ADULT ESL LEARNERS CONSTRUCTING KNOWLEDGE

BY WRITING TEXTS

by

CHIN-HYON KIM

B. A. in English, Soong Sil University, Seoul, Korea, 1984

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Department of _LANGUAGE EDUCATION_

The University of British Columbia

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ABSTRACT

Because of an emphasis on academic discourse in tertiary-level courses, many adult ESL students discover that they need to adjust their strategies for learning ESL. Prior to attending university in English-speaking countries, these students tend to focus their ESL learning strategies on spoken English perhaps largely because they believe spoken English accounts for the bulk of ordinary people's communication time. When they begin studying at an English-speaking university, however, their participation shifts and the focus of their ESL learning strategies become written English. This paper reports a seven-week research project which involved six Korean adult ESL learners who, in an effort to improve their academic discourse competence, wrote reading logs about English newspaper articles. These logs mainly featured summaries and personal responses based on opinion articles such as editorials and columns. The research questions focused on exploring mainly the participants' self-reported benefits, difficulties and transfer of learning. The participants felt that the reading log strategy helped them detect and correct their ESL reading and writing weaknesses. They experienced a close relationship between reading comprehension and academic writing skills: They had difficulty writing their reading logs when they had a shaky grasp of content. They also felt that writing reading logs got them predisposed toward active or spirited oral discussion. Such research findings led to the conclusion that the reading log strategy is a good way to improve and integrate reading, writing and oral discussion skills for ESL learners. This paper might help educators gain insight into how adult ESL learners' academic discourse skills can be developed.

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Chapter One

Introduction

English as a Second Language (ESL) students and teachers often focus

exclusively on oral English to the detriment of written English (Thompson, 1996).

Students who have focused solely on learning oral English skills tend to have difficulties

when they are asked to do academic tasks that involve reading and writing in English.

The Problem

Many ESL students have difficulty learning because they do not have the

academic reading and writing skills (in the target language) required to pass their

courses or to learn independently (e.g., Applegate, Quinn & Applegate, 1994).

Purpose

The purpose of the project reported below was to examine the use of a strategy

called the reading log method to improve ESL learners' overall language proficiency so

that they would be able to cope with academic language tasks. Reading logs require

students to read texts and to write about them in a systematic way.

Rationale

I wanted to examine Korean adult ESL learners' responses to the reading logs,

exploring their understandings of this strategy. I designed all the activity sheets to help

the Korean participants to write their reading logs in a personal, critical, and analytic

way. Along with reflection sheets, the activity sheets were also expected to help me to

pursue, in a detailed way, the research goal of examining ESL learners' responses to the

reading log method: a strategy for the aim of enhancing reading, writing, and oral discussion skills.

Background

On the surface, the reading log method seems to have nothing to do with oral discussion skills, but actually in the classroom the reading log method has three facets: reading proficiency, writing skills, and oral discussion skills. Conducted on Korean adult ESL learners, this research project showed pedagogical possibilities the reading log method holds. By having the Korean participants write their reading logs and speak about them, the project examined the participants' lived experiences and their perspectives.

The Research Questions

The general question was how the Korean ESL learners perceived the reading logs used in their peer study. In pursuit of answers to the general question, I sought to answer the following questions:

1. Benefits or drawbacks reported by the participants

   a. What influence did the participants think keeping a reading log had on their general competence in writing?

   b. How did the participants report writing a summary helped (or did not help) them in their opinions?

   c. How did the participants report writing a personal response helped (or did not help) them in their opinions?

d. How did the participants report the one-page restriction helped (or did not help) them in their opinions?

2. Difficulties reported by the participants

    a. What difficulties did the participants report facing when they summarized reading material?

    b. What difficulties did the participants report facing when they wrote their personal responses to reading material?

    c. What difficulties did the participants report facing when they tried to follow the one-page restriction?

3. Questions related to types and topics / Questions related to transfer of learning

    a. What was the difference in the participants' self-reported responses to different topics (e.g., politics, economics and science) and different types of articles (e.g., news reports, editorials, and columns) in the following areas?

