thoughts or feelings about an incident that has occurred or that has actually been experienced in familiar situations by the writer.
   ・To write correctly about one's thoughts and feelings to the reader, nothing the connections between the sentences written.

Through classes based on a WBA and the four integrated skills, it is possible to become conscious of listeners or readers due to the

interaction with other students. In task-oriented activities, they have a responsibility to create writings which foster their autonomous attitude toward learning.

2.2. Communicative Language Teaching

In this section, I will outline the historical background and definitions of communicative competence, the characteristics of Communicative Language Teaching (CLT), and the four integrated skills with regards to CLT.

2.2.1. Historical background of Communicative Competence and CLT

In the 1970's, there arose criticism that the language competence which Chomsky described and considered to be the basis for most theories of language teaching was not reflected in real language use. In order to combat this problem, CLT was the approach that Hymes (1972) proposed that declares that knowing a language involves more than knowing a set of grammatical, lexical, and phonological rules. Prior to this, the common belief was that if the learner correctly learns the grammar, consequently, he/she can use the target language. However, Hymes argued that learners need to develop communicative competence which he defined as the ability to use the language appropriately and effectively in any given social encounter. Hymes' notion of communicative competence was further elaborated by a number of practice-oriented language educators, most notably by Canale and Swain (1980), who contended that communicative competence is comprised of grammatical competence, sociolinguistic competence,

discourse competence, and strategic competence.

Moreover, Savingnon (2002) emphasized that CLT puts the focus on the learner. She stated, "Learner communicative needs provide a framework for elaborating program goals in terms of functional competence". She believes that communicative competence will emerge naturally from practice in meaningful communicative interactions. Holliday (1994:54) calls 'the learning group ideal' or 'the optimum interactional parameters' within which learners, by meaningfully interacting with each other, can best develop the communicative skills they immediately use in their real life. Brown (1994) describes the practices to be used in the classroom, such as a significant amount of pair work and group work, authentic language input in real life contexts, and that students are encouraged to produce language for genuine, meaningful communication.

However, the CLT approach is not without its share of opponents – those who would argue that there are flaws to the CLT methods. For the past 15 years, researchers and writers have continued to argue that it can be problematic to take a set of teaching methods developed in one part of the world and transfer it to another. While there are certainly problems in the transfer of CLT methods from Western contexts to others, it is questionable whether these problems negate the potential usefulness of the CLT theory. Certainly, in Japan, CLT is the most common approach for language learning instruction.

In Japan, CLT has been the fundamental method for English education since the 1980's; however, several problems have become known. Two of the more complex problems are that the variety of interpretations toward CLT will largely depend on each English teacher

and that there are difficulties with real implementation in the EFL classroom. As Brown mentioned, CLT is based on a broad theoretical position about the nature of language and of language learning and teaching, yet it is the teachers who must explore how to effectively utilize CLT methods which will be suitable to the learners and the cultural context. Despite these limitations, CLT is still widely regarded as one of the most effective tools in language education.

Beginning in 2012, the New Course of Study in Japan will be revised and it will include the development of communicative competence by instruction based on the four integrated skills. Therefore, CLT will continue to be the foundation for Japanese English education and it is further expected to aid in the development of instructional methods which are suitable to EFL environments like Japan.

2.2.2. Definitions of communicative competence

Communicative competence in a language is an essential requirement for using a language properly and suitably. Hymes (1972) states that communicative competence is the competence to use language appropriately in a certain society. Basically, it is the competence necessary to communicate suitably by understanding the object and intention of the utterance in real life. Further elaborated by Canale and Swain (1980) and later by Savingnon (1983), communicative competence is classified into four distinct categories.

1) Grammatical Competence

Grammatical competence is the "mastery of the linguistic code, the ability to recognize the lexical, morphological, syntactic, and phonological features of a

language and to manipulate these features to form words and sentences" (Savingnon 1983:37).

2) Discourse Competence

Discourse competence is "the ability to interpret sentences or utterances in order to form a meaningful whole and to achieve coherent text that are relevant to a given contexts" (Savingnon 1983:40)."While grammatical competence focuses on sentence-level grammar, discourse competence is concerned with intersentential relationships"(Brown:1987:199).

3) Sociolinguistic Competence

Sociolinguistic competence is the knowledge of the sociocultural rules of language and of discourse. This type of competence "requires an understanding of the social context in which language is used: the roles of the function of the interaction" (Savingnon 1983:37).

4) Strategic Competence

Savingnon (1983:40) described this competence as "the strategies that one uses to compensate for imperfect knowledge of rules - or limiting factors in their application such as fatigue, distraction, and inattention." In short, it is the competence underlying our ability to make repairs, to cope with imperfect knowledge, and to sustain communication through "paraphrase, circumlocution, repetition, hesitation, avoidance, and guessing, as well as shifts in register and style" (Savingnon, 1983:41).

The definition of communicative competence by Canale and Swain and by Savingnon are primarily focused on language competence. It does not aim for comprehensive human communication. Needless to say, to communicate adequately by using a L2 in intercultural communication depends not only on the humanity of the users but on knowledge of the world. These factors are beyond language itself. That is to say, the cognitive abilities, the real-world knowledge or thought, and the attitude, values, and personality of a learner all need to be added to language competence and strategic competence. Language competence here can be defined as grammatical competence, discourse competence, social competence, and functional competence.

Cognitive competence has an especially important role in the English Department of the New Course of Study. This competence requires the learner to think logically and have the ability to predict,

analyze, and judge. Also, real-world knowledge/thought is important for the learners not only just to learn language skills but also to think globally.

2.2.3. Characteristics of CLT

CLT is an instructional approach whose purpose is aimed at acquiring communicative competence. Brown (2007) offers four interconnected characteristics of the CLT method:

1) Classroom goals are focused on all of the components of communicative competence and are not restricted to grammatical or linguistic competence.

2) Language techniques are designed to engage learners in the pragmatic, authentic, and functional use of the language for meaningful purposes. Organizational language forms are not the central focus but rather are aspects of language that will enable the learner to accomplish those purposes.

3) Fluency and accuracy are seen as complementary principles underlying communicative techniques. At times fluency may have to take more importance than accuracy in order to keep learners meaningfully engaged in language use.

4) In the communicative classroom, students will ultimately have to use the language, both productively and receptively, in unrehearsed contexts.

It is important for learners to make grammatically accurate sentences but more important is the ability to convey authentic feelings, opinions, and ideas. If learners are hesitant to speak or write for fear of being incorrect, they may lose invaluable chances to have smooth conversations. Therefore, it is the teachers who must create meaningful situations which enable learners to use the target language authentically.

2.2.4. Integrated four skills in CLT

The New Course of Study will be revised from a practice whose

foundation for authentic communicative competence focuses on listening and speaking to one whose basis for communicative competence is founded upon listening, speaking, reading, and writing. An integrated approach to utilizing these four skills in CLT is not only beneficial but also natural.

The following are Brown's (2007) thoughts regarding the four integrated skills of CLT.

1) Production and reception are, quite simply, two sides of the same coin.
2) Interaction means both sending and receiving messages.
3) Written and spoken language often bear a relationship to each other; to ignore that interrelationship is to ignore the richness of language.
4) For literate learners, the interrelationship of written and spoken language is an intrinsically motivating reflection of language, culture, and society.
5) Educators must attend primarily to what learners can do with language and incorporate what is relevant into the classroom arena.
6) Often one skill will reinforce another. We learn to speak, for example, in part by modeling what we hear and we learn to write by examining what we can read.
7) Proponents of the whole language approach have shown us that in the real world of language use, most of our natural performance involves not only the integration of one or more skills but a connection between language and the way we think, feel, and act.

In CLT one of the most desirable traits an educator hopes to develop in their students is a high level of learner autonomy. Learner autonomy facilitates sophisticated uses of learning strategies. If students hope to create intellectual, coherent writing compositions, a higher level of learner autonomy is needed. It is not enough for students to just regurgitate the thoughts/opinions of their teacher or peers; they must think of what *they* want to write. Students must be motivated to use new sentence structures along with old ones, create a variety of sentences, and try new words they may never have used before. All these are related to the development of learner autonomy which I will discuss in the next section further.

2.3. Learner Autonomy

In this section, I outline the definition of learner autonomy and describe learner autonomy and the cooperative strategies utilized in the learning process.

2.3.1. Definition of learner autonomy

Learner autonomy has a variety of characteristics and definitions. They range based on culture and on the individual. Yet all definitions of learner autonomy have one central tenet: the willingness of the learner to take responsibility for their own learning. Sinclair (2000) states these twelve characteristics of learner autonomy:

1) Autonomy is a construct of capacity.
2) Autonomy involves a willingness on the part of the learner to take responsibility for their own learning.
3) The capacity and willingness of learners to take such responsibility is not necessarily innate.
4) Complete autonomy is idealistic and desirable.
5) There are many degree of autonomy.
6) The degree of autonomy are unstable and variable.
7) Autonomy is not simply a matter of placing learners in situations where they have to be independent.
8) Developing autonomy requires a conscious awareness of the learning process, i.e. conscious reflection and decision making.
9) Promoting autonomy is not simply a matter of teaching strategies. Autonomy can take place both inside and outside of the classroom.
10) Autonomy has a social as well as an individual dimension.
11) The promotion of learner autonomy has a political as well as psychological dimension.
12) Autonomy is interpreted differently by different cultures.

To learn the target language it is very important for the learner to have autonomous learning methods. It is not easy to foster the methods of each student, but it will be possible if the teacher is accountable for their own teaching. This duty of teachers to reinforce and build learner autonomy is crucial in a variety of school subjects, not just language classes. From Sinclair's definition of learner autonomy, I will focus on

two for my study – students' responsibility for their own learning (1) and developing a conscious awareness of the learning process (2).

2.3.2. Learner autonomy and cooperative learning

Cooperative learning has been well used in English classes since the 1980's. However, sometimes the meaning of "cooperative" is misunderstood. In most classrooms in Japan, "cooperative" means to make groups and to cooperate with the other members to accomplish a task. However, usually only the leader has a role to bring the group together. The other members have almost all the same position. With regard to cooperative learning, Olsen and Kagan (1992:8) defined it as:

> Cooperative learning is group learning activity organized so that learning is dependent on the socially structured exchange of information between learners in groups and in which each learner is held accountable for his or her own learning and is motivated to increase the learning of others.

Therefore, if cooperative learning is to be effective, each student has a responsibility as a member of the group and he/she accepts an important role to accomplish the given task. All students must be accountable for success. The final product must be the efforts of the group, not only of the leader.

Johnson and Johnson (1999) and other researchers suggest the following key elements of collaborative learning:

1) Positive interdependence
   Positive interdependence, which is the heart of cooperative learning, is the perception that you are linked with others in a way so that you cannot succeed unless they do (and vice versa).
2) Individual accountability
   Each individual is accountable for his or her own learning and is also accountable to the group.
3) Face to face promotional interaction
   For collaborative learning to be effective, the members of the group need to be

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in very close physical proximity, face-to-face.
4) Social skills
   Contribution to the success of a cooperative effort requires interpersonal and other smaller skills (leadership, decision making, trust-building, etc.)
5) Group processing
   Group processing exists when group members discuss how well they are achieving their goals and maintaining effective working relationships.

By instructing the roles or the values of cooperative learning, learners can develop an accountability for their own learning and this helps facilitate their own autonomy.

2.4. A Writing-Based Approach

In this section, I will outline the definition of critical thinking, discuss the characteristics and instruction of paragraph writing, and describe the integration of reading and writing.

2.4.1. Benefits of a WBA

A writing-based approach (WBA) is one way for learners to not only acquire language skills but also to foster learner autonomy. It is based on instruction of paragraph writing and cooperative learning with effective strategy use. Paragraph writing is included in daily assignments and in the four integrated skills' classes. Through integrated classes, learners are conscious of readers and listeners. The students will learn to write their opinions or feelings by reading articles or stories. Then they will display their knowledge of the material through English newspapers or speeches. Other students benefit from this as well. By reading or listening to their peers' creations, they too must think critically about the material. In this way, students realize that writing is not an isolated skill, but that it connects to other skills in the classroom.

2.4.2. Critical thinking

Critical thinking is the competence or attitude necessary to analyze the given information or knowledge from plural points of view. Critical thinking is crucial in present–day Japanese society. Without this ability, students will find it difficult to succeed academically and personally. Yet, recently in Japan, there are many students who do not have thoughtful, critically examined opinions or the ability to properly explain their ideas. Therefore, it is important to explicitly teach them how to learn.

In 2004, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) assessed students' abilities on an international scale. Japanese students were among forty-one other countries' students who participated in a study on reading comprehension. Reading comprehension is defined as the ability to comprehend a text and then think critically about the content. Therefore, when it comes to language learning in a classroom or on a test, reading comprehension is the basis of the ability to think. Writing is deeply connected to recognition and to critical thinking.

Nickerson, Perkins & Smith (1985) divided critical thinking into five methodology points as described below:

1) Cognitive operations
   Cognitive operations are those methods which teach the standard skills required to make comparisons or classifications.
2) Heuristics
   Heuristics encourages reflection and uses pamphlets or practice in terms of strategy.
3) Formal thinking
   Formal thinking applies tests which evaluate processing toward abstract ways of discovery including concrete ideas, classification, and temporary formation.
4) Instruction in language and symbol manipulation
   Instruction in language symbol and manipulation is used in educational curriculums to make compositions which pay attention to semantics and/or

computer language.
5) "Thinking about thinking"
Students consider their own process of thinking; in other words, reason, thinking style, generalization awareness of inconsistencies, and the rules of cause and effect are important abilities to acquire.

From these points, I will focus on the last, "thinking about thinking", as most relative to my students. To deepen the learners' thoughts, this "thinking about thinking" methodology is suitable for junior high school students. By providing a topic in which the learners have to think intellectually, their critical thinking abilities will be stimulated. By encouraging and facilitating such opportunities step by step, their ability to think will be fostered and their ability to write logically will be further developed.

2.4.3. Paragraph writing

Paragraphs are the building blocks of English composition and comprehension of their construction is critical to writing. A paragraph is a section of piece of writing which consists of several sentences dealing with an idea that the writer asserts to be true or wishes to inform upon. It is supported by a logical expansion of the idea and relevant information.

In a paragraph, writers must write in a manner to persuade readers about the writers' insistence. This is called proving responsibility. John Hinda (1987) demonstrated that Japanese writing is primarily reader-responsible, on the other hand, English writing is primarily writer-responsible. This is to say, writers have to prove something as accurate or informative in order to convey their intention correctly to the readers. In order to accurately and effectively transmit the writer's insistences, the writer must first inform the reader of the

purpose or intent of their writing.

(1) Construction of the paragraph

   A paragraph is divided into three parts. They are the introduction, otherwise called the topic sentence, discussion, or the supporting sentences, and conclusion, or simply the concluding sentence. In a topic sentence, writers display their main opinion, insistence, or the purpose for the writing. During the discussion, writers prepare the reason, give concrete examples, provide data, and describe experiences to encourage the readers to consent to the writer's main idea. Therefore, discussion is also described as supporting sentences and the concepts shown are called supporting ideas. Lastly, in the conclusion, a concluding sentence confirms the main idea again along with a summary or final impression of the writer's main idea.

(2) Writing at the junior high school level

   In traditional communicative activities at the junior high level, mostly the skills of listening and speaking are focused upon and the exchange of information occurs by only one sentence. Even in a class focused on writing, usually the students write a few sentences using a newly-learned sentence structure as summary writing. The sentences are not connected to each other and do not provide coherence. The thinking power of students will not grow if the teacher's aim is to have the students write only the sentences which use this new sentence structure. Students need to carefully think about their ideas or opinions. Paragraph writing can be used to classify their thoughts or think logically about any topic.

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At the level of junior high school students, I support instruction of short paragraphs with attention to coherence. By instruction of conjunctions, the use of pronouns, and the construction of a paragraph, the students learn how to make their ideas flow logically. Also, by using peer feedback, error corrections, or encouragement by teachers, development can be accomplished based on the student's actual capability. In this way, students become aware of their important role as a writer and the critical influence their own thoughts and reasons have on their written work.

(3) Writing competence in CLT

The construction of the paragraph is highly related to the basic competences of CLT. Written works must be coherent and logical to foster student development. There are rules and patterns in writing that must be followed to be considered competent.

1) Grammatical competence
   Grammatical competence is the competence required to use the knowledge of the correct form, the agreement of subject and verb, syntactic construction including a rule of demonstrative words, vocabulary, writing style, spelling, and punctuation marks.
2) Discourse competence
   Discourse competence is the competence necessary to write sentences which have cohesion and coherence.
3) Sociolinguistic competence
   Sociolinguistic competence is the competence necessary to change or control depending on the purpose, the subject, and the readers.
4) Strategic competence
   Strategic competence is the competence required to be able to have ideas, formulate the beginning of a story, to make a draft, and to polish the finished product.

Junior high school students must be explicitly taught these writing requirements to achieve true competency. The methods of writing and knowledge of how to write do not come naturally but

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instead should be thoroughly discussed with students.

2.4.4. Integration of reading and writing

In this section, I will outline how reading affects writing and vice versa. Wolff (2000) argues that, from an instructional angle, the specific writing skills a L2 learner unconsciously develops should be explicitly taught in order to promote L2 writing competence. He also argues that L2 writing competence is related to L2 reading competence. This means that frequency with which the L2 learner makes use of his/her reading competence is both a psycholinguistic and an instructional issue.

As junior high school language learners are not yet capable of reading lengthy literature, the most suitable reading materials are short stories, news articles, or other short compositions. News articles are useful in developing critical thinking and short stories foster creative abilities. Collie and Slater (1987) state that short stories, like most literary genres, contain the widest variety of syntax and the richest variations of vocabulary discrimination. Applied to the school setting by reading short stories, students gain an understanding of the formation and function of sentences, the variety of possible structures, and the different ways of connecting ideas. These features broaden and enrich students' own writing skills. They become more creative in their productive skills.

Blanton (1999) asserts that "in reading-writing classrooms, creating opportunities to interact with texts means engaging in tasks that require talking and writing about them". We can infer that to interact with texts" can mean not merely reading or writing but writing

about reading the texts or thinking about writing while reading them. Instead of reading texts in isolation, we ask students, as much as possible and in ways discussed throughout this thesis, to combine reading and writing activities. Meanwhile, "talking about them" is critical in the L2 context. It allows the students to put their own practices into more meaningful perspective by comparing and contrasting their own practices with those of their peers. This might occur through electronic review in which they share comments via an e-discussion format, such as a list serve or some other networking arrangement or in more common settings in a traditional peer review involving face-to-face discussion.

Instruction which connects reading and writing to speaking and listening is instrumental to students' success. Learners' attitudes toward language learning must be active. Passive learning, which many Japanese students are fond of, erodes the active learning necessary for learning English. In order for students to be aware of this, they must take responsibility for their own learning. Yet to do so, it is necessary that they are equipped with the appropriate learning strategies.

2.5. Learning Strategies

In this section, I will outline the definition of learning strategies and describe the features of learning strategies, both indirect and direct.

2.5.1. Definition of learning strategies

Learning strategies are the thinking processes or actions used by learners when they process, understand, and memorize information in

order to learn effectively. Typical definitions by researchers include the following:

Table 2.1   Definitions of learning strategies

Weinstein & Mayer(1986)	Learning strategies are the thoughts and actions performed by learners when they allow themselves to be influenced by the process of language information.
Rubin(1987)	Learning strategies are the things which contribute to the learners when they construct language knowledge development and they are a direct influence on learning.
Oxford (1990)	Learning strategies are the behavior or the action of the learner in order to succeed in learning their target language
O'Malley & Chamot (1990)	Learning strategies are the special thoughts or actions that assist in learning, understanding, and keeping new information.
Wenden (1991)	Learning strategies are the mental strategies or processes that help control the learner's effort when they learn a new language.

The definition by Oxford (1990) is the most suitable for the theme of my thesis which aims to not only foster language skills but also learner autonomy as well. Therefore, I will consider learning strategies to be those behaviors or actions which aid the learner in acquiring their target language.

2.5.2. Features of learning strategies

All appropriate language learning strategies are oriented toward the broader goal of communicative competence. Development of communicative competence requires realistic interaction among learners using meaningful, contextualized language. Therefore, learning strategies help learners participate actively in authentic communication.

These are features of language learning strategies:
1) Contribute to the main goal of communicative competence
2) Allow learners to become more self-directed
3) Expand the role of teachers
4) Are problem-oriented
5) Are specific actions taken by the learner

6) Involve many aspects of the learner, not just the cognitive
7) Support learning, both directly and indirectly
8) Are not always observable
9) Are often conscious
10) Can be taught
11) Are flexible
12) Are influenced by a variety of factors

Learning strategies reinforce language learning and knowledge of them allows the learner to realize and reach their own potential. Understanding how to best approach learning a language is critical to learner success. A method that is useful to one individual, may not be beneficial to another, but all successful learners use at least some learning strategies.

