

英語読解におけるライティングの役割について — EAP の観点から

大東 真理

The role of writing in an EAP reading course

DAITO Mari

要旨 (Abstract)

今日、大学においては教育改革の名のもとにカリキュラム改革が進められ、実用目的の英語を内容とする科目が各大学の教育課程に登場している。一方、基礎的な英語の力を養うためのリーディングやライティングをおろそかにしてよいはずはなく、特に 1、2 年次の基礎教育においては実際にこれらの技能を中心としたカリキュラム編成を行っている大学が多い。

そこで本稿では、大学の専門教育につながる学術目的の英語 (EAP) への準備段階となる、また、中・高の英語教育ともつながりを持つ英語学習について考察した。読解の授業の中でリーディングとライティングを相互に関連させた活動を行い、相互にどのような結果を生み出すか、そしてより効果的な学習環境を実現するためにはどのような課題に取り組む必要があるかということについて考察した。

1. Introduction

The teaching of English in Japanese universities involves both common and specific issues of TESOL. When we look into the general foreign

language curriculum currently adopted in major universities, the courses are categorized by the four language skills: reading, writing, listening, and speaking. This aligns to the English courses students are required to take during their secondary education. Apparently, the university curriculum aims to create some kind of link or consistency between secondary and tertiary language education for the benefit of students as well as for the smooth transition from entrance exam-oriented learning to EAP (English for Academic Purposes). However, given the drastic change in learning context after they enter their specific academic disciplines, issues other than coordination should necessarily be taken into consideration when we set out to design common core English courses even for their first and second academic years. The present article will thus focus on an aspect arising from these issues, i.e., connection of language skills in course planning and development of language awareness on the part of learners. This will be followed by a case of task-based instruction that integrates reading-to-write activities for the classroom.

2. Background

As many professionals note, the primary goal of EAP programs should be to prepare students for the demands required of them in subject-matter classrooms. One of the challenges of course design is to recognize the level of language proficiency, and to grasp the diversified motivation and learning strategies on the part of students enrolled. Another is to decide what kind of skills or elements would, or should play a bridging role to the more advanced, or the more discipline specific studies, and integrate them into the entry level courses in advance.

2.1 Connection of skills

There is a body of research on reading and writing interrelations. Among the more recent studies is Grabe's (2001) review of reading-writing literature in *Linking Literacies* where constructions central to the field of reading-writing connections are provided (cited from Hirvela, 2004: 27):

- L1/L2 literacy transfer.
- The role of "wide" or extensive reading in developing reading and writing knowledge.
- EAP
- The roles of summarizing, using text models, note taking, outlining, and using graphic organizers in reading and writing instruction (p.35).
- New approaches to curriculum development and their implications for reading-writing instruction (e.g., task-based and content-based instruction).
- The role of talk and discussion in the development of literacy abilities (p.36).

The present study focuses on language-using activity that features the role of summarizing and task-based instruction.

3. Application of task-based instruction in a reading classroom

In the following, an account will be made of a classroom activity which serves as a case of reading-for-writing instruction. The aim of its

application was to have students experience reading with a purpose. The students are all freshmen at a Japanese university and are majoring in Humanities. The university has started a new curriculum of compulsory English applicable to all faculties excluding English majors.

3.1 Teaching situation

The curriculum and the course

The new English curriculum applies to all undergraduates starting their academic careers at this university from the year 2006. It features graded courses according to students' English proficiency based on a written test. The courses are organized into three categories, basic, general, and advanced English. Students are required to take one reading and one writing course of their specified category. They are to take a 90-minute lesson once a week, and complete two consecutive half-year courses.

One of the advanced English reading classes has an enrollment of 27 students. In the following, writing-to-read activities that this class experienced will be illustrated as a case study for the application of task-based instruction in an EAP context.

Teaching material

A textbook and other printed material from the Internet, etc. is used as a source of reading. Dudley-Evans and St John (1998: 170-71) note that there seem to be four significant reasons for using materials in the ESP (English for Specific Purposes) context, and they are:

1. as a source of language
2. as a learning support
3. for motivation and stimulation

4. for reference

This can also be said for EAP, or EGAP (English for General Academic Purposes), of which the content to be learned encompasses things and matters coming from subject areas according to the degree of specificity, along with the appropriate skills for each group of students enabling them to make effective use of their discipline-specific knowledge. Also, Flowerdew and Peacock (2001: 182) depict the difficulty of selecting teaching materials. Generally, choices are made between published materials and materials tailored to the needs and requirements of the course. Another choice is between authentic and non-authentic materials. Here, the distinction between authenticity of text and authenticity of purpose must be accounted for. In relation to this distinction, Brinton (2003) cited in Nunan (2004: 132) summarizes five principles for content-based instruction:

1. Base instructional decisions on content rather than language criteria.
2. Integrate skills.
3. Involve students actively in all phases of the learning process.
4. Choose content for its relevance to students' lives, interests and/or academic goals.
5. Select authentic texts and tasks.