       1) The topics which they thought most or least helpful to writing their reading logs (i.e., facilitated their reading log-writing) and in what ways?

       2) The types of article which they thought most or least helpful to writing their reading logs (i.e., facilitated their reading log-writing) and in what ways?

    b. Were there self-reported indications that what the participants did in their reading logs carried over to their oral work when they met? For the answers

to the question, I examined the number of topics and kinds of topics (per meeting) mentioned in reading logs and during oral discussion.

4. Questions related to language

    a. What self-reported role did a Korean version of a participant's reading log play in the following areas?

    1) Generating ideas

    2) Writing an English version of a reading log.

<u>Limitations and Delimtations</u>

I conducted the current research on six Korean adult ESL learners in Vancouver, Canada. It means that there were three conditions for the participants to meet: Koreans; adults; ESL learners. Therefore, basically any generalizations from the current research project might be limited to Korean adult ESL learners.

<u>Definitions of Terms</u>

<u>Reading logs</u>. I applied Belanger's (Language Education 534 course description, winter session 1997, pp. 13-14) reading log method. He asked students (i.e., Canadian participants in the 1997 pilot research project) to choose and read one article/book/book chapter per week and respond to it in a reading log. I adapted his reading log method for my research. In this case, the participants read a newspaper article. The most important feature of a reading log was personal responses to the newspaper article. Other features

(which were optional in Belanger's method) of a reading log were a summary and a one-page restriction.

Critical reading or thinking. The Ministry of Education of British Columbia (pp. 147-148) defines critical thinking as "thinking through problematic situations about what to believe or how to act, making reasoned judgments that embody the attributes of high-quality thinking." In my research project, critical reading is a specific task while critical thinking is a general task. The Ministry of Education of British Columbia asserts:

critical thinking:

- is a normative concept (the core of the idea of critical thinking is that something is being done well; it meets certain criteria and standards; in technical and professional communication the criteria and standards adhered to vary tremendously from genre to genre, from purpose to purpose, and in many other ways)
- is a basic set of capacities and inclinations that equip individuals to make up their own minds for good reasons - to make intelligent and well-considered choices, both as citizens and in relation to their private lives
- constitutes a part of learning in every area of life, in every subject matter, at every grade and age level (critical thinking is . . . a prerequisite to much of what is involved in learning)
- pertains to such things as solving problems, resolving dilemmas, evaluating theories, making decisions.

Pre-meeting activity sheet. While reading a newspaper article, my research participants filled out a pre-meeting activity sheet. It featured vocabulary, grammatical structures and passages which individual participants had difficulty in comprehending.

Newspaper summary form. While reading a newspaper article, the participants filled out a newspaper summary form. I used an existing form (Johnson 1997, appendix) for my research project. Among the newspaper summary form's major features are 1) My new headline for the story 2) Brief Summary (what, where, when, how and why happened) 3) My opinion of the story 4) I still have these questions about the topic 5) Have you heard any other news about the story? From what source? 6) Did this paper's information differ from the other reference? If so, how? 7) Did you notice any cultural biases or attitudes? Johnson asserts that a goal of such a newspaper summary form is "not to simply have students read the paper, but rather for them to go further and question and form rational opinions about the material with which they are working" (p. 31).

Sentence-level teaching. If language teaching focuses on sentence-level issues, the teaching focus is on language components of a sentence (e.g., grammar, spelling).

Background reading text. Text or other material used as information for inventing ideas or as support for a writer's claims made in writing or formal speaking. In this research project, newspaper articles (i.e., editorials, columns, news reports) were used as background reading texts.

LEP.(Limited English Proficient). LEP students usually mean students whose English proficiency level is less than high.

<u>L1</u>. First language, or mother language.

<u>L2.</u> Second language or sometimes foreign language

<u>Recursive writing process</u>. If a student writer writes an essay by using recursive writing process, he or she draft writing and continuously return to earlier sections to check rhetoric strategies such as coherence before moving ahead with the writing.

<u>Linear writing process</u>. In contrast to recursive writing process, linear writing process has a student writer follow such predetermined steps as outlines when he or she write an essay.