2.5.3. Discussion of learning strategies

According to Oxford, there are two main strategies: direct strategies and indirect strategies. Among direct strategies, there are three categories: memory strategies, cognitive strategies, and compensation strategies. These strategies are the ways of learning, or in other words, how to study. Among indirect strategies, there are metacognitive strategies, affective strategies, and social strategies. These strategies are used for self-study, self-evaluation, and effective communication with others. In this section, I will also further explain all three direct strategies and social strategy of cooperation as they are especially relative to my research.A systematic table of all strategies is added as an appendix (Appendix I).

I believe that most strategies that Oxford had described were already used in my class unconsciously so I hadn't previously considered dividing them systematically. However, I think that students can become more aware of effective studying techniques if I explicitly

teach them about each strategy. Oxford introduced the following learning strategies of all language learners, categorized by either direct or indirect methods:

(I) Direct strategies

Direct strategies are directly involved in learning the target language. All direct strategies require mental processing of the language. The three sub-strategies utilize this processing differently and with a specific purpose.

(A) Memory strategies

Memory strategies are the tools used to memorize and use a language. Memory strategies reflect very simple principles, such as arranging things in order, making associations, and reviewing. These principles all involve meaning. Memory strategies have a highly specific function: helping students to store and retrieve new information. Memory strategies fall into four sets: creating mental linkages, applying images and sounds, reviewing well, and employing actions.

(B) Cognitive strategies

Cognitive strategies vary quite a bit, ranging from repetition to analyzing expressions to summarizing. Even with all their variety, cognitive strategies are unified by one common function: the manipulation or transformation of the target language by the learner.

Four sets of cognitive strategies exist: practicing, receiving and sending messages, analyzing and reasoning, and creating structure for input and output. The cognitive strategy of practice includes such practices as repeating, formally practicing with sounds and writing systems, recognizing and using formulas/patterns, recombining, and practicing in natural, authentic conversations.

(C) Compensation strategies

Compensation strategies enable learners to use the new language for either comprehension or production despite their limitations in knowledge. Compensation strategies are intended to make up for an inadequate repertoire of grammar and vocabulary. Ten compensation strategies exist, clustered into two sets: guessing intelligently in listening and reading as well as overcoming limitations in speaking and writing.

(II) Indirect Strategies

Indirect strategies are useful in virtually all language learning situations and are applicable to all four language skills: listening, reading, reading, and writing.

(A) Metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive strategies allow learners to control their own cognition–that is, to coordinate the learning process by using functions such as centering, arranging, planning, and evaluating. Metacognitive means 'beyond', 'besides', or 'with cognitive'. Therefore, metacognitive strategies are actions which go beyond purely cognitive devices and which provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning process. Metacognitive strategies include three strategy sets: centering your learning, arranging, and planning.

(B) Affective strategies

Affective strategies help to regulate emotions, motivations, and attitudes. "Affective" means the emotions, attitudes, motivations, and values which affect an individual. By using these strategies, language learners can influence and gain control over their language learning. There are three main sets of affective strategies: lowering your anxiety, encouraging yourself, and taking your emotional temperature.

(C) Social strategies

Social strategies help students learn through interaction with others. Language is a form of social behavior. It is the communication which occurs between and among people. Language thus involves other people and appropriate social strategies are very important in this process.
In social strategies, there are three main methods: asking questions, co operating with others, and empathizing with others. Asking questions involves asking either a teacher, native speaker, or a more proficient fellow learner for clarification, verification, or correction.

(III) Three main strategies with regard to my thesis

In the classroom, I focused on three strategies: cognitive strategies, metacognitive strategies, and social strategies. First, cognitive strategies are the main strategies necessary to learn a foreign language. Second, metacognitive strategies allow the learner to understand their learning process. If they do not know how to study English, they can not progress. It is important to make sure they understand the process of their own learning and, more importantly, are responsible for it. Third, social strategies are the strategies required to build a friendly atmosphere in the classroom. They promote not only the learners' language skills but also their autonomy. In my research, I

used these three main strategies to initiate the students into thinking about their own learning and how to better facilitate their language learning.

(A) Cognitive strategies

Cognitive strategies are the methods used directly by students to transform the L2 into their own. It is important to take enough time to practice using a target language as an individual, in pair work, or as a small group. The cognitive strategy of receiving and sending messages relies on getting the idea quickly and using resources for receiving and sending messages. Skimming the texts to determine the main ideas or scanning to find specific details is especially important. This strategy helps learners understand rapidly what they hear or read in the new language.

By using these strategies, they effect the learner's ability to think or express their ideas and feelings. With the skills of analyzing and reasoning, learners can use these strategies to understand the meaning of a new expression or to create a new expression. The skills of analysis and reasoning are divided into five methods - reasoning, analyzing expressions, analyzing contrastively, translating, and transferring. These help the students to understand the construction of each sentence and it becomes one of the factors to facilitate better comprehension.

Lastly, in the cognitive strategy of creating structure for input and output, the learner needs to create structure which is necessary for both comprehension and production in the new language. This strategy is further divided into three methods: taking notes, summarizing, and

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highlighting. The practice of summarizing fosters the learner's ability to deeply think about the content of the story as well as the intention of the writer. It develops learners' ability to think and produce their own opinions or feelings. It is the ability to connect information and create output. Taking notes and highlighting triggers students' memory and reinforces learning. These are especially useful for reviewing the main ideas of the content or instruction.

(B) Metacognitive strategies

Metacognitive strategies help to construct learner autonomy because, if learners do not pay attention to their own learning, they may lose the ability to improve. Metacognitive strategies are these actions which provide a way for learners to coordinate their own learning processes. There are many methods to use metacognitive strategies.

Centering one's learning helps learners to converge their attention and energies on certain language tasks, activities, skills, or materials. Learners focus on their own language learning. Arranging and planning one's learning involves finding out about language learning, organizing the schedule and a suitable environment, setting goals and objectives, considering task purpose, planning for tasks, and seeking chances to practice the language. Evaluating one's learning helps learners to check their own language performance. Self-monitoring involves noticing and learning from errors whereas self-evaluation concerns evaluating overall progress. Each of these is connected in developing learner's autonomous attitude toward language learning. Both are necessary for students to objectively evaluate their own learning process and also foster learner responsibility.

(C) Social strategies

Social strategies are those activities which involve cooperation with others to improve language skills. These strategies are the foundation of cooperative language learning which not only increases the learner's language performance but also enhances self-worth and social acceptance. Empathizing with others means to personally grow more responsible and sensitive to others while also developing a cultural understanding.

One of the most utilized and effective forms of social strategies is the educational method of cooperative learning. Cooperative learning is the learning acquired through interpersonal contact and discussion. Within the learning strategy of cooperative learning, there are two methods. One is the ability to cooperate with peers and the other is interaction with proficient users of the new language. This relates to the four integrated skills because the learners must ask, answer, read other learners' opinions or ideas, and write something for others by using the target language. They learn from each other and this develops both language skills and also fosters learner accountability and cooperation with others. In English classes, this is especially important for the classroom's atmosphere. It helps control the learning. If these learning strategies work effectively, the learning process will be a success.

CHAPTER 3   BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

3.1. School Setting

The present study was conducted at a Japanese public junior high school in Aomori Prefecture. There are fifty-two students in this school. Due to the town's relatively isolated location, the students have been in the same classroom since they were in the first grade of elementary school. All students would like to continue to higher education after graduation.

The educational aims of this school are divided into three fields. They are "learning", "the mind", and "the body". The aim of "learning" is to apply yourself to your studies by making use of your originality and creativity, the aim of "the mind" is to cooperate with each other with consideration, and the aim of "the body" is to pursue a strong mind and body by enjoying exercise.

The research plan of the current year was decided with the aims of this school, the actual situation of students, and by the research process which was planned for a period of three years in mind. "Instruction to foster a positive attitude towards solving complex problems" is the research plan of the current year. The educational aims and the research plan of this school coincide with the ideas of the New Course of Study based on CLT and also reflect a hope to strengthen students' autonomous attitudes toward learning.

This particular school has a designated English room which has many materials for use during class. There are audio-visual aids, picture cards, flash cards, English-Japanese dictionaries, and Japanese-English dictionaries for all students. The works of the

students, important English expressions, and English newspapers which introduce the pictures or works of the students hang prominently on the wall (Appendix XIV～XVII). English instruction is conducted primarily in this room.

There are four English classes in a week - two classes are team-taught with an ALT from the board of education and the other two classes are team-taught with another Japanese teacher of English. One hundred and five classes are distributed regularly throughout the school year and another thirty-five classes are distributed as a selective subject during the year. The duration of class is 50 minutes.

In the first lesson, I explained what I was going to do and asked the participants for their cooperation as my partners in this study.

3.1.1. Research plan of the English Department

Based on the research plan of this school, the research aim for the English Department has been decided. The research goal of this year is "to encourage student creativity and willingness by planning appropriately challenging activities and stimulating instruction." Therefore, this allows the teachers to create classes for the students that provide an intellectual setting for learning. I believe a writing-based approach (WBA) will be one of the ways to stimulate the students' intelligent curiosity and foster their autonomous attitude toward English learning.

3.2. Preliminary Investigation

Prior to implementing my research plan, I first gathered information about my participants' aptitude levels and feelings toward

English learning. The Norm Reference Test provided data of Japanese students as a whole so that I could better place the students in a specific level. It was important to designate specific levels for each student so that I could better analyze their progress.

In addition to the NRT, I also utilized surveys as a means of gathering student information. I gave the students two kinds of questionnaires - one for general questions related to learning English and the other to examine their sense of strategy use when learning English.

3.2.1. The Norm Reference Test

The Norm Reference Test was performed on April 8th in 2009. This test was an investigation of student examination statistics nation-wide in order to study the level of learning amongst Japanese students in the last academic year. The Norm Reference Test (NRT) divided the results into four categories - listening, speaking, reading and writing.

The results are displayed below.

Table 3.1   **The correct rate of each skill**

Skill	National ratio	The participants	The difference
Listening	81.0	87.5	+ 6.5
Speaking	61.9	72.9	+11.0
Reading	59.3	71.3	+12.0
Writing	46.9	67.4	+20.5

number of students (n=16)

The writing skill of the participants was the lowest whereas the listening skill was the highest. This result is the same as the national ratio. The current course of study for English focuses on listening and

speaking; the results statistically support this focus since students'
highest scores lay in these two areas.

The result of the T-score (a deviation value) for student
achievement was divided into five levels, five being the highest and
one being lowest. There were five level five students, four level four
students, three level five students, and two level two students.

3.2.2. Investigating students' opinions of activities

This questionnaire was carried out on the 15th of April in 2009.
Like the questionnaire investigating strategy use described later,
investigating the actual conditions as to why we should use a WBA is
effective for not only understanding the development of language skills
but learner autonomy as well.

This questionnaire questioned various areas, like the students'
likes and dislikes, their autonomous learning, their attitude towards
learning English, and what they hope to achieve by learning English
(Appendix II).

(1)   Student opinions of activities

1) Speaking

Figure 3.1   (n＝16)   *Figure 3.2*   (n＝16)
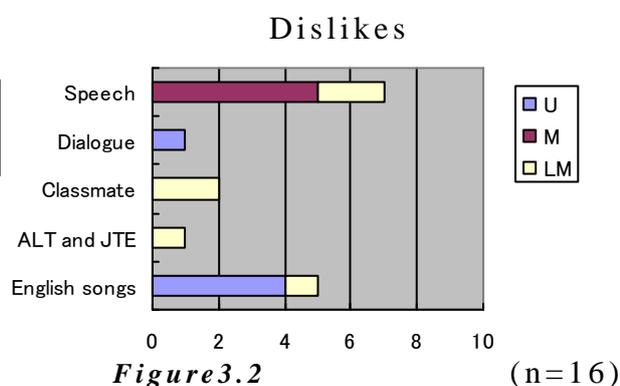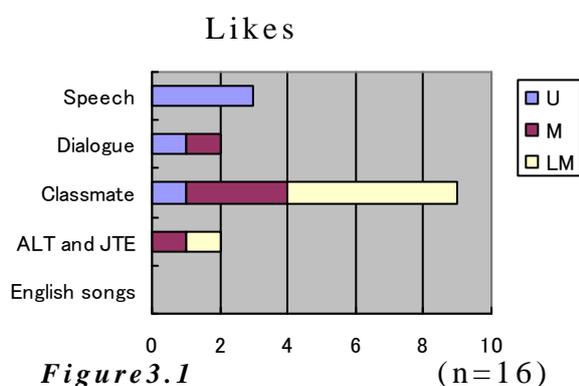
"Dialogue" means to present the original dialogue with a partner,

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"Classmate" means to communicate with other students, and "ALT and JTE" means to talk with the English teachers.

Nine students like to communicate with their classmates, but they do not like to perform their speech. They did not mark the choices "to talk with ALT or JTE in English" as an enjoyable activity in English class. They also reported that they do not like to perform individually in public, but they like to speak with others in English in the classroom. In this way, they enjoy learning English freely but dislike studying seriously. It can be said that they prefer to study in a relaxed atmosphere.

Seven students do not like to perform their speech and five students do not like to sing English songs. Among these five students, there are four upper level students. The reason why they do not like to sing English songs is perhaps because they dislike being confronted with unfamiliar words or strange pronunciations. While the students are intellectually curious, they feel uncomfortable when there are too many unknowns.

2) Listening

Figure 3.3 (n=16)   *Figure 3.4* (n=16)
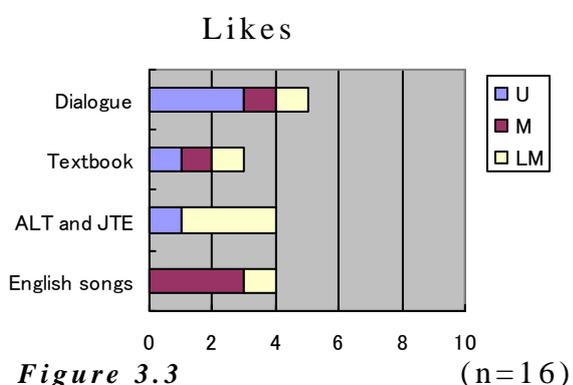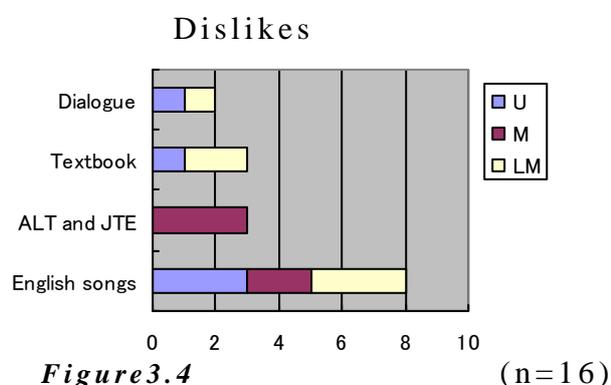
"Dialogue" means to listen to classmates' speeches or dialogues, "textbook" means to listen to the contents of the textbook on CD, and

"ALT and JTE" means to listen to the demonstrations of the English teachers or their conversation.

Five students like to listen to their classmates' speeches and dialogues and four students like to listen to English songs. This can be interpreted that the students enjoy a passive style for language activities. They do not like to present themselves, similar to speaking activities, but they like to listen to other classmates' performances. In this way, they are removed from having to produce something themselves; listening is only internal and requires no external display of knowledge.

Half of the students do not like to listen to English songs. Like with singing, the reason for this may be that they do not understand not only the meaning of the songs but also the pronunciation. However, there were four students who do like to listen to songs. This shows that, if they can understand the meanings and pronunciations of the songs, this activity has a possibility to change to an enjoyable activity..

3) Writing

Likes

Dislikes
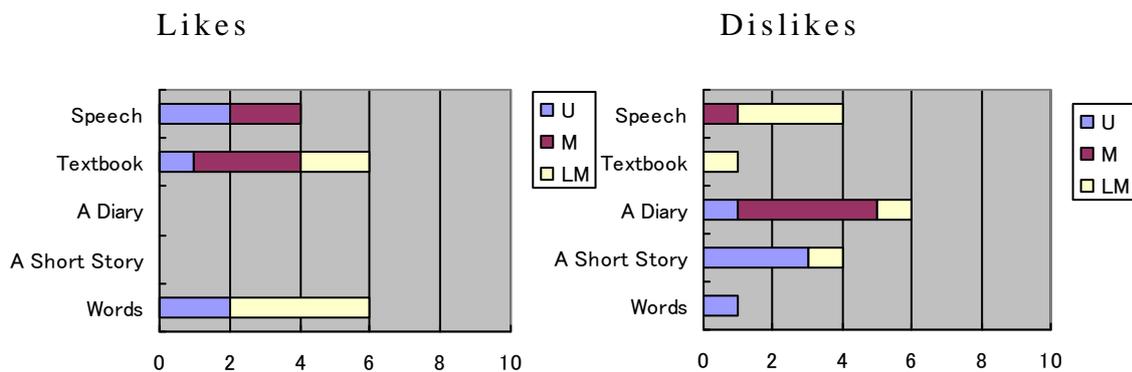
Figire 3.5 (n=16) **Figure 3.6** (n=16)

"Speech" means to write a speech manuscript, "textbook" means to copy sentences from the textbook, "a short story" means to create a

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simple story, and "words" means to practice writing English words.

Six students like to copy the sentences of the textbook and six students like to practice writing words in their notebook. They enjoy repetition and its inherent lack of need for creation. This also displays their affinity for passive learning. The reason they chose this activity was that "it is easy to do" or that "it is just something to do." This once again shows that they do not enjoy having to actively create something. Like listening to English, students enjoy passive, receptive-only activities. Four students chose that they like to write a speech manuscript. The given reason for this was that "they like to convey their thoughts to others", or that they "like to practice previously learned expressions." Some of the students wish to relate their learning to themselves and, by doing so, hope to positively express themselves.

Some students marked the choices, "to write a manuscript of their speech", "to write a short story", or "to write a diary" as uninteresting activities. The reasons that they chose these were probably because they did not know the words or felt they were not particularly good at creative writing. Actually, this shows an interrelation to the activities they liked. With regards to writing activities, they liked repetitively copying the words and the sentences from the textbook. The students dislike actively creating something; they prefer repetition and familiarity over creativity. To create an intellectual, logical English composition requires the student to use various sentence structures and try unfamiliar vocabulary.

4) Reading

Likes

Dislikes
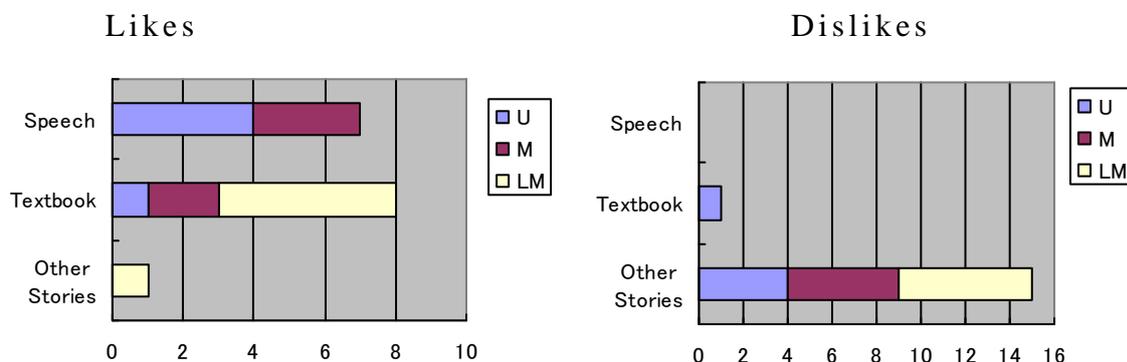
Figure 3.7   (n=16) *Figure 3.8*   (n=16)

"Speech" means to read other students' speeches, "other stories" means to read stories other than their textbook, and "textbook" refers to reading passages of the textbook.

As far as reading is concerned, most students chose that reading the textbook or their friends' speeches was the most enjoyable. The reason for this is because there are only the words which they have already learned and they understand the meanings correctly. Another reason could be that the textbook is always with them and it makes them feel relaxed. They are interested in their classmates and want to know more about them, and so, self introductions are fun for them. On the other hand, they do not handle unfamiliar things well and lack an eagerness to take on new challenges, such as those presented by unknown words.

Most students chose "to read stories or articles besides the textbook" as a disliked activity. This shows again that they do not have a willingness to read materials which have a lot of unknown words. Passive learning is their most comfortable way of learning and it permeates everything they do. Their discomfort with unfamiliar words

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could be alleviated by looking the words up in the dictionary, but many students feel there are too many unknown words and give up fairly quickly.

(2) The most difficult activities in the English classroom
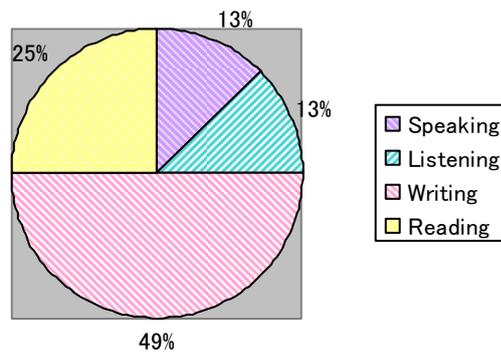
Figure 3.9 (n=16)

The students varied in what activities they believed to be most difficult. About half of the students chose "to write something in English" as the most difficult. Four students selected "to read" while two students chose "to listen or to speak" as their least favorite.