From this note, it is clear that in selecting material and designing a task-based activity, tasks that have meaningful goals for the students, are as important as preparing texts representing real-world language use.

In the present case, body texts are taken from an English newspaper for Japanese readers. They are compiled into a textbook of eighteen units. Each unit has one or two reports, articles, or essays on a topic. Areas of

concern are: environmental issues, health problems, education and social matters. Words and phrases characteristic to these fields are annotated in Japanese at the end of the body text. Comprehension exercises are mainly in English. For additional reading practice, the instructor selected topic related articles from the Internet.

Students

A total of 30 Japanese students from the advanced English reading class participated in the study. One student did not reach the expected score in the placement test but was motivated to take this course in order to pass a certification test, and was accepted. None of the 30 students have experience of studying abroad. One student wants to prepare for the graduate course.

Students' overall performance is evaluated by individual classwork, group activities, and end-of-term written examination. As they will be receiving higher education in the fields of history, psychology, and Japanese literature after finishing their freshman courses, it is important that they acquire the skills of organizing or elaborating on their thinking, in written and spoken discourse according to whatever purposes they may have.

In order for such skill-building to be effective, with limited exposure to the target language as in the case just described, finding an appropriate model for active learning is essential. The model should reflect the student's actual condition so that learning would be enhanced and everyone is provided with something that they can engage in according to individual levels of understanding. With these purposes in mind, the use of language learning strategy and individual reading speed were both measured. Results serve as basic information in reflecting and making adjustments on the reading-to-write tasks occasionally assigned during the course.

3.2 Data collection and analysis

As Rubin (1975) observed, “good language learning is said to depend on at least three variables: aptitude, motivation and opportunity” (p.42). In other words, those who are accurate guessers, are eager to get their message across, and are willing to try out newly acquired knowledge can be said to have language aptitude. In relation to this is the second variable of motivation. According to Cohen and Dörnyei (2002), motivated learners are those who keep in mind favourable expectations or positive incentives; add interest to tasks and liven up learning; could manage disruptive emotional states; and create a positive learning environment, for example by asking friends to help them (pp.184-85). And the third variable which is opportunity includes all those activities both within and outside the classroom which expose the learner to the language. Therefore, good learners take every opportunity to practice what they have learned while the poorer learners passively do what is assigned.

Learning strategy

To have a look at the students’ use of language learning strategies, a self-report questionnaire — the 50-item SILL¹ (Oxford, 1990) — was used. The SILL asks students to report on a scale of one to five how often they use each of the 50 language learning strategies. The choices are: 1. Never or almost never true 2. Usually not true 3. Somewhat true 4. Usually true 5. Always or almost always true. The 50 items are grouped into six types of strategies: A. Memory strategies B. Cognitive strategies C. Compensation strategies D. Metacognitive strategies E. Affective strategies F. Social strategies.

The 50-item SILL was given to 26 students. After all questionnaires were handed back, responses of participants were recoded into three

broader categories for the purpose of analysis — 1. Never or usually not true 2. Somewhat true 3. Always or usually true. For the six strategy types, 1 to 3 most frequently used strategies were identified by strategy type. Also, some of the least frequently used strategies were identified among strategy types that may affect the learning of foreign language reading on the part of Japanese students.

Table 1 shows the most frequently used strategies by strategy type. Table 2 shows the least frequently used strategies in cognitive, metacognitive, and social strategy types.

Table 1. *Strategies always or usually used by students (N=26)*

| Strat. Type | Strategy |
|----------------|---|
| A | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I connect the sound of a new English word and an image or picture of the word to help me remember the word. - I remember a new English word by making a mental picture of a situation in which the word might be used. |
| B | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - I say or write new English words several times. - I try to talk like native English speakers. - I find the meaning of an English word by dividing it into parts that I understand. |
| C | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If I can't think of an English word, I use a word or |

phrase that means the same thing.

- To understand unfamiliar English words, I make guesses.
- D
- I notice my English mistakes and use that information to help me do better.
- E
- I give myself a reward or treat when I do well in English.
 - I notice if I am tense or nervous when I am studying or using English.
- F
- If I do not understand something in English, I ask the other person to slow down or say it again.
 - I try to learn about the culture of English speakers.