<u>Summary</u>

The current research project was an exploration into Korean adults' perceptions of reading logs used in their peer study. Helping shed light on what would become of a tendency to ignore academic writing skills, research results might give pause to those promoting spoken English skills at the expense of written English skills.

The general question guiding the current research project was how the Korean ESL learners perceived the reading log strategy. The answers to the question were pursued by exploring four major areas: benefits or drawbacks reported by the participants; difficulties reported by the participants; questions related to types and topics / questions related to transfer of learning; questions related to language.

Chapter Two

Literature Review

Introduction

Forming a background of this research project in both knowledge claims and methodological issues, the literature review revolves around writing pedagogy; connections between reading and writing; ESL reading; writers' responses to different topic types; audience-awareness; writing quality improvement; and using L1 as an assessment or information-retrieval tool. Some of the literature review involves studies on using newspapers to teach ESL students.

Background

Some teachers and students have the mistaken notion that communicative language teaching does not include written communication (Thompson 1996, p. 12). In ESL classes, instruction in listening and speaking tends to receive exclusive and extensive coverage. After having the experience of attending writing classes at a large Canadian university's International House, ESL students have told me that the ESL program in writing usually loses its focus on writing within the first two hours. Few ESL composition instructors at the university's International House seem to be able to resist pressure from students to shift the class focus to oral conversation. Confronted with academic tasks, however, many ESL students whom I have met say that they suffer because of their partiality for oral conversation instruction to the exclusion of reading and writing. The partiality, I think, is a result of an obsession with spoken aspects of language. On the surface, the partiality does not seem to be an unreasonable strategy, for

listening and speaking account for the bulk (up to 80 percent) of the total time ordinary people (i.e., these figures do not apply to academic situations) spend in communicating (Mendelson 1994, p. 9). However, on reflection, it seems to be pedagogically undesirable that language learners are involved in oral language to the exclusion of written language. There are many whose lack of interest in written language is responsible for their language usually failing to go beyond a syntactically and semantically simple stage. I infer from this that reading and writing are important in language education.

A Place for Writing in Language Education

The following remarks or studies help identify a place for writing in language education. They might form a rationale for calling for a change to the reality: In many ESL classes, spoken English receives extensive coverage at the cost of written English.

Freed (1998) casts reporters' writing skills in the light of where they cut their professional teeth (i.e., print, TV and radio). His remark implies that there appears to be a pedagogical niche in which, compared with other language strands, writing is inherently well positioned to train reporters in structuring stories, a major aspect of discourse skills. By extension, his account helps to raise awareness about the virtue of writing pedagogy.

> Alderman is one of many print reporters I know who easily made the leap to TV, but the reverse voyage is long and hard. Print forces you to write and structure your stories, while in TV it's possible to get by just linking images and interviews with a script that fills in the worst holes. Many of the best TV and radio reporters have done a stint in

print - learning how to use words before they start worrying about pictures (Freed, 1998, p. 197).

Fathman and Whalley (1990) focused their study of teacher response to writing on how and when teachers should correct errors and comment on content. Their findings have important implications for language education. That is, they suggest that text-specific feedback (e.g., grammar feedback) is instrumental in improving students' language skills. For example, they found that rewriting is almost always effective in improving students' writing. They suggest that writing is an effective language-learning method because of its inherently high receptivity to text-specific feedback. (In the current research project, the participants' exchange of feedback on their reading log contents took the form of an oral discussion; and they received feedback on their English expressions by asking their peer participants and/or the researcher.)

Spack's (1984) definition of writing appears to promote writing's pedagogical virtues. Spack defines writing as "a way of learning as well as communicating" (p. 651). That is, she views writing as "a creative process for exploring and communicating meaning" (p. 651). She implies that an emphasis on a student's composed product rather than his or her composing process is likely to stifle creative ideas about a subject. Therefore, she promotes a recursive writing process (as opposed to liner writing process) as an invention strategy. Her view echoes Emig's (1971) finding that the writing is series of overlapping and interacting processes. Her definition of writing as a way of learning parallels what Murray (1978) and others believe: "The act of "doodling with language (free writing) leads to meaning" (Hillocks, 1986, p. 176). That is, according to

Myers (1983), Murray and others teach students "to use writing as a means of self-discovery, not just a means of communicating something to someone else" (Myers, cited in Hillocks, 1986, p. 177). They believe that the linear writing approach does not help students generate creative ideas. Invention techniques such as brainstorming and looping, Spack asserts, allow students to "think and write at the same time" (p. 656).