The students feel that writing is the skill that limits them the most and it is here that they feel their lack of knowledge most strongly. They also feel somewhat self-conscious about making mistakes or misrepresenting their feelings. However, this fear could also become a catalyst to motivate the students to write coherent, creative sentences if handled properly.

(3) The happiest time in English classes

Most students wrote that their happiest time in English class was when they could do something that they could not do previously. They gave some examples as when "I was happy when I could deliver my speech very well", "I was happy when I could speak English in front of

others", or "I was happy when I could properly describe what I wanted to". This shows that they like to study in a casual surrounding, but, on the other hand, they feel satisfaction when they are able to present their ability in public. This achievement when recognized by others enhances their intrinsic motivation towards learning.

(4) The students' hope to master English
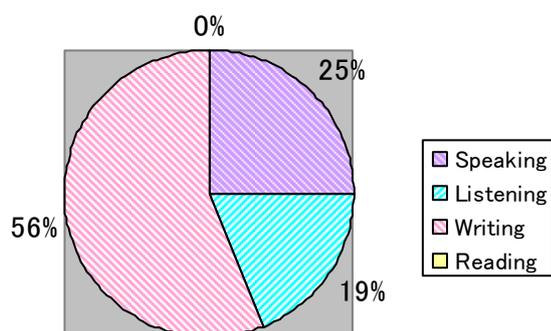
Figure 3.10   (n=16)

More than half of the students chose "to write in English" as their most sought-after achievement in English. The most difficult activity for the students is English writing and yet, they strongly desire the ability to write in English. From this, it can be said that they study English in order to write whatever they would like to.

(5) Writing themes

Students enjoy things related to themselves, their friends, or anything else pertaining to their personal life. It makes sense, therefore, that their favorite theme is about themselves. They like to write sentences with their friends as the actors or write about their future hopes and dreams. On the other hand, they are not interested in writing about topics beyond their immediate world. For instance, they disliked writing about social problems, environmental problems, or world news.

These topics are accompanied with a need for the student to analyze or think objectively. It is also logical to infer that they dislike these topics due to the amount of unfamiliar, academic vocabulary.

(6) Preparation for English classes
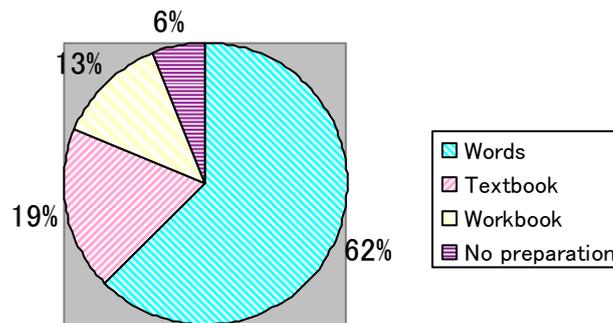
Figure 3.11   (n=16)

"Words" means to write new words and the meanings in their notebooks, "textbook" means to write the sentences of the textbook into their notebook, and "workbook" means to study and drill themselves using the workbook.

Most students wrote "studying new words" or "copying the sentences from their textbook" as their usual preparation for English class. According to the investigation above, they feel uncomfortable when they encounter unknown words so they try to study them before their English classes. It is beneficial to cultivate this motivation to learn new words. Without this motivation, the students will not challenge themselves to try new things. Instead of feeling agitated when encountering new words, they should feel a desire to learn these new words to progress further.

(7) Review for English classes

Most students reviewed by rewriting the sentences in which they

made mistakes. This can be interpreted as a desire to learn English precisely. While this is not inherently wrong, it does not make the students flexible or willing to try new things without fear of being incorrect. It is necessary to create an atmosphere where the students are not afraid of making mistakes.

(8) Individual work versus group work
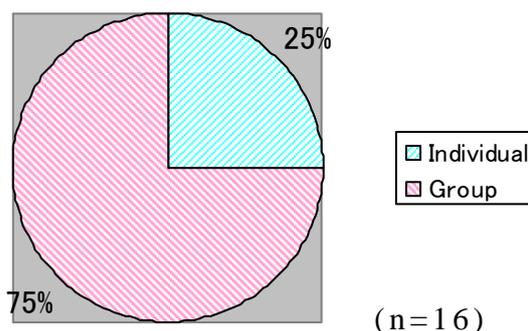
Figure 3.12 (n=16)

Twelve students prefer cooperative activities over individual work. The reason they chose this was that they felt they could learn from others. On the other hand, four students did not like to study with others. Their given reasons were that "I like to be alone" or "I am not good at cooperating with others." This is not only true in English classes, but in their daily school life as well. These students tend to be introverts and prefer solitude over group activities. It is important to have these students understand the importance of learning from and with others during language classes. Language is a social activity and group work is especially crucial when learning a language.

3.2.3. Investigating strategy use among students

In the beginning of April, I inquired about a suitable questionnaire for strategy use (Appendix III). I adopted a questionnaire (Muranoi 2006) and modified it to a more appropriate level for junior

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high school students.

Each student gave a score that reported their frequency of use of a particular method from a learning strategy. I added the numbers reported for each method and then divided by the number of students. To arrive at the relative frequency for each learning strategy, I then divided this number by the number of methods multiplied by the number of students. This gave me the average percentage of students who used each strategy (rounded off to the nearest decimal).

Student learning strategies of use
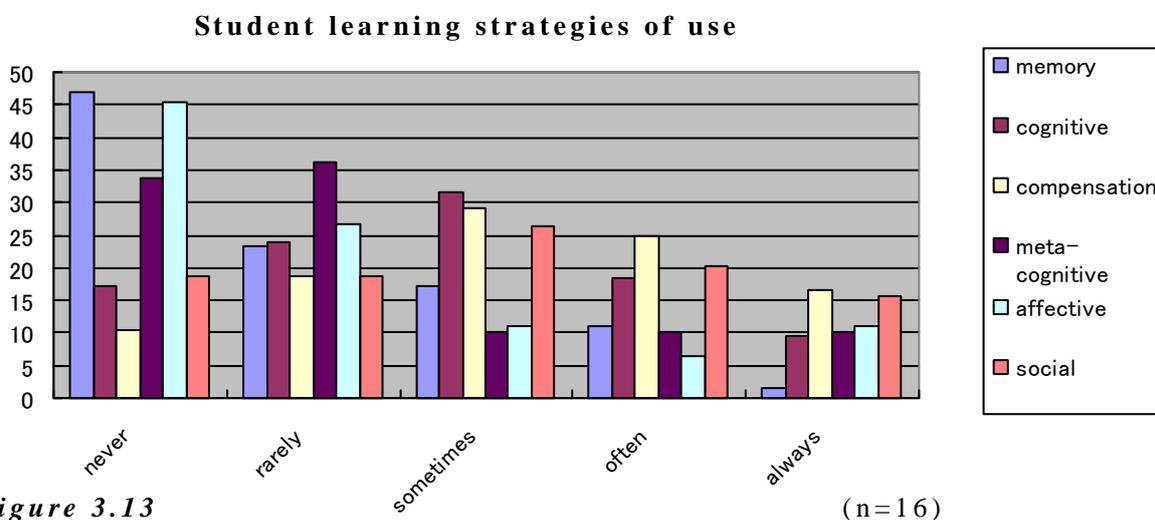
Figure 3.13   (n=16)

The above table shows what strategies the students unconsciously have used in their study of English in the previous year. Based on the students' replies, mostly the students have used compensation strategies. This strategy is used when someone compensates their knowledge to understand and speak with a new language. Therefore, the intention is to compensate their lack of knowledge of grammar, especially vocabulary, to create coherent, logical sentences. Students can use gestures, facial expressions, and single word sentences and answers when they speak, but they found they could not change difficult words into easy ones when they wrote. Written English is not aided by these helping actions (facial expressions, gestures, etc);

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therefore, students find it difficult to fully express themselves in writing. The relative frequency of use of this particular strategy shows the students heavily rely on this method.

The students used social strategies as their primary learning strategy. They mostly have used these strategies to ask their classmates when they do not know something or they try to understand what kind of thoughts or feelings others have. On the other hand, they reportedly were not interested in other countries or the culture of people in English-speaking countries. This lack of concern for things outside themselves and their immediate surroundings is mildly unsetting. In an increasingly global society, this narrow-mindedness and short sightedness may prove to be disadvantageous to many of the students.

Cognitive strategies are an absolute necessity to learning a new language. More than half of the students have used practicing the language as a useful strategy, according to the results of the questionnaire. Practicing with others or by oneself is crucial to language learning and frequent practice can be an indicator of motivation. Frequent practice, therefore, can be viewed as having a positive attitude toward English learning.

Although the table shows that they rarely used memory strategies, R.Oxford (1990) mentions that

Although memory strategies can be powerful contributors to language learning, some research shows that language students rarely report using these strategies. It might be that students simply do not use memory strategies very much, especially beyond elementary levels of language learning. However, an alternative explanation might be that they are unaware of how often they actually do employ memory strategies.

While these strategies may be regarded as a way to study in their

individual learning, they are usually solely used during personal study. By this meaning, memory strategies are related to metacognitive strategies. Metacognitive strategies are the strategies to control their own learning. Furthermore, affective strategies are also to related to metacognitive strategies. They are the strategies which control their feelings. These three strategies are deeply related to learner autonomy and, as such, should be encouraged and taught to the students to motivate the students to further develop learner autonomy.

3.3. Problem Identification

The background of the conventional course of study focuses on listening and speaking to develop authentic language ability by learning those practical skills for purposeful situations. However, by introducing English as a subject in elementary school, a regular aptitude towards communication, based on the phonetic aspect, is cultivated. The ability to convey students' thoughts and ideas as well as the ability to use basic vocabularies and sentence structure is well-respected by educators. By encouraging students to foster the ability to write consistent and coherent sentences, educators can motivate students to acquire a proficiency in writing.

Based on the results of previous NRTs, the ability of writing was usually the lowest of the four skills in my students whom I had taught. This is reported to be the national tendency. Regarding the class examined this year, the writing skill was the highest compared to the national ratio; however, the average writing score was still the lowest of the four skills. This phenomenon is understandably natural because the purpose of the present course of study in the English Department

has been focused on reinforcing authentic communication competence through speaking and listening.

According to the investigation of students' opinions of activities, most students felt that writing was the most difficult skill of the four. Their given reasons were that "they do not know how to construct the sentences", "they do not know what to write", and "they do not know how to write".

One of the possible factors of this antipathy towards writing is the decline of students' abilities to express and think for themselves. The Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) (2004) reports that Japanese students ranked fourteenth of forty-one countries in their ability to read and understand written material. This can be thought of as the ability to read and understand or the ability to correctly comprehend, use, and discuss written documents. Therefore, the ability to read and subsequently analyze the backbone for thought. These findings resulted in a revision of the New Course of Study which now aims to foster the ability of students to think, judge, and express for themselves. This is also expressly related to autonomous learning.

In conventional instruction, writing involves:

1) Several sentences using a newly learned sentence structure for self expression.

2) A dialogue describing a particular situation done with a partner.

3) Some sentences copied with examples from the textbook with little room for self-expression or student creativity.

There are problems with this method, however, including:

1) Students are not aware of the connection between sentences.

They focus on the sentence structure, not on the content.

2) One student will lead the pair and usually think and write the sentences of their dialogue while the other simply copies and blindly agrees.

3) Students write sentences imitating the model sentence and usually do not think about what they are writing.

Therefore, I would like to develop their ability to think creatively by combining the four integrated skills. For instance, they can gain a fondness of writing through reading, talking about writing, and reading/discussing others' writing. For my WBA, I chose paragraph writing as the basis for my instruction of English compositions. By teaching them how to construct writings, they must consider the consistency of the content and the connections of each sentence. Also, by utilizing peer feedback or a presentation of their writings, they write with an awareness of their readers or listeners.

As I mentioned before, most students don't know what to write or how to write properly in English. It can be inferred that this shows they do not know how to study English. This theory is further supported by the investigation of the students' likes and dislikes. Their attitudes toward learning were very passive. For example, they like to read or write words in the textbook, however, they do not like to read other stories or create stories of their own. In addition to this, some students are not cooperative with others and this prevents them from learning effectively.

In the questionnaire I gave discussing strategy uses, most students reported that they did not use strategies well. Most students probably use many of these strategies unconsciously, however.

Therefore, strategy training is effective to use, not only for their development of language skills but also the development of their learner autonomy. For the purpose of my study, I focus primarily on cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategies as I thought these would be the most beneficial for my students.

CHAPTER 4   PURPOSE OF THE PRESENT STUDY

The main purpose of this dissertation is to explore the various factors which influence the development of a project to acquire English language skills and to enhance learner autonomy through a writing-based approach (WBA). The study was conducted on Japanese lower secondary students with an emphasis on understanding students' approaches to the four integrated skills.

The students feel that writing is the most difficult skill so I chose to focus my attention there. This inclination is not limited to only English classes, but it seems they find writing the most difficult in all their classes.

One of the reasons could be that the ability of critical thinking of Japanese students has decayed. A good example of this decline is the students' interests. For example, my current school has an assigned reading time every morning. One book is chosen by the students with little teacher interference as we would like to respect their interests. However, most students always choose a book written mainly in the colloquial style. They do not have to contemplate figurative expressions, metaphors, or the writer's intention of the book. They do not need to read between the lines because the writing of these books is easily comprehensible. If the students read only conversational books, it is safe to assume their own writing will be influenced by these books. Their writing may lack begin to depth and their creativity could become limited with such a narrow range of variety.

Another reason for this decline in students' critical thinking ability lies in the instruction process itself. In English classes, the

students are given the choice to write a few sentences as a drill practice or practice self expression using a new sentence structure. These writings typically contain sentences which are not connected to each other. They endeavor to use the new sentence structure when they write sentences, but it becomes automatic and they do not consider the meaning of the content. It seems that most students do not have a clear purpose to their writing and they instead focus on the form of the sentences. This can be also interpreted as they do not know how to approach English to best suit their writing needs.

The reasons for this decline are understandably complex and one of the factors assuredly lies with the education system. Education in Japan allows and even supports passive learning. Yet language learning, in particular, requires an active student. By providing students with useful feedback and possible writing ideas, the students can transform these suggestions into their own. By doing so, it enhances their chances to improve other language skills and also promotes learner autonomy.

Considering the state of language education in Japan, several questions should be asked. How can EFL teachers help students develop the language skills needed for a writing-based approach? How should EFL teachers develop learner autonomy? In looking for solutions to these concerns, the following two research questions are raised:

(1) To what extent can a WBA develop the students' English language skills?

(2) To what extent can a WBA develop the students' autonomy in language learning?

CHAPTER 5   METHODOLOGY

In this section I will explain how student levels were established and discuss the general learning environment to help explain the students' attitudes or motivation towards learning English. The materials and procedures are those items I used inside the classroom and the assignments which focus on providing practice opportunities and enhances cooperative learning.

5.1. Participants

The participants of this study were all second-year students. There were sixteen participants in this project - five boys and eleven girls with varying levels of ability and motivation towards learning English.

The general atmosphere of the classroom is very cheerful and polite. The boys are usually active and friendly. The girls are also cheerful, however, they are divided into two groups. One group is fairly gregarious and another group consists of two girls who usually like to be alone. These two girls fall into the self-introverted, quieter spectrum of students and this tendency is displayed in both their school and social life.

As for their ability in English, there are four designated levels - high, mediate, mediate, and lower mediate. These levels are based on the NRT (Norm Reference Test) which investigated the students' English ability during the first year of junior high and my own analysis/observation of the students. For this thesis, high level includes upper level, mediate level includes mediate, and the medium

level is included in the lower mediate level.

There were five students who scored within the upper-level ranking. Four of these students are positive and tend to be student leaders. They are usually the ones who set the mood of the classroom. The other student is very quiet and prefers to be alone, however.

There are five students at the mediate level. There are many personality types among them, but most students are cooperative and cheerful. It should be noted that one student in this group has negative feelings towards learning and is not able to cooperate with others very well. She sometimes expresses her personal feelings during class so sometimes the activity does not proceed smoothly. Yet as a whole, most mediate level students enjoy interacting with others and favor group activities.

There are four students at the medium level and two students at the lower mediate level. However, for the purpose of this thesis, the medium level is included in the lower mediate level. These students typically score at low levels not only in English but also other subjects. However, they usually tackle their assigned tasks seriously. One of the students is very quiet and sensitive which sometimes disrupts the class activity. Her style is different from the other two quiet girls at the upper and mediate level. Even so, she can cooperate with others and is very flexible.

In the first lesson of the semester, I explained what I was planning to do and asked the participants for their cooperation as my partners in this study.

5.2. Materials

The writing-based approach (WBA) was carried out mainly by paragraph writing which includes some activities based on the grammatical points from the textbook, writing assignments, making a speech, and tests. Some activities were based on the textbook, Crown by Sanseido, which was selected by the area's school board. The grammatical points are clearly outlined in each lesson of the textbook, so the activities which were implemented in class were based on each grammatical point. The activities were "traditional Japanese stories" and the task-oriented activity, "disaster planning".

Writing assignments include diaries, creative writing, and news articles. After my lessons on paragraph construction, I had the students create a second self-introduction but unlike the previous time, only in English. I then wanted to compare their first and second self-introductions to evaluate their process.

The students have a special notebook which corresponds to the textbook, a workbook based on conversation activities, and two files for further English practice. One file is for homework focused on writing practice and the other is for worksheets handed out during class. Japanese-English dictionaries and English-Japanese dictionaries by Benesse are provided in the English room. The students can use these dictionaries to do their homework or accomplish a given task in English class. I made English newspapers which display the students' works, pictures of the students acting in English class and other important activities for English class. The English newspapers are handed to each student and also hung on the wall of the English room.

5.3. Procedures

After dividing the students into three levels based on the results of the NRT and the level of their written works, I planned the classes and their assignments based on a WBA. Before creating a final speech, basic instruction to reinforce grammar competence and increase vocabulary was essential. Therefore, I gave the students writing assignments to gradually improve their English skills which steadily increase in complexity and build on previously learned knowledge. The students began with diaries, proceeded to creative writing, and then finally analyzed news articles.

I introduced paragraph writing by emphasizing the importance of coherence and cohesion in English writing. By dissecting a Japanese composition into topic sentences, supporting sentences, and a conclusion, the students could clearly see what each sentence provides to the paragraph as a whole.

Cooperative learning was carried out both for the students who needed help and also for the students who can not express their own feelings clearly. To integrate more cooperative learning into the classroom, the students made traditional Japanese stories, disaster plans, and speeches. Finally, a second self introduction was carried out at the end of July. I then compared the first self introduction writing and the second self introduction. The students' achievement tests at the end of August also provided useful information to evaluate student progress.

For the writing-based approach, I adopted mainly three strategy trainings which were developed by Oxford (1990). I primarily focus on cognitive strategies as indispensable strategies for language learning.

According to the results of the questionnaire on strategy use, the students reportedly did not use metacognitive strategies often. For further metacognitive strategy training, I planned cooperative learning activities and a self-evaluation sheet at the end of the activities to have the students reflect on their own learning. As I mentioned previously, some students could not adapt well to this style of instruction and this prevented them from learning effectively. Therefore, I used other social strategies to reinforce cooperative learning, such as peer feedback, pair work, and group activities, to assist these students' learning. This combination of social and cognitive strategies benefited the students and enhanced their learning experience.

CHAPTER 6 A WRITING-BASED APPROACH

Chapter 6 provides an overview of a writing-based approach (WBA) carried out over a period of five months with a class of 16 second-year students at a Japanese junior high school.

Grabe & Kaplan (1996) argue that writing skills are not mastered naturally but learned under the cultural circumstances of the classroom. It is important, therefore, to learn how to write in an educational setting. With the instruction of paragraph writing, continuous feedback of writing assignments, and cooperative learning based on a WBA, students' attitudes toward writing will be active. Therefore, language skills and also learner autonomy can be developed.

This chapter consists of the results and discussion of the data compiled from paragraph writing, cooperative learning activities and tests. Paragraph writing is sub-categorized into nine sections: first self-introductions, instruction of paragraph writing, diaries, traditional Japanese stories, creative writing, disaster planning, news articles, speeches, and second self-introductions.

6.1. Paragraph Writing

This section details how paragraph writing was used to develop the speech-making process of junior high school students. Assignments and activities are analyzed with regards to content, level of writing, and attempts at using unfamiliar grammar. Assignments conducted primarily on an individual level (diaries, creative writing, and news articles) will be discussed based on grammatical competence and how these relate to learner autonomy. The activities which require more

group interaction (traditional Japanese stories, disaster planning, and speeches) will be analyzed with a focus on cooperative learning, grammatical competence, and how these activities can promote autonomous behavior.