A=Memory strategies

D=Metacognitive strategies

B=Cognitive strategies

E=Affective strategies

C=Compensation strategies

F=Social strategies

This outcome might be said to reflect an image of the participants as Japanese learners of intermediate-to-advanced reading proficiency. Specifically, the strategy most frequently used in the Metacognitive strategy type is noticing mistakes and using it for improved learning. Also, those in the Affective and Social strategy types include recognizing the feeling of nervousness and trying to be as certain as possible about the matter in question (such as asking to slow down). Learners going through this kind

of mental manipulation might always be conscious of the negative aspects that emerge in the process of learning, while at the same time seeing it as a source of improvement. They interact with other learners or native speakers in a careful but positive way. The willingness to learn about different cultures seems to reflect an influence of secondary education with an emphasis on international cultural exchange.

Table 2. *Strategies least frequently used in three strategy types (N=26)*

| Strat. Type | Strategy |
|-------------|---|
| B | - I start conversations in English. |
| | - I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English. |
| | - I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English. |
| D | - I look for people I can talk to in English. |
| F | - I ask questions in English. |

A=Memory strategies

D=Metacognitive strategies

B=Cognitive strategies

E=Affective strategies

C=Compensation strategies

F=Social strategies

Next we take three strategy types associated with cognitive and interactive tendencies, and look into the least frequently used strategies in these domains. The point of interest is whether the outcome includes

responses that cannot be explained by L1 influence or the EFL learning situation of the participants. Two strategies in the Cognitive strategy type seemed to fit into this category, i.e., “I write notes, messages, letters, or reports in English.” and “I make summaries of information that I hear or read in English.”

From these observations, we can say that this kind of reading and writing not yet fully experienced by these learners may have a positive effect as an opportunity of reading with a purpose. If designed to involve specific goals, it would also serve as an introduction to more advanced EAP. This is the background of using a reading-to-write approach in this case.

4. Reading-to-write activity

4.1 Procedure

In this section two kinds of reading-to-write task procedures will be outlined. The first procedure is an extended sequence of the exercises in the textbook, focusing on summary writing and peer evaluation. Students are asked to choose one from two topics to read and report on — environmental disruption or nuclear power plants. Both articles are previously learned in class. The class has already been learning how to read English material and summarize in Japanese. This is the first time they do it in English. In the first step, summaries are written individually. After everyone is finished, students make groups of three or four. Next, group members read each other's work and write down comments. This is another reading-to-write exercise about something they know. Members of the same group have chosen the same article so the tension of having to read extra L2 material is reduced. Finally they read their peer review and try to revise their own writing according to the comment they have received.

Negotiation of meaning is welcomed if there is a need for clarification in the original text, the summaries, or the comments. This procedure prepares students for the next task to be outlined.

The second procedure involves the reading of a report article on centenarian studies, taken from an Internet resource. English summaries are written as the first step. The class has already learned something about this topic in the textbook, so they have a content schema. Next, they must make a comprehension quiz based on their summary. The questions of the quiz will be in Japanese and answers should be in English. In this way, students are asked to do their task partly in L1, which means that they must pay some attention to linguistic details. Also, they must decide whether the questions will concern global or local parts of the text, giving them opportunity to use both top down and bottom up processing when they read. Finally they choose a partner, exchange summaries along with the quiz, and try to answer the questions using the summary written by the same partner.

4.2 Product

Students are asked to limit the length of each summary they write. Attention is also called to the connection of paragraphs, i.e., main topic vs. side topic, supporting paragraph vs. opposing paragraph, etc., when they read the original text.

Students start by shortening the story picking out sentences that seem to represent the main ideas. It doesn't take long before they are able to do synonymous substitution if they are reminded of them (=synonyms) in class. However, paraphrasing is observed in only a limited group of students. One student tried to write in report style using indirect discourse.

5. Observation and implications

As discussed in the previous section, there are a number of students among the target group who have the capability but don't take risks. This is essentially due to the fact that they know that all of their work will be graded. As An Cheng (2006) explains in his account of genre-based writing instruction, language awareness (LA) is an approach that relies on the learners paying conscious attention to instances of language in an attempt to discover and articulate patterns of language use. He says that the learning context in which this can be enhanced is basically determined by the following dimensions.

The basic tenets of LA include three major dimensions — the objectives of learning, the processes of learning, and assessment — which a viable conceptualization of learning usually includes (p.84).

In the case described in this study, reading-for-writing instruction is applied with an aim to enhance reading with a purpose. Also, the processes of task-based activities are planned so as to reflect the strategic use of these learners. In order that they would be motivated to stretch their learning style and could make effective use of linguistic resources for intentional learning, the dimension of assessment could serve as a supporting factor.

(Notes)

1. SILL refers to the Strategy Inventory for Language Learning. Learners who were more proficient and more motivated consistently reported on the SILL that they used a wider range of strategies, and used them more frequently, than learners who were less proficient and less motivated.

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