Some Impediments to Writing Pedagogy

Before ESL students deal with academic tasks at an English-speaking university, instruction in written English tends to receive less emphasis because of their preference for spoken English. Early (1990) and Leki (1995) shed light on other factors which appear to stand in the way of teaching academic writing to ESL students, or improving their academic writing skills. Early and Leki mention two issues: teaching academic writing to beginning ESL students; and intentionally giving easy writing assignments to ESL students respectively.

Reporting on an exploratory study investigating the acquisition of non-narrative writing by ten grade-five beginning ESL students, Early cautions ESL teachers about dismissing written academic discourse as untenable in an ESL class for beginners. She argues that "if ESL students are asked even in the beginning stages of literacy to produce written academic discourse which evolves from a serious of shared experiences accompanied by talk and graphic support, they will ... succeed" (p. 122). She suggests that pedagogical treatments such as graphic support might help limited English proficient (LEP) students learn written academic discourse.

Leki analyzed how five ESL visa students dealt with writing tasks at a U.S. university. Her research was about how they coped with writing tasks across the curriculum. She alerts us to the toll which a false confidence inspired by too easy assignments take on ESL students' writing skills. She writes:

In many ESL writing classes, teachers purposely structure writing assignments for success. But to be meaningful, the success must come from overcoming a serious and challenging obstacle. The disciplinary writing assignments faced by the participants in this study fully engaged fully engaged them intellectually. If writing successes in English classes come too easily, these may be insufficiently challenging to serve the purpose of giving students writing experiences they can later refer back to in attempting to address tasks across the curriculum. Although ESL class should no doubt be psychologically nurturing places, surely being a safe refuge is not enough (Leki, 1995, p. 256).

Spack (1984) notes some impediments to an application of the invention strategies in ESL field. She implies that low proficiency in the target language can be an impediment to tapping ESL students' potential ability to generate ideas actively. She argues that students' rich vocabularies are needed if they are to "become immersed in the writing process from inception to completion" (p. 663). She implies that ESL students' poor proficiency in L2 should not be allowed to play havoc with generating their ideas under any circumstances. She suggests the time for ESL students' L1s to

come into play is "when a vocabulary word in English does not immediately come to mind" (p. 656).

Spack has found that ESL students' difficulty generating ideas is due to their low proficiency in the target language. However, there may be more factors which affect ESL students' invention of ideas but draw little attention from researchers. For example, not developing outlines is a case in point. Promoted by the researchers as instrumental in generating ideas, recursive writing involves free writing rather than outline-based writing. But the reality is that it takes longer for some ESL students to begin to assimilate recursive writing approach than expected. That is, for many reasons including cultural, and personal ones, many first-time ESL students seem to be at a loss for ideas unless a detailed outline is prepared in advance. For example, many ESL students tell me that they usually have more difficulty with personal writing (e.g., a self-reflective essay) than with writing assignments (e.g., a term paper) because while an instructor usually gives detailed guidelines for a writing assignment, they feel, personal writings have no predetermined outlines. In terms of generating ideas, ESL students seem more comfortable with outline-based writing approaches than with recursive writing approaches.

Connections Between Reading and Writing

Campbell (1998) describes academic writing in terms of an integration between reading and writing. Her description details the connections between reading and writing.

Campbell, by breaking the writing curriculum down into process and product pedagogy, builds the case for integrating reading and writing. Among her process-based writing strategies are thinking about topics; getting started on rough ideas; sifting through ideas and beginning to organize them for writing; clustering; mapping; listing; outlining; drafting; rereading; redrafting; cutting and pasting; reworking; revisioning; revising on end; proofreading; editing. Among her written product-based strategies are summarizing; paragraphing; analyzing an author's approach or argument; retelling something from another perspective. She encapsulates her argument for balancing process and product pedagogy. Campbell's description of writing class activities shows how reading and writing can be integrated in writing classroom. She writes:

> In striking the balance between process and product pedagogy you will find that rather than teaching writing per se, or reading, or any other separate skill, what you are doing is guiding your students to interact with text (Campbell, 1998, p. 13).