Before making speeches, I investigated to what extent they could write consistent compositions, or proper sentences, and how much information they could write in Japanese and English. With the results of this investigation as the basis for my lessons, I planned their assignments and the classes.

6.1.1. First Self-Introduction

Self-introductions are useful activities because they combine students' favorite theme of personal discussion with familiar sentence patterns. Students enjoy talking about themselves in writing. I planned this as the first activity because it provided them with a comfortable atmosphere to begin the introduction to coherent writing. The students' compositions were analyzed by a comparison between their mother tongue and English.

First, the students wrote their self-introduction in English. Afterwards, they wrote it again in Japanese. I felt that the students would be adversely affected by their native Japanese if the order was reversed. I allowed them to use their dictionaries and gave them fifty minutes writing time.

Three teachers evaluated the students' writings according to a holistic scoring rubric based on O'malley and Pierce's scale (1996:143) which I modified to the level of lower secondary school students. As for the evaluation of Japanese writing, two Japanese teachers of

English (JTE) provided assessment. If there was a discrepancy between points, an average from the two assessing teachers was adopted. As for the evaluation of English writings, two JTEs and an assistant language teacher (ALT) critiqued the students. Once again, if there was a difference among the points, an average score was given.

Table6.1 **The Grading Rubric**

	Level	Standards of evaluation
Contents	3	Coherent
	2	Generally coherent
	1	Each sentence is not connected
Grammar	3	Almost no mistakes A lot of sentence variety, advanced sentence patterns
	2	Some mistakes, but they do not effect the content Some sentence variation, mid-level sentence patterns
	1	Sometimes sentences are not completed Not much sentence variety, lower-level sentence patterns
Sentence Amount	3	A lot of information (more than nine sentences)
	2	Enough information (more than six sentences)
	1	Not enough information

(1)   Results

The analysis of the first self-instruction to provide evidence as to the efficacy of a WBA will be discussed largely by an analysis of the grammar used and the general content. A range of vocabulary and a wide variety of grammar structures is evidence of language competence and, to some extent, learner autonomy. Autonomous learners take it upon themselves to find ways to express what they want to say and not simply settle for what they already know. Therefore, a high frequency of new words or creative uses of previous and new grammar patterns is evidence of learner autonomy. Similarly, a gradual increase in the

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difficulty level of the context displays a higher level of thinking as well as an increased awareness of their audience. These are signs of communicative competence.

Table6.2 **Comparison of Self-Introduction Compositions**

Level	Content		Grammar		Sentence Amount	
	J	E	J	E	J	E
Upper	1.8	2.0	2.6	3.0	1.8	2.4
Mediate	1.6	1.0	2.6	2.0	2.0	1.4
Lower mediate	1.2	1.0	1.2	1.0	2.2	1.3

J=Japanese E=English   (n=16)

In Japanese writings, upper and mediate level students scored comparably the same in content, grammar, and sentence amount. The lower mediate level students seem to have a problem in grammar even in Japanese. However, they were the highest of the three in terms of sentence amount.

In English writings, the upper level students scored fairly high in content, grammar, and sentence amount. As far as content is concerned, the use of conjunctions and pronouns is highly related to sentence coherence. They used several pronouns and conjunctions whereas the students at the other two levels used only a few pronouns and conjunctions. Therefore, the score for the content of upper level students was twice as other much as the other level of students. As for the use of conjunctions, upper level students used "but" and "and", mediate level students used "and", but the lower mediate level students did not use any conjunctions. As for the use of pronouns, "I", "my", "it", "you", and "this" were used by upper students. "My" and "I" were

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used by mediate students. The lower mediate level students used only "I", however.

In grammar, the three levels were clearly divided into three ranks. Among the mediate level students, their grammatical mistakes were in primarily in the improper use of the verb "to be" and the lack of "s" after a noun to indicate its plural form. Among the lower mediate students, mistakes in word order were common. Their sentences were usually very short and the construction of a sentence consisted of only a subject, a verb, and an object or a complement. They did not use any prepositions.

The amount of sentences was quite different in English writing. Among the upper level students, the amount of sentences was twice as much as the other levels. Lower mediate and mediate level students do not have the confidence to write as much in their English writings as they would do in their native tongue.

(2) Discussion

As the results show, the upper level students scored high in content due to their use of some conjunctions and a variety of pronouns. By comparison, the mediate level students used "I" and "my" while the lower mediate level students used only "I". During the first grade of junior high school, the students learned twenty-five pronouns and four conjunctions. These are the conjunctions and pronouns learned in the first grade:

***Table 6.3* Conjunctions and pronouns learned in the first grade**

Conjunctions	and but so then
Pronouns	her hers him his I it me mine more our ours she someone something their them they this we you your yours us that my

This limited amount of pronoun use was most likely due to the theme of the composition. By implementing a WBA, the use of a variety of pronouns and conjunctions in the students' written works will be encouraged. The creation of coherent writings will be possible with the instruction of paragraph writing for all level of students.

As the results show a clear difference in grammatical competence, instruction according to student level is critical. Therefore, I carefully planned their daily assignments and the written portion of the activity of the class with this knowledge in mind.

As for the amount of sentences, lower mediate students produced the most of the three in Japanese writing. This shows that, even though there are many problems in grammar and coherence, they have a desire to write and express themselves. With the exception of the upper level students, it may take a long time before the amount of sentences in English and Japanese is roughly comparable. Not only instruction of proper conjunctions, pronouns, and an extensive vocabulary but explicit training to write many sentences in a variety of ways is required.

The first self-introduction written by the students shows the students have an undeveloped understanding of how to write coherent, connected sentence or paragraphs. Some students are beginning to grasp

the concept of how to connect one sentence to another, but still do not know quite how to properly transition from one idea to the next. My next instruction goal was to teach the students how to create proper English writings using paragraphs as the foundation. Explicit instruction on paragraph writing can help transform the students' fragmented, unconnected sentences to smoothly transitioning paragraphs which clearly reflect the students' meaning.

6.1.2. Instruction of paragraph writing

In this section, I will describe my instructional plan to teach the students paragraph writing. For instruction of paragraph writing, I prepared three kinds of assignments and three activities. The assignments were diaries, creative stories, and news articles. The activities were traditional Japanese stories, disaster planning and speeches.

(1) Instruction of the paragraph

A paragraph is a section of a piece of writing which consists of several sentences dealing with a single topic. Therefore, conjunctions and pronouns play important roles in creating a coherent paragraph.

As I stated in the discussion of the first self introduction, the mediate and the lower mediate level students did not use conjunctions and pronouns enough. This reflected in the level of clarity of their writings. Sentences were unconnected due to this lack of conjunctions and pronouns. Therefore, I planned to encourage them to use these by focusing on the contents through a WBA.

(2) Brain Storming

Brain storming is a very effective tool to discover many useful ideas. It also helps the students to link words with clusters of other related words and ideas. Most students wrote about themselves in the first self introduction, however, they found they could not develop their ideas well. Therefore, I encouraged the students to use this brain storming in the activities of creative writing and speeches.

(3) Mind maps/Venn diagrams

Mind maps were used after the brain storming session to assist in creating the students' speeches (Appendix V). It is very difficult for lower mediate level students to divide the words into an upper concept and lower concept. The upper concept refers to the category and the lower concept refers to the supporting ideas of each category. I explained this to the students by using my model diagram written in Japanese to the class. Then the students divided the ideas into the two concepts. Upon completion, the students exchanged their worksheets to provide peer feedback. Some of them got new ideas from their partner or learned from each other how to divide the ideas. Afterwards, I corrected their mistakes if necessary.

(4) Cohesion and coherence

Before making their final speech, I planned the assignments and the activities to allow the students to be conscious of cohesion and coherence. The first assignment, a diary, was chosen mainly to reinforce grammar competence and also to increase the use of pronouns or conjunctions. The activity, traditional Japanese stories, was selected

to make a coherent story using proper verbs, conjunctions, and pronouns. The creative story activity reinforces the previous activity but also allows the students to create their own coherent stories. Disaster planning was used as an activity to describe and defend their reasons. News articles range in topic, review former instruction, reinforce critical thinking, and permit the students to discuss their personal opinions and feelings. This also provides practice to write logically about deeper topics. Finally, speeches incorporate and integrate all previously learned instruction.

6.1.3. Diaries

As assignments, I made the students write a diary using the past tense. I planned this assignment to have the students practice using cognitive strategies. "Repetition" is one of the practicing strategies which is effective for writing. Therefore, I planned to have the students rewrite their diary after the teachers have corrected them according to their levels.

This assignment was conducted from the 13th of April to the 14th of May for a total of twenty times. Diaries are useful assignments to practice personal expression using the past tense. The past tense was the first grammatical point of the second year textbook. This was also the same order as the annual guide plan of the English department which I create at the beginning of every year.

I told the students to write only three sentences at a time because I wanted to lessen the burden and their resistance toward writing. According to the results of the first self-introduction, instruction for improving grammatical competence was needed, especially for lower

mediate students. This assignment would help reinforce basic grammar.

Originally, I wanted to give the students three kinds of assignments depending on each level, but I was afraid that their motivation may be decreased if there were such distinctions based on ability and may destroy the good atmosphere of the classroom. Therefore, the teachers planned to comment based on their level. For the lower level students, every mistake was corrected. For the mediate level students, we respected their contents and only unintelligible mistakes such as the word order or tenses of the verbs were corrected whereas other mistakes were underlined. For the upper level students, we also respected their creativity and mistakes were underlined to be corrected by the students themselves. The ALT was in charge of correcting or underlining their grammatical mistakes and I commented with some general impressions about the content of their diary.

Once again, as with the first self-introductions, I will evaluate the students' diaries based upon their variety of grammar and desire to fully express themselves in English to provide evidence for grammatical competence.

(1)The first ten diary entries
[The lower mediate level students]

Lower mediate level students had the most amount of mistakes and sometimes were difficult to understand. The students wrote three sentences which were not connected to each other. All students at this level made mistakes about the forms of verbs.

Example:

I am played volleyball.
I playing TV games.
I eated sukiyaki.

The highest word count in one sentence was four and they usually did not use any conjunctions or pronouns. The sentence pattern was frequently subject, verb and object.

[The mediate level students]

Students of the mediate level could write sentences with more than four words. Most students could use irregular past tenses. They did not make mistakes in irregular past tense verbs. They usually used the preposition "in", "at", "for", "with", and "to". They used the pronouns "I" and "you" but not "my" or "it". Their grammatical mistakes were primarily with the improper use of a preposition or pronoun.

Example:

I rode the car.
It was cute dog.

[The upper level students]

Mistakes in the form of verbs were not typically seen in this group; however, as they tried to use more difficult words, they were inclined to misspell words like the examples below. Also, they made mistakes about the articles "a" and "the".

Example:

I went to *conbenient* store at six forty with my mother yesterday.

(2) The result of the next ten times

This time I required the students to write more than three sentences and told them it was better to write sentences connected in content. I displayed good examples of student writings in the English newspaper to illustrate the correct way to connect ideas. One of the upper level student's diary is below:

> **I went shopping to Jusco with my mother.**
> **I bought T shirt and jeans there.**
> **They were very cute.**
> **Then we ate curry and rice in the restaurant.**
> **We had a very good time.**

Some of the students in the upper level asked me if they could write about any topic so I agreed. Then, I gave the students lists written about some topics based on the investigation of the students' likes and dislikes.

[The lower mediate level students]

The number of verb mistakes decreased in these later entries. They still wrote only three sentences, however, some students could write a second sentence related to the first sentence. They also now could use the pronoun "it".

Example:
> **I drank a coke.**
> **It was yummy.**

[The mediate level students]

They sometimes wrote sentences without an "a" or "the" before nouns and their writings were typically about very ordinary things.

However, the three sentences were connected in content and they expressed their feelings well.

Example:

I played volleyball in my school.
It was fun.
So I like it very much.

[The upper level students]

At this time, the students should be separated into two groups. Some of the students (A) wrote coherently and expressed their feelings well. On the other hand, some of the students (B) still wrote at almost the same level as at the beginning.

(A) **My favorite comic is "The Prince of Tennis". I think it's very interesting. It's popular among my friends. Ms X likes it, too. So please read it.**
(B) **My favorite animal is dogs. But I don't like cats. Which do you like, dogs or cats?**

(3) Discussion

1) Discussion of the first ten times

As a way to reinforce basic grammar, the lessons on coherence and cohesion were effective for the mediate and the lower mediate level students. Although the verbs used in the diary did not have much variety, most students improved and did not make the same mistakes with the past tense of irregular verbs. This shows that it is necessary and useful for the students to repeat daily practice of writing.

For the mediate students, they intentionally used irregular past tenses and each sentence became longer than before. Some of the students were conscious of the connections of each sentence and

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increased their use of pronouns. Due to daily feedback from the teachers, they paid more attention to the content of their writing. I asked some questions about the entries in their diary like, "where did you go shopping?" or "when did you eat curry and rice?", if they did not write about the place or the time. Therefore, they began to pay attention and include details like the place or time. This let them create longer sentences than before.

For the upper level students, additional instruction was needed to stimulate their intellectual curiosity. They usually wrote about facts and their impressions of those facts. Therefore, comments like, "Why did they feel like that?" or "Why did they think like that?", were asked to have the students write while thinking more closely about coherence and providing logical reasons.

2) Discussion of the next ten times

For the lower mediate level students, it seemed that they were more conscious of the connections between sentences this time around. Some of the students wrote sentences which were connected to the first sentence. As their amount of mistakes in grammar decreased, their concerns then moved to content. As before, they wrote only three sentences, but at least two sentences of the three connected to each other. Sometimes, they wrote some expressions within a sentence in Japanese, but they used this when they wanted to convey their true feelings yet did not know how to write it in English. This phenomenon was not seen in the first ten times so this could be an indicator that their motivation toward writing was enhanced.

For the mediate level students, they usually wrote more than five

sentences and the content was consistent. However, they still did not use any conjunctions even though the teachers added some conjunctions before the sentences. Therefore, further instruction on the use of conjunctions was needed in addition to the correction in grammar or comments in their diary.

For upper level students, they again can be divided into two groups. Some of them expressed themselves creatively in their writings. But, on the other hand, some of them wrote at almost the same level as the first ten times. There could be two reasons for this. One reason relates to originality because this was emphasized by the topics they chose. The students who could display their power of expression chose topics like "my favorite movie", "school events like sports day", "my favorite TV program", or "my favorite song". On the other hand, the students who were at the same levels as before wrote about "my daily school life", "club activities" or "classes". The former topics were easy to develop the content, but the latter topics were difficult to further develop because the words used in those topics were usually the same as before. For the students who could not improve their writing, some more effective comments were clearly needed.

"I practiced baseball for a short time."

Comments: "Why did you practice for a short time yesterday?"

"Did you go anywhere after practice?"

If I had the students rewrite the diary by responding to our comments, they might have tried to write more creatively. Another reason for this theory is because the students who had not improved

wrote the same things in English as in their Japanese self-introduction. They were not overly creative or expressed themselves using a variety of rhetorical expressions in their writing. This factor could be related to their fundamental creativity or, more likely, their literary competence. It is necessary to create ways to develop their ideas by using brainstorming or peer feedback.

As I demonstrated above, instruction which develops the amount of vocabulary, explains the proper use of conjunctions, and teaches how to connect each sentence coherently is fundamental to developing students' writing. At the same time, a respect for their sensibility and willingness to express their real feelings in class or through assignments is also necessary. These instructional lessons can encourage the students to write creatively and expressively as well as foster consistency and coherency in their English writing.

6.1.4. Traditional Japanese Stories

Traditional Japanese stories are useful instructional tools since they are examples of creativity and the proper use of sentence connections. Stories follow a timeline and, without proper transitions, the story would be incoherent.

The reasons traditional Japanese stories are beneficial for teaching the students about cohesiveness and coherence are as follows:

(1) It can be constructed using the four integrated skills: write the story, present the story, and listen and read other stories. The students are involved with others and must be conscious of listeners and readers.

(2) During this activity, they use several strategies concurrently.

They practice reading their part several times, learn a variety of new expressions and how to correctly use them, and also can ask something that they don't understand to the teachers or other group members.

(3)　It helps the students to be conscious of the connection of each sentence and they learn to use more conjunctions or pronouns.

(4)　Since all stories are tales of old Japan, the students must use the past tense to create logical stories.

(1) Practice

　　I prepared very popular traditional Japanese stories which every student has known since they were little children in advance. They were "Urashima Taro", "Princess Kaguya", "The Crane Woman", and "The Child Statues with a Bamboo Hats". These stories tell us the importance of promises, kindness, and sincerity.

　　I used four classes to complete this activity. The first period was used to connect the pictures according to the plot of the story and make simple outlines in Japanese (Appendix X). The next class was used to decide who would play what role and to write their part in English. The third class was used to connect each students' part with those of their peers and discuss whether the finished story was coherent or not. The fourth period was used to practice reading and present the story in front of the class.

[The first period]

　　I divided the students into four groups with four members in each. A group consists of upper, mediate, and lower mediate level students

with one leader who was chosen by the group members. I gave them a sheet with some divided scenes of one Japanese old story. Each scene was randomly arranged and out of order. Each group had a sheet of more than ten pictures from a different traditional Japanese story. They discussed how to connect these pictures by putting them in order according to the plot of the story. Then they individually wrote the same outline of the story in Japanese on another worksheet.

[The second period]

Each student wrote a part of the story by deciding on a part and then translating it into English. They could use any dictionary or ask the other students in the group or the teachers. After combining each part, they discussed whether the story was consistent or not. They then added some conjunctions or changed the vocabulary used in the story. The leader of the group determined whether the discussion or revision was finished.

[The third period]

After the teachers checked the finished work, the students practiced reading their own part. While they were practicing, the two Japanese teachers of English and two ALTs walked around to correct their pronunciation, intonation, or emotion of the characters in the story. The teachers advised the students according to their level and encouraged them to ask for help from the upper and mediate level students. Each group sat in the same group, therefore, after a set amount of time, each teacher moved to a new group to listen to a different story.

[The fourth period]

At the beginning of the fourth class, two ALTs introduced different old American stories to the students (Appendix XIV). One ALT is the regular ALT and the other is an ALT who visits about once every semester. The regular ALT introduced "Peter Rabbit" by Beatrice Potter and the other ALT introduced "Goldilocks and the Three Bears". Before the presentation of the groups' stories, the students learned how to present a story in an "effective" way. The ALTs read the story with a clear voice, made eye contact with the students, and fully expressed the feelings of the characters.

Then the students practiced their original Japanese stories in a group. The given practice time was for twenty minutes. The presentation was conducted in the order which the leader of each group volunteered. They could bring the story with them and presented side by side in front of the other students (Appendix XV).

[The evaluation]

The areas of the written story that were evaluated were the proper use of past tense, conjunctions, and the coherence of the story. However, as this activity was conducted in a group, I did not evaluate their writings individually. Instead, I assessed their stories as a group and evaluated the group's use of verbs, pronouns, and conjunctions.

The points given for the oral presentation were in pronunciation, intonation, and emotion. The evaluation of pronunciation was based upon if they tried to speak with an accurate pronunciation as much as they could. The assessment of intonation means that, if the sentence was an interrogative question, the students' voice at the end of the

sentence goes up or down depending on the interrogative kind. Intonation also was evaluated by word emphasis and proper inflection. Also, the assessment of emotion means that the student's emotion, gestures, and voice matches the character's emotions or the meaning of the sentence. The teachers walked around the classroom to show the students suitable ways to express a character's feelings or the situation of the plot.

(2) The Results

1) The written story

All four stories used a variety of verbs, vocabulary, idioms, prepositions, pronouns, conjunctions, and sentence patterns. Also, they wrote sentences using the infinitive, gerund, direct narration, and the passive voice which they have not learned yet.

Table 6.4 Number of verbs, pronouns, and conjunctions

	The Child statues With Bamboo Hats	Urashima Taro	Princess Kaguya	The Crane Woman
verb	10	16	12	10
pronoun	8	4	6	9
conjunction	3	5	5	2

Table 6.5 Variety of verbs, pronouns, and conjunctions used in each story

Verbs (past tense)	The Child Statues With Bamboo Hats	lived, went, became, said, exchanged, was, got, gave, heard, were
	Urashima Taro	was, named, helped, bullied, went, saw, said, enjoyed, tired, decided, handed, reached, opened, came, covered, became
	Princess Kaguya	was, went, cut, found, took, brought, spoiled, said, came, cried, got, lived
	The Crane Woman	was, saw, helped, invited, said,

		put, made, wanted, found, flew
Pronouns	The Child Statues With Bamboo Hats	it, my, your, he, his, I, you, they
	Urashima Taro	he, him, she, his
	Princess Kaguya	he, her, his, she, me, they
	The Crane Woman	he, she, I, it, me, her, his, him, that
Conjunctions	The Child Statues With Bamboo Hats	and, but, when
	Urashima Taro	and, but, so, then, when
	Princess Kaguya	and, but, so, then, when
	The Crane Woman	and, but

The students attempted to use newly learned expressions and grammar for this activity. The students had not learned the passive voice but many groups used this voice in their stories. The students also wrote interesting expressions which they learned either from a dictionary or by asking a teacher for an appropriate expression. Once again, this shows a high level of learner autonomy. The students wanted a smoothly flowing story and endeavored to find the most suitable way to create one.

2) The presentation

The table below shows the evaluation of a presentation conducted at the end of April to provide a reference for student progress in their presentation of traditional Japanese stories. The previous dialogue was made by two students and they presented it in front of other students. The teachers evaluated their pronunciation, intonation, and emotion like before.

The standards are established below. The number given was based on the average points that the four teachers assessed the students to be.

Two JTEs assessed emotions and two ALTs evaluated pronunciation and intonation. When there was a difference between the points given, once again, an average score from the regular ALT and myself was adopted.

Table 6.6   **The standards of the evaluation**

	Level	
Pronunciation	3	Very good pronunciation, clearly enunciated words
	2	Good pronunciation with only a few incorrectly spoken words
	1	Many words incorrectly pronounced
Intonation	3	Very good knowledge of sentence/word intonation
	2	Good knowledge of proper intonation but with a few minor errors
	1	Little knowledge of the proper intonation
Emotion	3	Very good grasp/expression of the character's feelings, clearly conveyed
	2	Good grasp of the character's emotions but sometimes failed to express it themselves
	1	Did not clearly express the character's emotions

Table 6.7   **The results of the evaluation**

Number	Level	Pronunciation			Intonation			Emotion		
		April	June		April	June		April	June	
1	LM	1	1	—	1	2	↑	2	3	↑
2	LM	2	2	—	1	2	↑	2	2	—
3	LM	2	2	—	2	2	—	2	3	↑
4	LM	2	2	—	2	2	—	2	2	—
5	LM	2	3	↑	2	3	↑	2	2	—
6	LM	2	2	—	2	2	—	2	1	↓
7	M	2	2	—	2	2	—	2	3	↑
8	M	2	2	—	2	2	—	3	3	—
9	M	2	3	↑	3	3	—	2	2	—
10	M	2	3	↑	2	2	—	3	3	—
11	M	2	2	—	2	2	—	1	2	↑
12	U	2	2	—	2	3	↑	2	3	↑
13	U	2	3	↑	3	3	—	2	3	↑
14	U	2	3	↑	2	3	↑	2	3	↑
15	U	3	3	—	3	3	—	3	3	—
16	U	2	2	—	2	3	↑	3	3	—

(n=16)

The regular ALT commented on the students' performances. The other JTE also commented next to the ALT like below. Their comments are as follows:

[For the lower level students]

ALT: I think Student 2 has more confidence than before and was much louder. She has improved greatly. She is still lower compared to her peers, but, compared with before, I think she is much better. Student 1's main problem is pronunciation still. He stumbles over his words sometimes. But I can hear him much better. He spoke clearly this time yet his words still sounded "off". He seemed to be more confident, too.

JTE: The students were more creative with their presentations than before. Student 2 seemed to have more confidence compared with the last time. It came from the repetitive practices of the presentations of the activities with the group members. Student expressed the emotion of the scene or the character quite well.

[For the medium level students]

ALT: Everyone was much louder than before. Their intonation is much better and some of their pronunciation has improved. They still need to work on their "th" and "l" sound, but overall they improved. I think Student 9 and Student 10's pronunciation especially has improved. I actually thought Student 11 had gotten much better as far as volume is concerned. Because before she could not be heard at all.

JTE: Student 10 especially improved their pronunciation. Overall most students improved their intonation.

[For the upper level students]

ALT: I think they have a better grasp of intonation than before. I think, because they have a better understanding of the meaning, they can act better. I think Student 14's pronunciation has gotten a little better. Student 12 and Student 16 have better intonation than before. Student 12 and Student 13 both convey their emotions well and Student 13's pronunciation is much better than before.

JTE: Most students memorized their parts and student 13 and student 14 grasped the situation of the scenes and the feeling of the characters very well. They were outstanding.

(3) Discussion

1) The written story

As before, I will analyze the results of the written story based on grammar usage, content level, and students' attempts to create challenging sentences or try new expressions. This willingness to take chances with their writing and display their creativity are indicators of student accountability for their learning and an autonomous attitude towards learning.

As I showed before, the students could use a variety of pronouns, conjunctions, and prepositions. The pronouns which they used in the story were mostly about the third person due to the nature of the assignment. They used only "I", "my", "you" and "it" in their diaries because a diary is for writing about their daily lives or interests of themselves. However, in this activity, they needed to write about the characters of the story so they did not need to use "I" or "my" except for in direct narration.

The use of "when" as a conjunction was a newly learned grammar item for the second grade students. They endeavored to use "when" several times in the story. The use of "so" and "then" were previously unseen in their diary even though they were the conjunctions which they learned in the first grade. The students who wrote "The Crane Woman" used "but" as well as "and" as conjunctions. However, other groups used other expressions to show the transition of time. This activity was good training to have the students think about the construction of a story. "So" and "then" are the conjunctions which connect a sentence to the former content. By using these conjunctions, they learned how to lead a reader smoothly to the conclusion of the

story.

Individually, the students typically used only the most basic conjunctions of "and" or "but" in their previous work of diary-making. However, as a group, the students were able to use more advanced conjunctions to create coherent, smooth traditional Japanese stories in English. The students could express themselves better using previously unfamiliar things like colloquial expressions as well. The upper level students assisted the lower mediate level students and together they could achieve more when they focused on the content rather than only the grammar/sentence structure.

2) The presentation

From the evaluation and the comments provided by the two teachers about this activity, some students at each level had improved in the points of pronunciation, intonation, and emotion. Student 1, who is from level 2, expressed reading confidently. Student 2, who is also from level 2, improved her intonation. All students seemed to have a better understanding of how to deliver a speech.

This improvement shows that they wrote the traditional Japanese stories by themselves and practiced with the members of the group until they were satisfied with their work and they understood the content of the lines and stage directions. These practices which were used only for memorization allowed the students to improve in both their language skills and also their power of expression.

6.1.5. Creative writings

The activity of writing a traditional Japanese story was to force

the students to write outlines with the members of the group and then present it. However, the content of the stories were well-known so the creativity of each student was not underdeveloped. In the New Course of Study for the English Department, an enhancement of students' creativity is one of the most important factors. Therefore, I planned to have the students write creative stories as their assignments. This assignment was also a chance to develop vocabulary, pronouns, prepositions, conjunctions, and make a coherent story. As for strategy use, I planned for the students to use "recognizing and using formula and patterns" as a cognitive strategy. I suggested that the students make their creative writing by applying their previous knowledge from the activity "making traditional Japanese stories".

This assignment was conducted from the beginning of June until the end of June. I had the students write about one or two stories a week so I gave them seven worksheets in total. On the worksheet, there would be a picture drawn and a space for a brainstorming word list next to the picture. The students are given ten lines to make the story and there are spaces at the bottom of the sheet for the teacher to comment or to write their impression of the story.

This assignment was conducted to draw out the student's creativity so grammatical mistakes were corrected at a minimum. However, if the content was not coherent or the connection of each sentence was not smoothly written, I commented to add a suitable conjunction or gave some hints about it. After my initial check, the regular ALT checked again. Then, every student rewrote the story on a new worksheet and I hung them on the wall of the English classroom.

(1) Results

I chose one student from each level as an example of the first story and the last story. These are the students' works before teacher corrections. The following are examples of students' first and last stories displayed by level.

(The first picture)

> The scene of the first picture goes something like this: two boys are standing in the river and the river is very high. There is a cave near them and they are talking to each other.

(The last picture)

> The scene of the last picture is with three children coming from a doorway. They are then flung out suddenly. They burst in with an umbrella, sofa, and golfing gear.

[The lower mediate level student]

Student (X)

(First story)

> **They name is Paul and Tom. One day, Paul and Tome is went fishing. But, didn't fishing. They be in trouble. Tom is "Are you find fish?" with speak. Paul is "No." with answer.**

(Last story)

> **Amy, Shimo, and Shuhei three brother. One day, three brother walked and enjoyed. And, they discover strange door. Shimo said, "What is this door?" Shuhei said, "Enter." Suddenly Shuhei opened door. Amy said, "Run away!!" They were surprised run away.**

[The mediate level student]

Student (Y)

(First story)

> **Their names are Taro and Tsuyoshi. They are expedition. One day, they found a cave. And they entered the cave. After a while they**

found a river. They spoke to each other "go ahead".

(Last story)

> **They are young children. One day, their mother and father went on a journey. Their mother said to them, "Don't peep into a door." But they were very curious. Then they peep into a door. Suddenly many things fell. They are pressed under things.**

[The upper level student]

Student (Z)

(First story)

> **Once upon a time, a young people in London. They're Ron and Don. They're bad guys. They broke a water pipe. The town is flooded. God saw it. He got angry then. So, they were metamorphoses into gold fish. The town was very peaceful. But Ron and Don aren't helped. Then they became edible.**

(Last story)

> **"Don't play hide-and-seek!" John's mother said. "OK, OK!!" John answered. His mother went out to a different city. Because of working, John, May, and Tom said, "Let's play hide-and-seek!" They invited his friend lives in next door to their house. They were playing together. At that time, "I'm home, where are you? John! May! Tom!" Their mother came back home. "Wow!!" "Dadadadada" "Oh, no!" they said. His mother found out their lie. After that they were very scolded by his mother.**

(2) Discussion

[The lower mediate level students]

In the first story, there were many grammatical mistakes, but the student (X) attempted to use a more difficult collocation, "in trouble", which was not learned yet so the student must have used a dictionary to create the story. "One day" is the collocation which was first learned in "traditional Japanese stories" so the student remembered it and could reuse it. The student (X) could now use two conjunctions, "and" and "but".

Compared with the last story, the amount of sentences was increased and the story was more developed. The collocation "run

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away", and other new words, "suddenly" and "discover", were used. They have not learned either of these yet so the student also looked into the dictionary to use them.

Two students at the lower mediate level students could not continue this assignment, however. They had the motivation to write something, but they could write only three or four sentences and usually gave up. I tried to give them some hints about the content that they wanted to create, but they still felt this assignment was too difficult. So I asked them, "What is the most difficult part of creating a story?", and they answered, "Constructing the sentences." Therefore, I gave them another assignment which provided more practice for sentence construction.

[The mediate level students]

In the first story, there were some grammatical mistakes, but the story was almost coherent. A comparison of a story by a lower mediate level student (X) and a mediate level student (Y) reveals that student Y can use several past tenses. The student also used "after a while" as an important expression to connect each sentence and transit time. The collocation "each other" was a phrase which they learned in the first grade, but this was the first time they had used it in their writing. This shows the student's mental knowledge allowed him/her to meaningfully use this phrase in their own work. In the last story, the student (Y) wrote seven sentences and four sentences had the order of phrase, conjunction, and adverb at the beginning of each sentence.

Every student at this level used at least one conjunction. For example, "but", "then", "when 〜", or "so". They had only used "and"

in their diary despite repeated teachers' corrections, however, they tried to use different conjunctions in their traditional Japanese stories. By reapplying this knowledge, the story flowed smoothly and the content became deeper.

[The upper level students]

The students wrote about a particular situation and introduced the characters at the beginning of the story. The development of a situation only by looking at a picture shows imagination and originality. This creativity was cultivated from not only their assignment diaries but also in the later activity of making a traditional Japanese story.

In the last story, most students at this level wrote twice as many sentences compared with the first story. They used "after that", "at that time", and "because of" as very effective collocations to connect each sentence. Also, they used a variety of vocabulary, conjunctions, collocations, and prepositions to create a logical story.

[All level students]

This particular assignment was very effective for each ability level. Because most students wrote a variety of vocabulary, collocations, pronouns, and conjunctions, the students found the lesson to be meaningful and interesting. By using the "passive voice" to make creative stories, they transformed their previously learned knowledge from their diary creations and traditional Japanese stories to produce thoughtful stories.

Most students in the three levels used some colloquial style in their stories. They had used the colloquial style in their traditional

Japanese stories and this experience was recreated in their creative stories. This is very natural as the content was developed from the conversations in the story. It shows that they wanted to create a story by utilizing suitable conversations.

During this assignment, they willingly used both Japanese-English dictionaries and English-Japanese dictionaries. The students were also able to integrate their prior knowledge from their textbooks into their own creative compositions. This shows an autonomous attitude toward English learning.

6.1.6 Disaster planning

Following the annual teaching plan, I planned to teach the students the future tense at the end of June. I planned this activity to not only reinforce the four skills but also to practice reasoning in English. They had previously learned how to connect each sentence and how to make a coherent story. Therefore, if they could learn to state their opinions and reasons, they could write sentences that would allow readers to clearly understand their personal ideas. To cultivate this logical ability to think is one of the main points in the New Course of Study and also evidence of language competence for CLT. I felt that the students' writing would be deepened through this activity.

(1)Practice

I allowed the students one class to practice this activity. First, I explained the situation using an OHP (Appendix XI). Then I handed a worksheet explaining the procedure of the group work to the students. I divided the students into four groups. Each group consisted of upper,

mediate, and lower mediate level students.

(The picture)

> The picture shows a big ocean with a small boat almost sinking. A big ship is coming across the small boat. The regular ALT is drawn standing on the deck of the big ship. She is dressed as the captain of the big ship.

(The task)

> You are a family: one father, one mother and two children. You can be rescued if you can persuade the captain to save you by taking one item to bargain for your safe passageway. Please decide one thing to bargain with and write the reason why. Discuss this with your group members. You can choose anything, either some examples from the lists on the worksheet or own your ideas.

I outlined the time schedule on the blackboard. Discussion time was for five minutes, writing time was for ten minutes, practice time was for ten minutes, and I allowed three minutes for presentations.

The students decided character roles and discussed the items to bring along with a detailed reason. Three teachers (two JTEs and the ALT) observed each group and gave advice if necessary. After checking their writing, each group presented in public. After each presentation, the ALT chose some students to rescue and mentioned the reasons why she chose those students.

Results

Every group thoughtfully discussed the situation and what items to bring. They willingly used both a Japanese-English dictionary and an English-Japanese dictionary. After searching in the dictionaries, some students asked us whether the word was appropriate or not for the sentence which they wanted to express.

As for their writings, there were not many grammatical mistakes as they spent a lot of time thinking of a persuasive reason. The upper

level students usually chose items they thought of themselves, while the mediate and lower mediate level students chose things from the lists.

In the example below, the roles of "father" and "mother" are those of upper level students, one "child" is from the mediate level, and the other "child" is a lower mediate level student.

Group A:
  (Father)   I will bring the gun because I want to protect ourselves.
  (Mother)   I will bring rice because I want to cook Japanese food
            for you.
  (Child)   I will bring dogs because they are very cute.
  (Child)   I will bring a mobile phone because it is useful.

During the given practice time, some students asked their group members about some words which they could not pronounce. Then, if nobody knew the pronunciation, they asked the teachers. They memorized their own sentence by heart.

For the presentation, they volunteered and presented one by one. If there was a relatively unknown word used in a sentence, I asked the students to explain before presenting. The students explained in various ways. Most lower mediate and mediate level students showed a card with the unknown word, then pronounced it, and explained it in Japanese. Some of the upper and mediate level students drew a picture on the blackboard and explained it in Japanese. One upper level student (student A) asked whether other students knew the word or not in English. Student A then pointed to some students and they answered student A's question. After that, student A explained it in English with a gesture. After the presentation of each group, the ALT decided whom she would rescue based on their reasons and why she chose those items.

After listening to the ALT's reasons, some students asked for her to reconsider or appealed with other reasons.

Table 6.8 **The evaluation of the writings**

A	Very clear reasoning
B	Mostly understandable reasoning
C	Vaguely understandable reasoning

All upper grade students and two mediate level students received A grades. However, three mediate level students and all lower mediate level students wrote very simple sentences, like below, and were given B grades.

For example,

I will bring comic books because they are interesting.

(2) Discussion

This activity provided an opportunity for the students to practice reasoning in English. However, the students' reasons for choosing an item, while understandable, were also not clearly and logically considered. The students wanted to use words they understood, however, this activity required a little more critical thinking. Similar to discussion of the other activities, I will analyze the grammatical competence of students, but I will also evaluate the students' use of learning strategies.

For the lower mediate level students, I was satisfied with the result that they wrote a clear choice and reason. For mediate level students, however, I should have given more advice or asked questions, like "how interesting are the comics?" or "how useful are the mobile

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phones?". Also, I should have required the upper level students to write more sentences to persuade the captain.

However, this class was effective for all students. The class was constructed using the four integrated skills: they wrote the reason in English, practiced reading with the group members, orally explained their choices and their reasons, listened to the other groups' presentations, and read of the consequences in the English Newspaper.

They presented their practiced sentences with a dignified attitude and also reacted impromptu to the ALT's decision. Further, some students could bring forward a counter argument or implore for a reconsideration. While this "disaster planning" was an artificial activity, it became an authentic practice for the students. The students thought of an answer without preparation and talked about it immediately. They used the strategy "practicing naturalistically" as a cognitive strategy. This activity was effective to connect writing with speaking in a natural situation.

6.1.8. News articles

Cognitive competence is one of the important competences to communicate. This competence requires the learner to think logically, have the ability to predict, and requires the ability to analyze and judge. Further, one of the standard thought behind the New Course of Study is "fostering the ability to think and understanding the judgment and power of expression". This new emphasis arose from the belief that the students' ability to think logically and to express their opinions or feelings has declined. Although there are many reasons for this decline, I think the trend away from reading practice is related.

I planned an assignment to have the students write their opinions or feelings by reading some news articles. Through this assignment, I also hoped to have the students practice "using resources for receiving and sending messages" and "summarizing" as useful cognitive strategies. They chose interesting news articles from the newspaper or the internet and summarized the articles in English. When they encountered unfamiliar words, I had them search in the dictionary to find the correct words to complete the assignment.

This assignment began from the beginning of July to July 20th, almost twice a week for a total of six times. For the first three articles, I made the students choose Japanese articles which they were interested in. They chose one article from a newspaper at home or the internet. I focused on drawing out their opinions or feelings and expressing them in written English.

Then, for the next three times, I provided some English articles. For the lower level students, I made them write their feelings or opinions about the article so they did not have to summarize the content of the article. For the mediate level students, however, I made them summarize the articles as well as write their feelings or opinions about them. Finally, for the upper level students, I made them write the same as the mediate level students but asked them to add some more comments about their feelings or opinions.

The ALT corrected the students' grammatical mistakes and I commented or provided advice about the content. The examples I will highlight are the uncorrected versions. I chose one student from each level as examples and, for consistency, they are the same students whose examples I displayed for creative stories, For the discussion, I

considered a general tendency of the students at each level.

(1) Results in the writings from Japanese articles

[The lower mediate level students]

Most of the lower mediate level students could not write their opinions or feelings very clearly in the assignment.

Student (X)

{The first writing}

Let me tell you about flu mask. The students are wear a mask. This is very bad news. So, many people protect the flu and wear mask.

Comments: Do you have any ideas to protect us from the flu?

{The third writing}

Let me tell you about schoolchaild flying rocket. It wrote name and dream in the rocket. It's very big. I want to make it.

Comments: In the water rocket he wrote the name and dream of each student. It was great. I want to make it, too.

[The mediate level students]

Most mediate level students wrote their opinions or feelings about the articles very clearly. They used the conjunction "because" and the sentence structure "I think that～". They applied "because" learnt from the activity of "disaster planning". However, a few students could not express their feelings very well.

Student (Y)

{The first writing}

A JHS gathered many pet bottle cap(s). It's do recycling. Because) send vaccine to the developing child. I think I send vaccine to many

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child. (can inoculate with a vaccine)

Comments: Thank you very much for telling me such a good news. Let's collect pet bottle caps!

{The third writing}

Let me tell you about the wind power generation in Aomori. This is the wind power generation. The Aomori's wind power generation is very big (amount of power generation) in Japan. I think Aomori is wonderful. Let's use electricity carefully.

Comments: I did not know that. The wind power generation is the important role for new energy. Please tell me your ideas to save the electricity.

[The upper level students]

Most students grasped the point of the article. All students wrote more than seven sentences and formed their opinions and supporting reasons for their feeling. They used many new vocabulary words to support their thoughts.

Student (Z)

{The first writing}

Let me tell you about him. He is Kenichi Genshi. He made a waterwheel. He made it first eight years ago, but it is broken in a minute. He exerted myself to make a good waterwheel. I think he is very great. I can't exert myself quite a few years

Comment: He was great! It is important to carry through with you're your convictions.

{The third writing}

Let me tell you about Yujiro Ishihara. He is a very good actor in Japan. But the late he thirty years ago, he is (still) popular. So, people praise him and made a temple in the National Athletic Stadium. He popularity is still terribly high. He has a great talent. I feel very enviable(envious of him).

Comment: He has a magnetic personality. I envy him, too. Where is the temple in the National Athletic Stadium?