While teachers are guiding students to interact with text and with other writers, Campbell (1998) claims, they are "teaching composing, not literacy" (xi). Along the way, the claim also seems to distinguish between composing and translating, a usually blurry line in Korea's English classes.

By suggesting that readings can be used as model written products and springboards for discussion, Campbell is more specific about explaining how readings integrated into writing courses function. She also calls for an integration of reading and writing that is pedagogically beneficial to students. For example, the quality of students'

writings may be improved after they receive feedback on their personal viewpoints on

the readings during a discussion. Reporting on a college writing class, she writes:

> ... readings provide authentic examples of text demonstrating issues that [an entire
>
> writing] class examines together, such as usage of vocabulary, sentence structure,
>
> rhetorical modes (comparison, contrast, persuasion), other discourse units (essay
>
> introduction, conclusions, literature review), the writer's audience, and purpose ...
>
> [Readings are also used] as springboards for discussion, having the students come up
>
> with their own personal viewpoints on themes reflected in the readings (Campbell,
>
> 1998, p. 21).

The current research was aimed at examining the Korean participants' responses

to the reading log method. In other words, the research project examined the

participants' perceptions of how their use of the reading log strategy improved their

reading proficiency, writing skills and oral discussion skills. The results may suggest

how both ESL learners and ESL teachers can use the connection between reading and

writing skills to improve learning. For example, learners might enhance critical reading

or thinking, and translate it into critical perspective-filled writings. When it comes to the

definition of being 'critical' in critical reading or critical perspectives, I quote a

provincial government's reference set. The Ministry of Education of British Columbia

(1996) defines critical thinking as "thinking through problematic situations about what

to believe or how to act, making reasoned judgments that embody the attributes of high-

quality thinking" (p. 147).

The currently adopted school instruction on writing is criticized because it fails to lead students beyond gaining information from texts (Odell, 1995). There is a need for promoting critical, analytic, reflective and objective perspectives (which Odell emphasizes) as integral to becoming good writers. Implying that simply gaining information from texts is not adequate to produce good writers, his criticism of the current school instruction on writing contributes to our understanding of the connection between reading proficiency and writing skills. His criticism goes something like this: If the connection between reading and writing is not used to nurture students' critical, analytic, reflective and objective perspectives, writing instruction in school may be in danger of condemning students to be less than good writers. Interested in ways to integrate critical perspectives into students' composing processes, teachers could benefit from rhetorical reading strategies which enable students to assess a writer's claims and construct their own meaning from a text (Odell, p. 50). If objective perspectives are valued in the composing process (e.g., Hillocks, 1986, p. 91; Scarcella & Oxford, 1992, p. 121), sharing reading logs in the form of oral discussions in class seems to deserve our attention. If they write their reading logs with an eye to oral discussions in class, students may come to write for a real audience.

Research (e.g., Belanger, 1987; Bergin, 1995; Campbell, 1990; Kennedy, 1985) shows students benefit from teaching that there is a linkage between reading and writing. Belanger (1987) suggests a way for students to gain maximum effectiveness from the connection between reading proficiency and writing skills. Through his comprehensive literature review, Belanger reveals the connections between reading

proficiency and writing skills. Citing research by Collins (1979), and Walker-Lewis (1981) on college students, he states that "writing practice reinforced what was taught in reading" (p. 14). He is specific about how to integrate reading and writing. If students are to maximize the learning benefits which the connection between reading and writing can provide, he suggests, reading should go hand in hand with such writing tasks as summarizing and notetaking. He suggests an effective way to integrate reading and writing.

It appears, then, that simple exposure to literature is not adequate to influence students' written composition, especially beyond the primary grades. Wide reading without discussion and analysis is no more effective as a composition treatment than is writing practice without analysis and discussion or the study or grammar (Belanger, 1987, p. 16).