(2) The result of writings from English articles.

(One of the articles)

> Recently, Japanese manga is very popular in the US. In 2006 Americans spent $175-200 million on manga. About 15 manga companies sell 1300-1400 titles. Manga is popular with boys and girls in the US. Bookstores sell many different manga books. Every week, American newspapers have American and Japanese comic stories inside them. Young people like the art and stories very much. Do you like manga?

[The lower mediate level students]

Most lower level students wrote their feelings with a few short sentences.

Student (X)

> I ike "The Prince of Tennis" very much. The story is about a tennis player. It is a good story. And he is cool. So I love Akaya Kirihara. He is a good cartoonist.

> Comments: I see. Please introduce more about to me Akaya Kirihara.

[The mediate level students]

All mediate level students wrote their feelings in more than four sentences. They also wrote the reasons why they thought that way.

Student (Y)

> I like manga very much, because it is very interesting. Manga is not expect cntent. So my heart beats very fast. The characters appear very nicely.

> Comments: I know your feeling. I liked manga very much when I was a junior high school student.

[The upper level students]

Some students wrote their opinions by using the expressions - "first", "second", and "finally" at the beginning of the sentences. They

wrote their opinions by dividing the supporting sentences into some categories.

Student (Z)

> **Yes, I like manga very much. Because, the stories are very interesting. There are many kinds. For example, sports, love romance, and comedy. And, the illustrations are very cool. The characters are attractive and beautiful. So, I want to know the comics to the world. These are the reasons why I like comics.**

> Comments: Good opinion! What genre do you like the best, sports, love romance, or comedy?

(3) Discussion

1) Writing from a Japanese article

[The lower mediate level students]

I did not ask them to summarize the article in English, but they wrote some sentences about the topic or the main idea of the article. It can be said that they tried to grasp the content of the articles. Their strategy was to get an idea from reading the article and then try to write something about the article.

[The mediate level students]

Most upper mediate level students had some grammatical mistakes. However, they wrote their reasons in only one or two sentences. Therefore, further instruction to develop their opinions and feelings is needed.

[The upper level students]

Most upper level students grasped the gist of the article and summarized it into English. They wrote their opinions, feelings, and reasons for choosing the articles. I had not yet taught the construction

of the paragraph yet, however, they could write their opinions logically.

[All students]

This assignment was useful not only to allow the students to express their feelings and opinions but to gain an interest in social problems or incidents. The level of instruction needs to be modified for the lower mediate level students and mediate level students; however, they willingly found an article that they felt they could reasonably write about. Some students came to the teachers' room to get many kinds of newspapers to choose from. Several students found an article from the internet or came to ask us how to use the words that they wanted to express in the dictionary after school. These positive attitudes toward English learning should be fostered to grow the students' sense of learner autonomy.

2) Writings from a English article

[The lower mediate level students]

Compared with the Japanese article, most students could write their feelings or opinions. As this article was chosen by the ALT and she knows their interests, I think that they wrote their opinions easily. It is important for this level of students that the teachers choose easier articles.

Although they could not express their feelings smoothly or construct sentences logically, they still wrote of their feelings well enough to transmit their feelings known to the reader. This is the first

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step to think critically about something and then express their own feelings from the passage.

[The mediate level students]

The students tried to write one solid reason why they like manga and then support their statement with data. However, the students were unprepared to write these supporting details and connect them to their main idea. Therefore, instruction on how to construct their ideas logically was needed. In the next section, I will teach paragraph writing explicitly.

[The upper level students]

Most students could write their opinions and reasons, however, the contents must be developed with more concrete examples. They could divide their ideas into categories already, so I taught them to use the strategy, "taking notes", as one of the "creating structure for input and output" strategies. By the third article, they could write their opinions logically.

6.1.9. Speeches

I planned to have "speeches" as the final activity of the first term. This activity consisted of the four integrated skills. The students wrote their speech, read their peer's speech manuscript for peer feedback, practiced speaking and presented, and also listened to other's speeches.

This activity also used several strategies in conjunction. From the cognitive strategies, the students used "practicing" for their speech, "receiving and sending messages" for mutual understanding from the

speeches, and "creating structure for input and output" for brainstorming or mind maps to develop their ideas and divide them into categories. From the metacognitive strategies, the students practiced "centering your learning" for connecting previous knowledge into making their speech manuscripts, "arranging and planning your learning" to make the speech manuscript comprehensible to listeners, and "evaluating your learning" to reflect on their learning. From the social strategies, students utilized "asking questions" for confirming or getting new information, "cooperating with others" for peer feedback, and "empathizing with others" for an understanding of other's thoughts. Therefore, I think this activity was meaningful to English learning.

A speech is used as an act to communicate the feelings or the opinions of the speakers to an audience. Therefore, the content of the speech must be clearly understood by the listeners. Needless to say, the speech manuscript must be constructed logically. Through the instruction of paragraph writing, it was possible for the students to write their feelings or opinions. Furthermore, this activity forced the students to be conscious of their readers or listeners.

(1) Practice

I used four periods for this activity. The first period was for the instruction of paragraph writing and brainstorming for their speech topic. The second period was used for peer feedback and for mind maps. During the third period, students actually wrote their speech manuscript. Upon completion, I planned for the students to do peer feedback again. This time I made the students check each other's topic sentence, conjunctions or connecting words, and conclusion.

Finally, the fourth period was used for practicing their speech and presentation.

(A) Cohesion and coherence

At the beginning of this process, I prepared a lesson on paragraph cohesion and coherence. The students compared two Japanese compositions (Appendix VIII): one is coherent and the other is incoherent. By comparing the two, it was easy for them to understand cohesion and coherence. Therefore, I used an OHP to show them the two compositions. Then I explained about paragraph construction, topic sentences, supporting sentences, and the conclusion.

I had the students make comparisons about two Japanese compositions as to which was written more logically. I used Japanese compositions because it was simpler for the students to understand and easier to focus on the actual consistency of the content. One of them (B) was constructed logically and the other (A) was a composition written without consistency. The theme of the two compositions was the same, a student's memory of their junior high school life.

I showed the students the composition on the OHP for five minutes and let them decide which one was easier to understand the writer's intention. Five minutes later, I asked the students which one was clearly understandable. Except for one student, all students raised their hands that the second composition (B) was the more consistent composition. I asked the students why they thought (B) was more intelligible. One student reasoned that "(B) was easy to understand because there were the expressions "firstly", "secondly" and "lastly" before the sentences". Another student replied "the content was divided

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into three categories, like "a speech contest", "a student council leader", and "a school trip", and each had an explanation of the content so I understood it more easily." I questioned one student as to the reason he did not raise his hand and he said, "I could not choose easily." Overall, however, the students could easily decide which of the two compositions was more coherent.

(B) Paragraph

I then explained why the construction of composition (B) was considered more consistent. I used this lesson as an introduction of the methods used in constructing a coherent paragraph. The existence of a topic sentence, supporting sentences, and conclusion in each and every paragraph is important in intelligent English writing.

(C) Brainstorming

During the given brainstorming time, the students decided the theme of their speech. I handed the students a worksheet with four squares to write a theme and three main ideas. Under each square, there were spaces to write several concrete ideas for the main idea. The students had to write at least three main ideas and they were bound by the image map that I made (Appendix IV). The upper level students used this effectively, but the other students could not use it well. Therefore, I made another diagram and let them brainstorm and write ideas in Japanese about their topic (Appendix V). Some of the upper and medium level students could not write many ideas on their first attempt, however, two lower mediate students wrote more than fourteen ideas. The students' levels in English do not seem to correlate with the

amount of ideas.

I encouraged them to use peer feedback in order to develop their ideas. I asked the students to use a color pen to write their ideas on their peers' worksheet and exchange them with each other. They considered their peer's remarks and developed their ideas again.

(D) Mind maps

The students divided the ideas into three separate categories individually. Then they named each category by general terms. For lower mediate level students, I advised the students to rewrite the ideas in simple English as much as possible.

(E) Writing

They wrote their speech according to the order outlined by their categories. They used both a Japanese-English dictionary and an English-Japanese dictionary. The teachers (two JTEs and the ALT) answered the students' questions or corrected their grammatical mistakes. The teachers respected their willingness to write, therefore, the mistakes were only pointed out and left for the students to use the textbook or notebook to correct their own mistakes. However, for lower level students, the teachers took time to correct their writings and fixed every grammatical mistake.

(F) Peer feedback

After they finished writing their speech, I gave a check list to a student pair who then exchanged their speech manuscripts (Appendix IX). This pair check list had five items which allowed the students to

evaluate their partner's speech manuscript according to the items. Then they commented with some impressions about the general content of the speech.

(G) Teachers' feedback

I collected all speech manuscripts and once again corrected any mistakes. The ALT corrected the grammatical mistakes and I commented about the general content. I handed the manuscripts to the students and they rewrote them for a final presentation.

(2) Results from the speech manuscript

These are examples of speech manuscripts from a student at each level. These are the same students who were introduced at the beginning of this section in creative writing and news article. Under each manuscript, I wrote about some features of each level from my observation of the activity and its final outcome.

[The lower mediate level students]

Three students wrote about their hobbies, one student wrote about mascots, and two students wrote about their dreams. Most students wrote eight or nine sentences. The speeches all had a topic sentence and three main ideas, but some of the students could not write many supporting sentences. Only one student wrote a conclusion.

Student (X)

Hello, everyone. I like mascots. There are three reasons. First, they are very small. As they are very small, I can put them on various places. Second, they are very cute. If I put them on something, they look very nice. Third, I can put on many different things. I can choose the mascot. I have many mascots now. For the future, I want to collect different mascots.

Thank you for listening.

[The mediate level student]

The mediate level students wrote about their favorite animal, their hobby, global warming, western food, and school life. All students wrote more than ten sentences. They wrote a topic sentence, three or four main ideas, and supporting sentences. Three students wrote conclusions while two students did not write a conclusion.

Student (Y)

Hello, everyone. My theme is global warming. There are four reasons. First, CO_2 causes global warming. Global warming is influenced by factory's smoke and car's waste. Second, the temperature is happening around the world. And unusual weather is influencing the animals. Third, the ice is melting and polar bears are disappearing. Finally, desertification is beginning to happen. When desertification happens, animals disappear. Many animals are becoming extinct. When you go shopping, use an eco bag. This helps save the earth! Thank you for listening.

[The upper level student]

Two students wrote about their hobbies, one student wrote about wars, one student wrote about his/her favorite food, and one student wrote about "Japanese food". They all wrote a topic sentence and more than eleven sentences with one student writing twenty-one sentences. They wrote three or four main ideas and several supporting sentences. Three students added one or two sentences to further explain the topic sentence.

Student (z)

Hello, everyone. Let me tell you about wars. I think we must not begin wars. I have four reasons for it. First, nobody will be happy. Many people are sacrificed. And we are sad. Second, they cost a lot of money. For example, it costs a lot of money to make weapon and carry them. Third, the country doesn't get along with other countries. They are selfish. We have ill feeling toward them. Finally, we must cooperate with other countries. The world is having an economic problem now. I think we must stop wars, because the economic condition will become better. Thank you for

listening.

(3) Discussion

The students chose to write on a variety of topics. Some mediate and upper level students chose a theme on social and global problems. Perhaps this critical thinking was facilitated by the activity of news articles and their outlook was broadened. They demonstrated their approval or disapproval towards a problem and constructed their opinions logically.

As their level increased, the sentence amount also increased. All students could write more than eight or nine sentences. It can be said that they fostered their discourse abilities through a WBA quite effectively. Previously, they were unable to write cohesive, creative sentences in their diary, but now many students could formulate a logically constructed paragraph.

Speech is a mutual activity between speakers and listeners. In the content of the speech, it is natural that the speaker's intention needs to be well organized. The students need to apply this same logic to their writings when considering what to write. They must not only write their feelings but also clear main ideas and some supporting ideas. From this final speech-making activity, the students effectively developed their analyzing and thinking power.

6.1.9. Second Self-Introduction

To understand to what extent the students could now write coherent compositions, I planned to have the students write another self-introduction as they had done earlier in April. Every condition was

the same as the first time (the time limit was fifty minutes and they could use dictionaries). The method of assessment was the same as the previous time and again three teachers (two JTEs and one regular ALT) evaluated.

(1)   Results and discussion

Table6.9   **Comparison of the Self-Introduction Writing**

	C		G		AS	
	April	July	April	July	April	July
Upper	2.0	2.8	3.0	3.0	2.4	2.8
Mediate	1.0	2.5	2.0	2.5	1.4	2.5
Lower mediate	1.0	2.0	1.0	1.4	1.3	1.6

(n=16)

[Contents]

All levels of students show remarkable improvement in the general content of their writing. Like the table from April shows, there was not a large discrepancy in consistency between compositions of self-introduction in Japanese and in English. With instruction of paragraph writing, it was possible for all levels of students to write consistent compositions.

The mediate level students could also now use more conjunctions: "because", "but", "so", and "therefore". The lower mediate level students could now correctly use "and", "but", "so", and "because". Therefore, each sentence was connected well and the writings were coherent.

[Grammar]

Among the lower mediate students, the most common errors was the misspelling of nouns or the inappropriate use of a pronoun. Yet, on the other hand, mistakes in word order had decreased. Sometimes the misuse of a Japanese-English dictionary created some unsuitable expressions.

The mediate and lower mediate students advanced their grammar. Among mediate level students, most mistakes were in the improper use of conjunction and verbs. They usually wrote fairly simple sentences. Therefore, mistakes were not particularly jarring or noticeable.

The same can be said of upper level students' grammar as well. This time both the improper use of a preposition or an article was seen. This grammatical point can be evaluated by understanding the proper use of verbs, word order, and vocabulary. The students could, however, write complex, infinitive, passive voice, and comparative sentences, and make comparisons. These grammatical points have not yet been explicitly learned so this shows they tried to write an expression which fully expresses their thoughts. Some of their writings show a great power of expression for second grade students. Although there was not a vast improvement between April and July in the area of grammar, the overall quality of the composition improved.

[Sentence amount]

All levels of students increased their sentence amounts. It may be said that they learned many new vocabulary or expressions through a WBA. Besides new vocabulary, they could now use different collocations or sentences with gerunds and infinitives.

In lower mediate level students, the number of words in a sentence was relatively few, but they wrote enough sentences to properly introduce themselves. The mediate level students wrote sentences using five or six words in one sentence. Some of the students wrote more then eight words in a sentence. They also used several conjunctions, such as "when", "but", "because", and "so". The upper level students used many words in a single sentence. They used either conjunctions or collocations in sentences. They also wrote their opinions using the expressions, "I think that～ ".

[Dictionary Use]

From my observation of this class, the lower mediate level students only used a Japanese-English dictionary. This could be one of the reasons that the lower mediate students wrote some unsuitable sentences. They usually referred to their textbook or notebooks when they did not know how to create the sentence that they wanted. This behavior was seen only amongst the lower mediate level students.

The mediate students used a Japanese-English dictionary first and then some of them used an English-Japanese dictionary within fifteen minutes. Most students at this level wrote by themselves, did not ask questions to the teachers or their peers, and were completely absorbed in their writing. They did not write many advanced sentences, however, they tried to write as much and as clearly as they could.

All upper students use both an English-Japanese dictionary and a Japanese-English dictionary within five minutes after class begins. They first look for the word which they want to express using a Japanese-English dictionary and then they look for the same word using

an English-Japanese dictionary. Some of them wrote sentences using the examples given in the dictionary. I did not suggest they do so, therefore, they must have learned this skill by themselves through a WBA.

Dictionary use depends entirely on the student's preference, learning style, or confidence in their word choice. All students attempted to express clearly what they wanted to share using whatever strategy they felt comfortable with. This motivation and perseverance is evidence of autonomous learning.

6.2. Cooperative Learning

As I mentioned in the section about the characteristics of the participants in Chapter 5, according to the investigation on students' opinions of activities, two-thirds of the students like to learn with their classmates. However, through daily observation of the class or the contents from recent private consultations, most students do not always trust their friends' answers or advice. They have a tendency to try to solve the problem without communicating their difficulties. I think that most students enjoy learning with their classmates because they want to interact with others and trust their peers to give them what they honestly believe to be true. However, they also tend to distrust any answer that they are not absolutely positive is correct.

Language is an important medium of communication. Therefore, language learning is valuable to reinforce the interaction of students by using a target language. Monbukagakusho (2003) says in "Action Plan to Cultivate Japanese with English Abilities":

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It is important for teachers to establish many situations where students can communicate with each other in English and routinely conduct classes principally in English. Through such opportunities, learners can experience the fulfillment of expressing themselves and understanding others, and feel the joy of learning English.

Further, Littlewood (1981:1) asserts that CLT's main strength lay in the human growth of learners by cooperation with others. Thus, cooperative learning is irreplaceable to not only develop language skills but also to stimulate the learners' autonomous growth in society.

I practiced traditional Japanese stories, disaster planning, and speeches as classes which use the four integrated skills including cooperative learning. The former two of the three were group activities whereas the final speech is basically an individual activity with some peer feedback. I supported the use of social strategies (Oxford: 2002) in these activities and verified their progress by relating it to the five key elements that Jhonson and Jhonson (1999) and other researchers suggested. These five elements, positive interdependence, individual accountability, face to face interaction, social skills, and group processing, are especially beneficial in language learning.

Traditional Japanese stories were activities which encouraged and promoted group interaction. There was a designated group leader who was responsible for checking group progress, but beyond that, all members of the group needed to provide assistance and contribute to the final project. The leader was also responsible for encouraging the group, especially the lower level students. This "group processing" was beneficial to all students to promote socialization through language.

The work was divided amongst the members and all students'

input was required. Through cooperation, the students were able to each have a part in the finished product. This ability to work independently for part of a larger group is termed "positive independence". Each member of the group had a role to fulfill, whether it be as a leader or a follower. These are important skills to learn in any society and these "social skills" are a replication of those they will fulfill in real life.

The other group activities also encouraged group cooperation and interaction, especially those of "disaster planning" and "speeches". During "disaster planning", each student played a role, assisted others in determining what to bring, and felt a sense of closeness to members of their "family". When some students were chosen to be saved while others left behind, the ones saved would appeal for the captain to reconsider. The members felt a certain sense of responsibility towards each other because they had completed this activity as a group. The students' cooperation with one another was promoted through this activity. By making "speeches", the students participated in peer feedback. The students were stimulated by others' comments and provided helpful advice to one another. This positive interdependence is beneficial to encourage, dependent nature of language learning.

After these activities, I gave them a self-evaluation sheet to reflect on their learning.

1) What did you learn through cooperative learning?
[The upper level students]
      A: I asked about parts I could not understand and then shared that knowledge with the other students.
      B: I asked about parts I could not understand well.
      C: I asked other members about pronunciation.
      D: I looked into a dictionary and cooperated with others.

E: I consulted with the other members when I felt unsure of something.

[The mediate level students]

F: I discussed with the group members and we helped each other.

G: I listened to the opinions of others.

H: I asked when I could not understand something.

I : I asked about the difficult parts and taught them to others.

[The lower mediate level students]

J: I enjoyed practicing for the presentation with the group members.

K: When I did not understand, the other members helped me. I was happy then.

L: I cooperated with the other members. I was happy when I presented the story we created.

M: I did not do everything by myself, but I was able to finish my part. I thanked the other members.

All levels of students commented that they learned the importance of helping each other. They interacted positively with others and this promoted their success. Also, each student accomplished his/her own "individual accountabilities" and this experience reflects an autonomous attitude.

As I mentioned in Chapter 5, student C, student G, and student L are students who like individual work. However, they commented that they felt satisfaction in accomplishing an activity with cooperation. This shows they learned a valuable social skill to get along with others through cooperative learning.

2) Activity reflection

[The upper level students]

A: I learned many new words and their pronunciation. During the presentation, I wanted to express more of the character's voice, so I will try harder next time.

B: I may have troubled the other members because I made mistakes. I will

practice more next time.

C: I mispronounced some words. However, I did my best. Student A's voice was clear and he/she used gestures. I want to act like that next time.

D: I needed more practice time. If I had more time, I might have done better.

E: I did my best, but I could not express the character's feeling well.

[The mediate level students]

F: I did not make mistakes. However, I wanted to better express the character's feeling. So I will try harder next time.

G: I did my best. I wanted to empathize with the character.

H: I wanted to memorize all of my part. Student K expressed the feeling of the character to the listeners. It was great. So I would like to be like him/her.

I : I wanted to practice more.

[The lower mediate level students]

J: I wanted to express myself like student A because student A used many gestures and the tone of voice was easy to understand.

K: I enjoyed practicing and presenting. I felt relieved when I could play my part well.

L: I did very well, but I wanted to stress of more of the words to convey the emotions better.

M: I felt relieved when I was finished presenting. I reflected on my mistaken pronunciation.

Many of them wrote comments to show their willingness to try again. They reflected on their learning and discovered their biggest problem. They realized by themselves what to do next through cooperative learning. Thus, cooperative learning provided a valuable chance to the students to enhance their English skills as well as learner autonomy.

The students learned cooperation is not merely a dependency on others but a positive interaction to aid in their individual studies. These activities stimulated an autonomous attitude by interacting with

others and reflecting on themselves through cooperative learning.

6.3. Achievement Test Results

I adopted two achievement tests which were carried out on April 10th and August 26th. The first one was the NRT which I introduced in Chapter 3 and the later one is an investigation which was conducted for second year students in all public junior high schools in Japan. The purpose of this test is to grasp the aim of lessons or the learning conditions in order to improve instruction. NRT used a computer-scored answer sheet while the latter was multiple choice for listening, reading questions, and sequencing words. This achievement test also contained fill-in-the-blank questions and writing three sentences to answer a writing prompt.

One of the purposes of a WBA is to develop language skills. Therefore, I compared the percentages of correct answers from these two tests in the skills of listening, reading, and writing.

(1) Results

Table6.10 **The comparison of the achievement tests**

Number	Level	Speaking April	Listening April (%)	Listening August (%)		Reading April (%)	Reading August (%)		Writing April (%)	Writing August (%)	
1	LM	43	80	38	↓	27	25	↓	25	15	↓
2	LM	29	85	88	↑	67	75	↑	31	38	↑
3	LM	38	75	38	↓	47	50	↑	44	46	↑
4	LM	67	75	38	↓	47	25	↓	44	23	↓
5	LM	62	90	63	↓	53	100	↑	63	38	↓
6	LM	48	80	88	↑	60	63	↑	44	46	↑
7	M	90	85	100	↑	60	88	↑	63	77	↑

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8	M	71	95	75	↓	87	100	↑	94	100	↑
9	M	76	90	88	↓	87	100	↑	88	85	↓
10	M	86	90	100	↑	73	75	↑	75	100	↑
11	M	81	85	100	↑	80	75	↓	81	100	↑
12	U	95	95	88	↓	93	88	↓	88	100	↑
13	U	100	90	88	↓	93	100	↑	94	100	↑
14	U	90	85	100	↑	87	100	↑	88	100	↑
15	U	95	95	100	↑	100	100	−	75	100	↑
16	U	95	90	100	↑	80	100	↑	81	100	↑
Mean		72.9	87.5	81.0	↓	71.3	79.0	↑	67.4	73.0	↑
Mean (Prefecture)				75.4				73.6			49.7	

(n=16)

[Positive points]

○ Half of the students scored perfect percentages in writing, seven students in reading, and six students in listening.

○ Three mediate level students scored perfect percentages in two skills

○ One lower mediate level student scored a perfect percentage in reading skill.

[Negative points]

● Some lower mediate level students did not improve in listening.

● The average percentage of correct answers in listening decreased.

(2) Discussion

While the results are subject to interpretation due to the differing content and difficulty level of the two tests, I believe a WBA was effective in developing reading and writing skills.

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To elaborate further, in the writing section, some questions on grammar competence are included. For example, there were some questions that asked the students to "arrange the words in parentheses and make a sentence in the correct word order". In the reading section, some questions on speaking are included. For example, there is one parenthesis in a dialogue and students are asked to choose a suitable answer from the four choices. The choices are all conversational style. This is not a true speaking test but contained questions based on English conversations.

The results of the achievement test and through my own observations of the class and the students' assignments provide evidence that a WBA is an effective method for learning English. The approach seems to have a positive correlation to speaking and grammar competence as well as writing. Writing is arguably one of the most difficult skills to master yet perhaps the students' confidence in this skill led to a proficiency in the other skills as well. Regardless, it seems to be true that a WBA does provide students one method to reach communicative competence along with a higher appreciation for learner autonomy.

CHAPTER 7   CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the answers to the raised research questions and discusses the findings. Moreover, I consider some implications for further study in lower secondary schools in Japan.

7.1. Summary of Findings

The answers to the research questions are as follows:

(1) To what extent can a WBA develop the students' English language skills?

The students improved their grammatical competence, vocabularies, presentation skills, and the four main skills. I verified this result by analyzing the quantitative and qualitative data of their writings, presentations, reflections, and tests.

Continuous daily writings assignments, as the foundations for paragraph writing, allowed the students to improve their grammatical competence. After continuous feedback from the teachers, the students revised their original writings many times. This was effective training, especially for the students at the mediate and lower mediate level. They repeated the same mistakes in their writings, but later, they could notice these mistakes by themselves and endeavored to correct them. As the assignments connected past and present learning, these assignments allowed the students to use their knowledge in a practical application of English.

The students improved their vocabulary building. By comparing the first diary with the speech manuscript, the students' vocabulary remarkably increased. They learned to effectively use both a

Japanese-English dictionary and an English-Japanese dictionary, not only for their homework but also for the activities in class. The task of making traditional Japanese stories was especially effective for the students because they learned a variety of conjunctions, pronouns, passive voices, and even collocations. Despite continuous feedback, at first, they could not use conjunctions effectively in their diaries. However, after several assignments, they could use them correctly in their creative stories.

Pronunciation was difficult for the students to improve over this short amount of time. The students did comment that they were satisfied with their presentations because the stories were made by themselves, however. They understood the contents of the story so they felt they could express their feelings well in their presentations. Therefore, while some students did not necessary improve in pronunciation, their self-confidence in their presentation and inherently in their overall performance ability increased.

According to the results of the achievement test, I found that most students improved in three skills: listening, reading, and writing. They especially improved in their reading and writing skills. In the second proficiency test, fifty percent of the students received perfect scores in writing, forty-four percent got perfect results in reading, and thirty-eight percent in listening. It is difficult to emphatically declare that they received perfect scores due only to an increased level of English proficiency, however; it could be that the second test was simply easier than the first.

After the test, some of the students claimed that they felt it was easier to write something in English than at the beginning of the term. I

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think that their negative attitudes toward writing had improved and their test results supported this theory. Regardless of the fact that there could be other factors for their improved skills, the scores clearly seem to indicate that a WBA was an effective method for English instruction.

Finally, by gradually becoming familiar and accustomed to paragraph writing, the students learned how to make a coherent story and other written works. Appropriate scaffolding based on skill level is necessary to assist all students. In this way, all students can create interesting, logical stories. The chronological order of what the students create is also something to consider. The upper group of students believed diary writing was too easy so it may have been better for them to begin from creative writing. Most of the students' speeches clearly contained their feelings, creativity, imagination, opinions, and reasons. These elements deepened the content of their speeches. They contemplated how to best express themselves, analyzed the content, and wrote with their target audience in mind. Their written and oral final presentations allowed the students to devote themselves to their own learning.

(2) To what extent can a WBA develop students' autonomy in language learning?

Cooperative learning, based on a WBA, provided the motivation and intellectual stimulation to succeed and reflect on their own learning. Judging from the students' self-evaluations, most students hoped to succeed in English for their present and for their future. They learned several beneficial points through accomplishing a task with other group members. Also, they interacted with each other through

their writing activities and learned from others' writings or presentations. They promoted their autonomous learning by sharing the same goal with one student and interacting in cooperative group work.

Reflection and review is essential to language progress and the English files the students kept provided this intellectual stimulation. One file was for daily writing assignments and the other was for worksheets used in class or English newspapers. When considering what to write, many students would use these files to reflect on their learning process.

The students came to understand that a variety of methods of individual learning exist. Most of the students willingly and frequently used a Japanese-English dictionary and an English-Japanese dictionary. In addition, some students used the Internet or newspapers to compile ideas for use in class or home assignments. Two lower level students came to the teachers' room and copied some interesting newspaper articles for their assignments. One method is not better than another, simply different, and the more methods the students can employ, the higher and possibility for learner success.

The students developed an appreciation for autonomous learning and the benefits to be reaped from going beyond the minimum requirements asked of them. According to the students' comments on their preparation for English class, they changed their method of studying from copying sentences from the textbook to making their own English sentences using new words. The students felt it would be more advantageous for their language learning to challenge themselves with those activities. One student at the lower mediate level began to practice writing words as well as reading. Also, another student from

the lower mediate level finished doing their assignments within three days from the beginning of summer vacation. These were the students who had previously stopped writing creative stories, but they found their own way to study English autonomously. All students integrated some level of autonomy into their language studies.

More students expressed an interest in language learning outside of class, both in extracurricular activities and in the academic proficiency examinations. The students who tried to take the English proficiency test, "STEP", increased in number. Only one student took the test in June whereas three students took the test in October and five more students in January. Of these five students, one student was from the lower mediate level. The students who participated in the English speech contests also multiplied. They practiced their pronunciation after lunch in the English room every day and enthusiastically studied their speech.

Finally, I noticed that most students increased their use of a variety of learning strategies (Appendix XIII). For instance, the students who used metacognitive strategies rose to almost 60%, although 30% still reported never using them. An effective use of metacognitive strategies can foster autonomous learning and many students' autonomous behavior can be increased. Thus, I helped to make use of metacognitive strategies more effectively through a WBA. Students gradually recognized the importance of learning strategies to develop their autonomy. The number of students who used social strategies also increased. They learned the importance of interacting with others through a WBA. They cooperated positively, not only to accomplish their task but also to support their own accountability for

their learning. The desire to succeed and prove useful to their peers was a positive motivator for autonomous learning.

7.2. Implications for Further Research

In order to develop a WBA in other lower secondary school classrooms, I would like to discuss future implications for further research.

(1) Methodological implications

While I analyzed a variety of qualitative and quantitative data in this thesis, the number of participants was relatively small. Small class sizes are beneficial in providing detailed results; however, fewer participants may also have skewed the results. In further research, I would like to involve more students and teachers in my study for validity and reliability.

Student group or level designations is subject to interpretation and change. I divided the students into three levels: upper, mediate, and lower mediate. However, these three divisions were based on the result of the NRT. Therefore, the three different levels were not composed of only the students' writing ability. Divisions into three levels based solely on writing ability is perhaps the most accurate way to categorize the students if using a WBA. This way improvements can be analyzed based only on writing ability and not influenced by the other skills. The division into particular groups for group activities is important to consider as well. We teachers need to carefully decide how to make pairs in the classroom. It is important for teachers to promote group dynamics as effectively as possible.

I adopted continuous feedback for the students' assignments and this proved to be very effective for them. However, if a teacher has many students, it will take considerable time to efficiently and effectively explain and discuss student errors. I think that appropriate use of peer feedback is one solution for this problem. With peer feedback, students are more conscious of self-evaluation, and peer evaluation. Their purpose for writing and their target audience will become more clear and the organization of writing will be more persuasive. However, in order to make peer feedback more effective, training on how to provide constructive feedback is needed and the questions on the feedback sheet should be explained so that students at all levels can carry them out.

(2) Pedagogical implications

When I compared the students' Japanese compositions with their English compositions, there were considerable differences in the content level. The contents of their English compositions were fairly immature by contrast. The students lack a complex lexicon, grammar, and discourse competence. By comparison, their Japanese compositions were rather rich in content but not always logical in organization. I think the instruction of paragraph writing was an effective way to combat this problem. Using this method, and due to the inherent simplicity of the paragraph, the students were able to write about a variety of topics. They thought about their theme, appropriate information, and proper paragraph construction. They activated their creativity and critical thinking.

They also supplemented their own knowledge with that from

dictionaries, the internet, and newspaper articles to provide support for their written works. Prior to these activities, most reading material and writing examples came from the textbook. However, the textbook is written in a conversational style and is not always suitable for more serious writing. Currently, in order to actively engage the students' creativity, many supplemental materials are needed for a writing-based approach to effectively promote creative thought. Future textbooks should contain more varieties of written compositions, from short news articles to creative stories. Students need to be exposed to many examples of written works to provide examples which they can use to logically construct their own works. In order to implement paragraph writing in the daily classroom, teachers need to provide supplemental instructional materials. By creating coherent stories and speeches, students can promote their language skills and positive attitudes towards learning English.

For further research, I would like to promote my professional competence and autonomy as a reflective practitioner and researcher. My own knowledge can be a strength for my students and provide a good example along with supplying the opportunity they need to focus on their own learning processes as autonomous learners.

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APPENDIX I
Methods of learning strategies

{Direct Strategies}

Ⅰ.Memory strategies
- A. Creating mental linkage
- B. Applying Image and sounds
- C. Reviewing well
- D. Employing Action

Ⅱ.Cognitive strategies
- A. Practicing
- B. Receiving and sending messages
- C. Analyzing and Reasoning
- D. Creating Structure for Input and output

Ⅲ.Compensation
- A. Guessing intelligently
- B. Overcoming limitations in speaking and writing

{Indirect Strategies}

Ⅰ. Metacognitive strategies
- A. Centering your learning
- B. Arranging and planning your learning
- C. Evaluating your learning

Ⅱ. Affective strategies
- A. Lowering your anxiety
- B. Encouraging yourself
- C. Taking your emotional temperature

Ⅲ.Social strategies
- A. Asking questions
- B. Cooperating with others
- C. Empathizing with others

APPENDIX II

Name _____

Part I **From the following, please circle one activity that you enjoy and place an X next to the one you do not enjoy. Please explain your choices.**

1) **Speaking**

   a   Speech presentations
   b   Dialogue presentations
   c   Talking to your classmates
   d   Talking to the ALT or JTE
   e   Singing English songs

Reason

2) **Listening**

   a   Listening to classmate's speech or dialogue
   b   Listening to the content of textbook with CD
   c   Listening to the ALT or JTE
   d   Listening to English songs

Reason

3) **Writing**

   a   Writing speeches
   b   Writing textbook sentences
   c   Writing diaries
   d   Writing short stories
   e   Practicing writing vocabulary

Reason

4) **Reading**

   a   Reading the writing of your classmates
   b   Reading the textbook
   c   Reading other stories

Reason

Part 2

1 What is the most difficult skill in English?

2 When do you feel the happiest in English class?

3 What competence do you hope to acquire in English class?

4 What themes do you like to write?

5 What do you do to prepare for the next class?

6 What do you do in your previous study?

7 What do you do as review for English?

8 Which do you like better, group activities or individual activities?

9 Please tell me the reason (in response to Question 8)

APPENDIX III

Name _____

○ **Please choose the following learning strategies you use when studying English. Mark the number from 1 to 5 (1 meaning you never use it and 5 meaning you always use it)**

A Memory strategies	
① I use flashcards to remember words.	
② I listen to CDs, the radio, TV, DVDs to learn words.	
③ To study words, I make lists.	
④ I study thinking of synonyms, antonyms, or related English words.	

B Cognitive strategies	
① I practice pronunciations by repeating words.	
② I practice the textbook aloud.	
③ I read aloud the new grammar sentence.	
④ I make use of expressions positively.	
⑤ I read sentences by thinking of the meaning.	
⑥ When I encounter unknown words, I guess the meaning of the sentence based content.	
⑦ When I encounter unknown sentences, I ask someone who knows or look into a reference book.	
⑧ I translate the main sentences into Japanese.	
⑨ I mark the expressions that I want to learn when I listen or read.	
⑩ I listen and take notes when I listen or read.	
⑪ I summarize the sentences of the textbook.	
⑫ After I understand the content from the text or through listening, I practice saying the content.	
⑬ After I understand the content from the text or through listening, I write the contents.	

C Compensation strategies	
① I try to understand by pictures, figures, or headlines when I listen or read.	
② I try to convey the things when I want to say or write.	
③ I try to use gestures when I can't express my intent.	

D	Metacognitive strategies	
① I study with my objective for learning English in mind.		
② I study with knowing what competence I want to acquire.		
③ I schedule time to study and plan how I will study.		
④ I make chance to listen or read English.		
⑤ I study to score well on the Eiken exam.		

E	Affective strategies	
① I talk to teachers or others about the feeling of English study.		
② Rewards encourage me to study harder. Praise from the teachers or rewarding myself for a good job make me want to try hard.		
③ Use English music to have a relaxing study time.		
④ To study English, I enjoy movies or the appreciation of music.		

F	Social strategies	
① I ask teachers or others when I don't understand.		
② I sometimes study together with others.		
③ I try to understand the life or culture of English-speaking countries.		
④ I try to understand the feelings or opinions of my classmates.		

APPENDIX IV

Name　_____

①テーマを決める（**Theme**）

（枠）

②イメージマップで自分の言いたいことを整理する
(Arrange your ideas using image map)

main idea 1

main idea 2

テーマ（**Theme**）

main idea 3

main idea 4

Example

テーマ(Theme)　**私の将来の夢**(My future dream)

main idea 1

世界中に行ける
travel around the world
・**いろいろな人と知り合いになる**
meet many people
・**様々な文化を知る**
understand different cultures

テーマ
私の将来の夢は外交官になることです
I want to be a diplomat.

main idea 2

社会に貢献できる
contribute to society
・**平和な社会**
a peaceful society
・**コミュニケーションの大切さ**
importance of communication

main idea 3

英語を生かせる
make use of English
・**自分の得意なことを生かせる**
make use of my talent

main idea 4

安定した収入
stable salary
・**お金は大切**
money is important
・**趣味を生かした生活**
make use of my hobbies

APPENDIX V

1 Brain storming

(1)From _____ (2)From _____

2 Mind map

Theme

Ideas by Category

Supporting

Conclusion

APPENDIX VI

イメージマップに従い英文を組み立てる　　Name _____

Construct your ideas and make an outline

For Example

こんにちは、みなさん（Hello, everyone）

テーマ**(Theme)**→私の将来の夢は外交官になることです。

I want to be a diplomat in the future.

その理由は四つあります。

T have four reasons.

メインアイディア１**(Main idea 1)**→第一に世界中にいけるからです。

First, I can travel around the world.

そこで世界のいろいろな人と知り合いになることができます。

I can meet many people.

またその国の様々な文化を知ることができます。

I can also understand many cultures.

メインアイディア２**(Main idea 2)**→第二に社会に貢献できます。

Second, I can contribute to society.

世界では様々な国が未だに戦争しています。

In the world, some countries are still fighting.

平和な社会を作るためにも誤解のないコミュニケーションは大切です

So communication is important for a peaceful society.

メインアイディア３**(Main idea 3)**→第三に英語を生かせるからです。

Third, I can make use of English.

自分の得意なことを生かした仕事をしたいと思います。

I am good at English and I think I can make use of my talent.

メインアイディア４**(Main idea 4)**→最後に給料が高いことです。

Finally, I will make a good salary.

満足した生活を送るためにはお金は大切です。

Money is important to live happily.

私には趣味がたくさんあるので、お金はかかせません。

I have a lot of hobbies, so I need money.

結論又は将来の展望　(Conclusion or hope for the future)

外交官になるにはとても難しい試験を受けなければならないです。

I must take a very difficult test to be a diplomat.

でも頑張ります。

But I will do my best.

最後の挨拶 (Final greeting)

聞いてくれてありがとう。

Thank you for listening.

APPENDIX VII

① アウトラインに従って英文を作成する　　　<u>Name</u>

Write in English according to your outline

※　①できるだけ習った単語を使う。
　　　　use words you have already learned
　　②長い文は短く切ったり、簡単な表現に変えてみる。
　　　　cut longer sentnces or change to easy expressions
　　③辞典を使って検討する。
　　　　use dictionaries and think
　　④どうしてもわからない場合は先生にたずねる。
　　　　ask teachers if you need help
　　⑤ペアやグループでチェックし合い、コメントをもらう。
　　　　peer feedback
　　⑥作成したら先生にチェックを受け、間違っているところを訂正する。
　　　　after that, check with teachers and correct your writing
　　⑦発表の練習をする。
　　　　practice your presentation

APPENDIX VIII

Japanese Compositions

(A)

I remembered when I got the second prize in the prefectual speech contest. I had considered the content of the speech and practiced pronunciation since April. I practiced hard after school every day. I had a very hard time. However, I was pleased to take part in the speech contest. I was a leader of the student council. I was busy with planning for the school festival and I had to practice for the speech contest at the same time. I could do this because my friends helped me. I went to Tokyo Disney Land for a school trip. I watched a parade with my friends. I experienced some attractions there. It was very interesting. We got lost but were relieved when we finally found our destination.

> 　私の中学校での思い出と言えば、「スピーチコンテスト」に出場し、県大会で２位になったことです。１学期から作文の内容を考えたり発音の練習をしたりしました。放課後や休日も一生懸命頑張ってきました。苦しいときもありました。全国大会にも出場できて嬉しかったです。私は生徒会長もやりました。スピーチの練習と学校祭の企画や運営が重なり苦しい時もありました。仲間の協力のおかげで無事やり終えました。修学旅行でデイズニーランドに行きました。友達と一緒にパレードを見ました。いろいろなアトラクションも体験しました。とても楽しかったです。自主研修も楽しかったです。迷いながら目的地に着いたときはほっとしました。

(B)

I have three wonderful memories from my junior high school. First, I took part in the speech contest. I had practiced pronunciation every after school and on holidays. It was very difficult to write a composition in English, but I got the second prize because of my effort. Second, I became a student council leader. I had to plan and conduct for the school festival but I could not do enough because of the practice for the national speech contest. However, my friends helped me a lot so I accomplished my task. Third, I could not forget my school trip. I went to Tokyo Disney Land and spent time with my friends. I watched a beautiful parade and experienced some attractions with my friends. We lost our way finally but we found the destination. It was fun. These are my best memories of my junior high school life.

> わたしが中学校で思い出に残っていることは３つあります。第１にスピーチコンテストに出場したことです。私は１学期から放課後や休日を利用して発音の練習をしてきました。英語で作文を書くのは大変でしたが、その努力が実り、県大会では２位、そして全国大会にも出場することができました。第２に生徒会長を務めたことです。学校の様々な行事での企画や運営の中心とならなければいけないのに、スピーチの練習と重なってみんなに迷惑をかけました。でも仲間の協力のおかげで行事を成功させることができました。最後は「修学旅行」のことです。特にデイズニーランドや自主研修が思い出に残っています。ディニーランドではパレードを見たり、アトラクションを体験したりすることができました。また自主研修では迷いながらも目的地に着き楽しく研修できました。以上の３つが私の中学校の大切な思い出として心に残っています。

Appendix IX

Name＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿＿

Pair Check Lists

		Check items
1		Is there a main idea?
2		Do the supporting sentences develop the main idea? How many are there? (　　　)
3		Are the given reasons logical?
4		Are there any conjunctions?　How many? (　　　)
5		Is there a conclusion?

Impression

From＿＿＿＿＿

Comments(ALT)

Comments(JTE)

APPENDIX X

Traditional Japanese Stories

The Crane Woman

Princess Kaguya

The Child Statues With Bamboo Hats
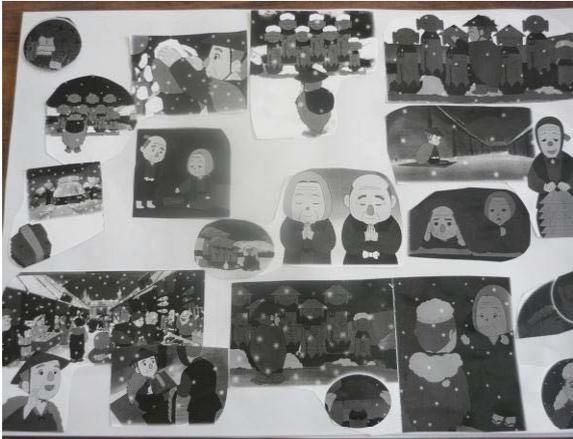
Urashima Taro
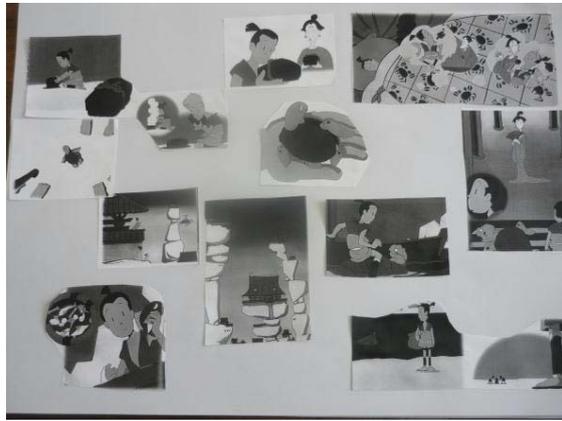
APPENDIX XI

Disaster Planning

All students are taking a trip on a small boat.
Suddenly, disaster strikes! Your boat is sinking.
But luckily a big ship comes and Captain Alison will save
you. But you can only take one item with you and you must
use this to pay for your rescue. What will you take and why?

Please choose one item to bring and write the reason why you
will bring it. You may choose from the examples or create your
own item. And remember...........if your reason is not good, then
the Captain won't save you!

APPENDIX XII

Comparison of students' opinion of activities

1) Speaking

Likes

Dislikes

(n=16)

2) Listening

Likes

Dislikes

(n=16)

3) Writing

Likes

Dislikes

(n=16)

4) Reading

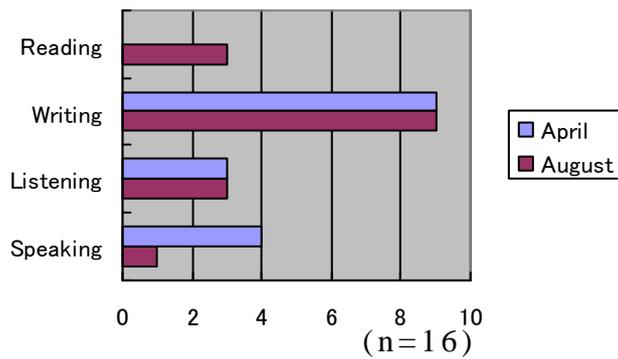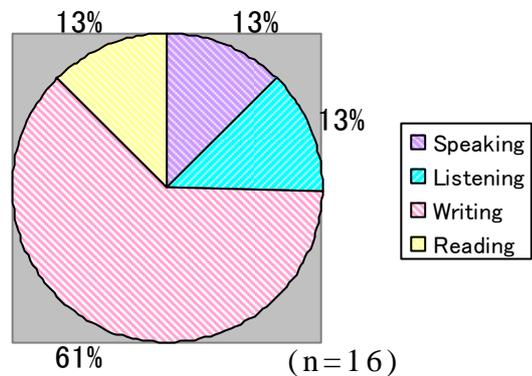### Likes

Dislikes

(n=16)

140
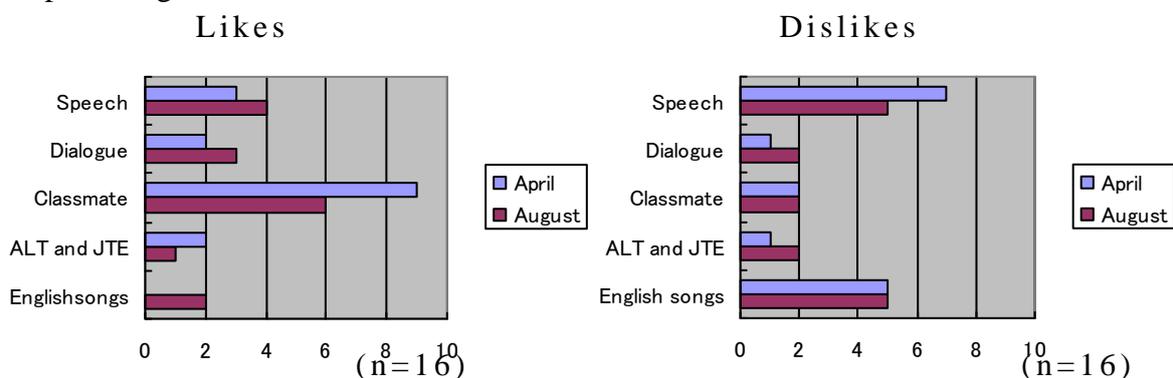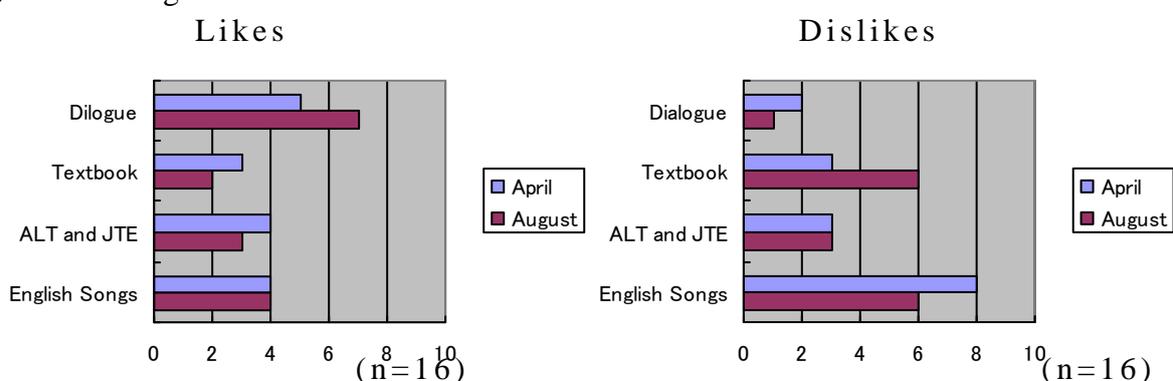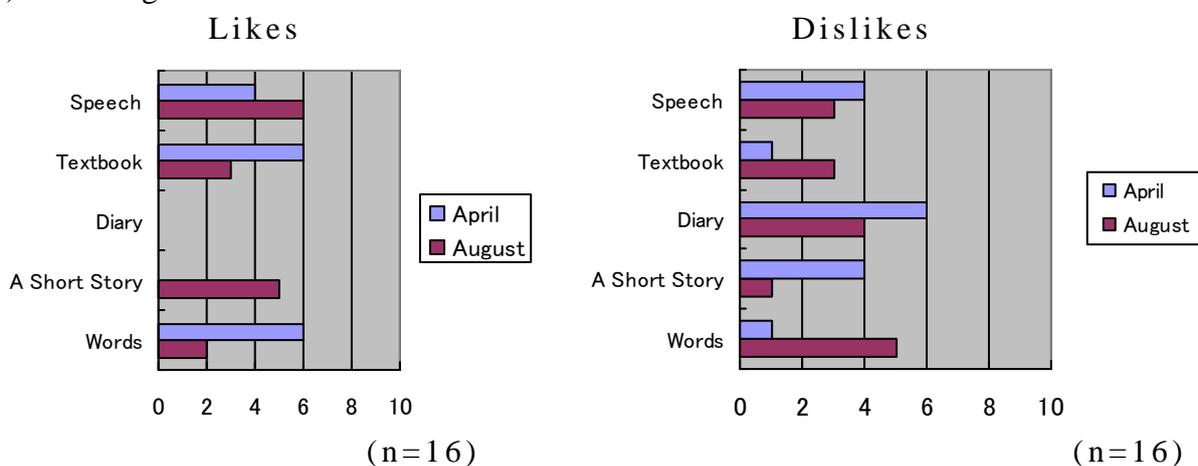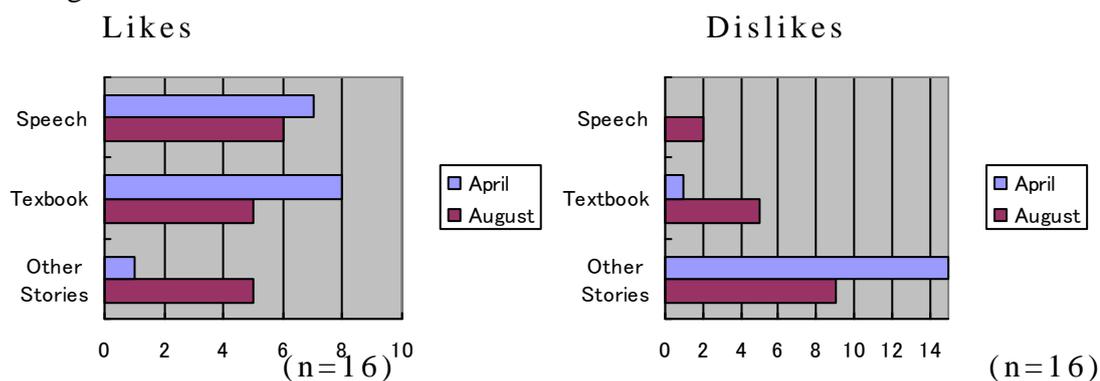
5) The most difficult activities in the English classroom

(n＝16)
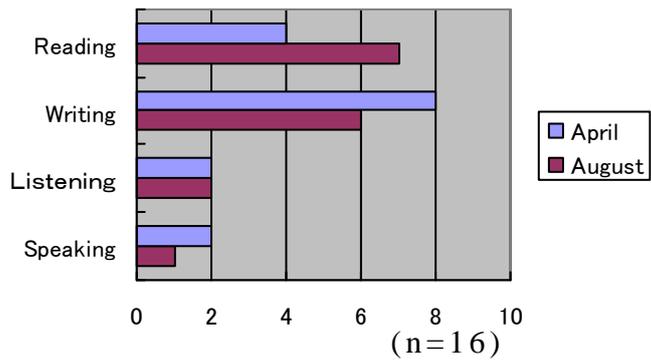
6) The students' hope to master English
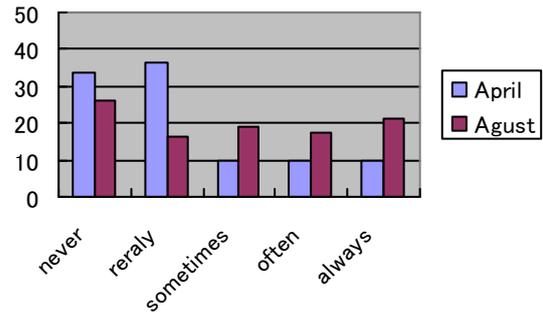

(n＝16)

7) Students' most competent acquired skill

(n＝16)
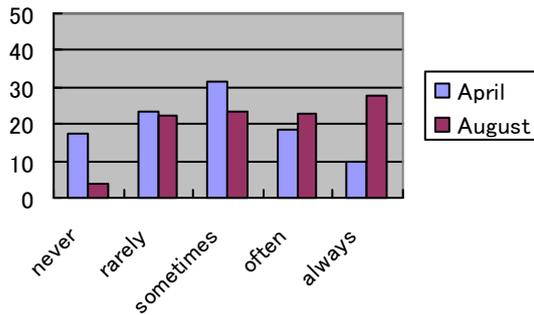
APPENDIX XIII

Comparison of strategy use among students
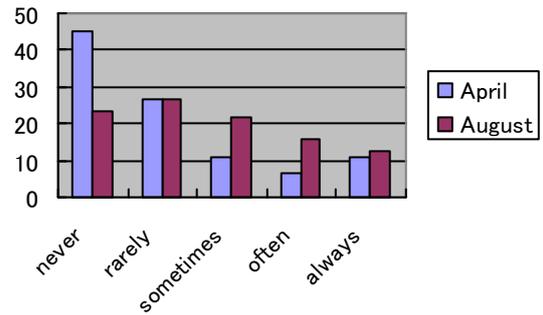
Memory Strategies
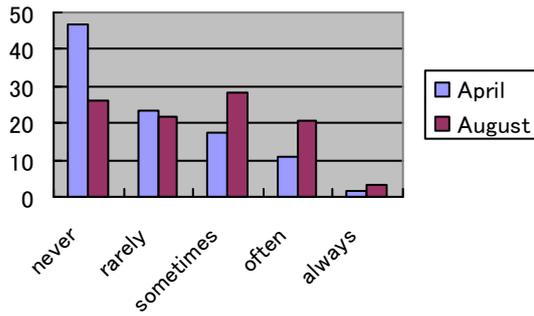
Metacognitive Strategies
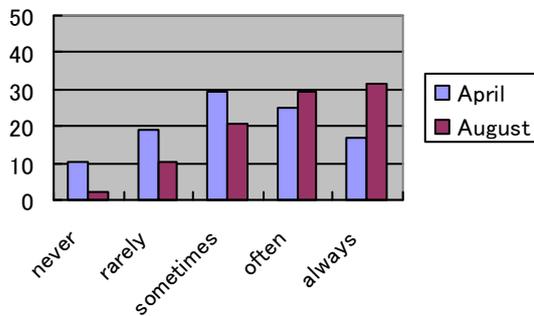

Cognitive Strategies
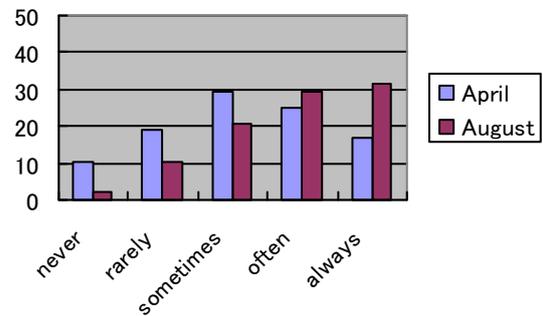

Affective Strategies

Compensation Strategies

Social Strategies

142

English Newspaper

June the 8th Monday   No.6   From Ms Miyamoto

Japanese Old Stories

　マーサ先生が先週来校し、日本の昔話を皆さんから教えてもらい、大変喜んで帰られました。

　絵を手がかりに短くまとめ、英文を作成して発表する活動は、時間も足りなかったせいもあり、大変だったと思います。しかし、皆さんの一生懸命な取り組みで立派な発表を聞くことができました。

　グループ学習では自分だけの意見だけでなく、相手の意見から学んだり、自分がわからないことを相手に教えてもらったり、お互いに検討し合ってよりよいものを作り上げていくことができましたね。

　皆さんのグループでの学習を見ていて、リーダーがまずしっかりリードして活動を進めていること、またグループのみんなもきちんと自分の役割を果たしていることがわかり、大変うれしかったです。

The Crane Woman

Princess Kaguya

The Child Statues With Bamboo Hats

Ms Martha is introducing the American old story'" Goldilocks and the Three Bears".

English Newspaper

June the 10th Wednesday   No.8   From Ms Miyamoto

発表終了!!!

　昔話の発表が月曜日に終了しました。とても短い練習時間であれだけ発表できるのはさすがに２年生です。

　Ｘ君の感情の表し方、Ｙ君のジェスチャー、Ｚ君の声の大きさ、Ａさん、Ｂさんの発音の良さ、Ｃさん、Ｄさんのスピード、Ｅさんの発音や伝わるようにしっかり読んでいたこと、Ｆ君が一生懸命だったことなどを書いてくれた人が多かったです。その他にもたくさんがんばってくれた人がいて本当にうれしいです。

　今回は"浦島太郎"です。

Once upon a time, there was a man named Urashima Taro.
He helped <u>a turtle</u> that <u>was bullied</u> by some children.
　　　　　かめ　　　　　いじめられていた
And then he went into <u>a castle</u> with the turtle.
　　　　　　　　　　城

He saw Otohime there.
"Thank you for helping the turtle <u>a little while ago</u>," she said.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　少し前
Then he enjoyed drinking, eating, and singing every day.
But he was tired of life there, so he <u>decided to go back</u>.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　　家にもどることにした
Otohime <u>handed</u> a <u>treasure box</u> to him.
　　　　手渡した　玉手箱
"Don't open a treasure box." Otohime said.
<u>When he reached his home, he opened the box.</u>（現在学習中）
　家に着いたとき、彼は箱を開けた。
White smoke came out from <u>inside</u> the box.
　　　　　　　　　　　　　中
He <u>was covered with</u> white smoke and became an old man.
　　おおわれた

English Newspaper

June the 12th Friday   No. 10   From Ms Miyamoto

Creative Writing!!

Title   The Future!

He looked at himself in the mirror. There saw his future.
He lived in the forest. He asked his friend. <u>But</u> his friend didn't listen to him and
the was alone.
<u>Ten years later, he would become alone, according to the mirror.</u>   By M

☆最初の一文から引きつけられました。鏡で自分の未来が映し出されたと
あります。ミステリアスですね。二重線の部分の表現、１０年後はこの
間習った表現をさっそく使っていますね。

Title   Where is the way out?

Tom lost his way in the forest. He *was looking for* a way out, but he couldn'tt
find it. <u>Then</u> he saw a man in the river. "I'm sorry, where is a way out?" "Go that
way, please." "Thank you. Good bye." "I wish you have a good luck."
                                                    By F

☆今習っている過去進行形を使っています。また look for （探す）の表現
や接続詞も自在に使っていますね。

Title   A Chance Meeting

This is Taro. He lost his way in the forest.
He found someone in the lake.
Taro said, "What are you doing? "
The person said," I am Jiro. I lived here for ten years. I am catching fish."
Taro said, "I see. Do your best. "
Taro went back home.   By A

☆話の流れがとても自然です。また今までに習った表現をきちんと使っ
ています。

Title   The man who settled down in the marsh

His name is Jim. He went to a marsh. <u>Then</u> a weird young man came out
of the marsh suddenly.
He said, "Help me!! I'll curseif you don't help me. "
Jim heard it fearfully. "What's up?"
He said, "I quarrelled with my wife, and it has been sent my house. Are you
please wrong in place of me? <u>Otherwise</u> I can't meet my wife as it is! "
Jim said, "I'm sorry, <u>but</u> I dislike troublesome things. "
He said, "Oh,no. "Jim said, "See you !!! "I heard it latter, <u>but</u> seemed
to have settled down in the marsh.
                                                    By K

☆相変わらず大作です。中学校で習うほとんどの文法事項が既に入って
います。本当に怖い奥さんなのですね！

English Newspaper

July the 21th Tuesday   No.22   From Ms Miyamoto

Speech

　７月１４日に１５名のスピーチ発表が終わりました。イメージマップから自分のアイディアを練り、英文を構成し、発表の練習をして本番もよくがんばってくれました。また、突然の大学生の参観もあり、びっくりしたと思いますが、緊張も見られず、いつも通りの発表ができたと思います。

N spoke about his dream.

W talked about his future.

Student A spoke about school.

Student B spoke about his hobby.

Student C spoke about Japanese food.

Student D spoke about baseball.

Student E spoke about wars.

Student F spoke about her dream.

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Chikako Miyamoto

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