Bergin (1995), apparently encouraging students to go beyond gaining information toward assessing a writer's claims and constructing their own meaning from a text, details the process of summarizing. Bergin breaks the summarizing process down into three phases: selecting, condensing and transforming information. During the selection phase, according to Bergin, relevant and important information is identified. Even though the condensing phase may not be often necessary to the summarizing process (e.g., in the case that the overall meaning of a text might be threatened by condensing or synthesizing the selected individual information), Bergin describes the condensing phase as synthesizing information so that the structurally important

information is gleaned. Bergin includes it in the definition of synthesizing information to discern levels of importance of information. Transforming information means relating main ideas to each other and restructuring "a meaning which is concise but representative of the original text's structure and content" (p. 30). In my opinion, such phases may pose opportunities for students to learn to discern levels of importance and make inferences. As a result, they may be able to write their reading logs in their own words (i.e., with verbatim and uncritically copied information screened out as much as possible). It appears that the skill is crucial to internalizing information from reading because it potentially prompts a reader to maximize his/her intellectual operations in the process. I think that only the internalized information could be effectively integrated into quality writings (e.g., personal and critical perspective-filled writings). In my opinion, the use of reading logs will help maximize such intellectual operations and helps students identify quality writing.

Campbell (1990) suggests how we can use pedagogically and effectively the connection between reading proficiency and writing skills. Campbell categorized written compositions: quotation, exact copy, near copy, paraphrase, summary, or original explanation. She asserts that there is a difference between students' written compositions in the degree (as opposed to quality) of the information integration in their text. That is, according to her, "an original explanation is the most integrated, since the background information is molded to fit the student text" (p. 217). Some of Campbell's findings and her comments on them are as follows:

When faced with the prospect of expressing information from the source text either by using "their own words," which may reflect a colloquial style, or by making slight syntactic or semantic changes in the wording of the background text (constituting Near Copies), thereby maintaining an academic style, the students may have opted for the latter for stylistic reasons. They have demonstrated their ability to adequately paraphrase, as well as summarize, and so forth; however, given the time constraints and classroom writing conditions, they may have lapsed occasionally, allowing Near Copies in favor of less colloquial, more academic style (Campbell, 1990, pp. 221-222).

Drawing on her findings, Campbell appears to view university composition students' efforts to wean themselves off the habit of copying as a sign of their progress in academic writing.

... Perhaps university composition students are still completing the stage of being able to paraphrase, quote, summarize, and expand in academic style without copying, and with continued academic writing they will progress to a higher stage. In that case, those students who continue to write research reports and theses will also continue to pass through these theoretical stages, their own academic style will improve, and copying will be eliminated from their writing. For students who do not pursue studies involving writing, the issue is largely irrelevant. The pedagogical difficulty that this evolution poses is in helping student writers who, when faced with a term paper or other writing task involving the use of information from a background text, continue to copy, rather than develop skill in paraphrasing, summarizing, and incorporating information in other appropriate ways (Campbell, 1990, p. 222).

In my opinion, Campbell's types (categories) of written compositions could act as criteria for rating students' written compositions. Challenging students to think about what direction their writings should pursue, the categories may have important implications. I think that a writer's critical or personal perspective is most reflected in original explanations and least mirrored in copies (i.e., students' written productions that copy a text verbatim). It appears that a writer's critical or personal perspective is valuable because of its role in integrating information from the background reading into her/his written compositions. I infer from this that copies (i.e., students' written productions that copy a text verbatim) in the category are far from maximizing students' intellectual operations (i.e., copies don't train students in being critical-minded). In this light, I think that significance read into a writer's critical or personal perspective may speak for itself. I think that summarizing reading material in one's own words (i.e., the participants in this research project were asked to use their own words as much as possible when they wrote their reading logs) may constitute a good start for training students in original explanations (i.e., original reactions to reading materials).

Kennedy (1985, cited in Campbell, 1990, p. 213) conducted research in which she assigned her college students to write an objective essay on the material in three related articles. Kennedy's findings suggest what fluent readers (versus the less proficient readers, distinguished on the basis of scores on the Reading Comprehension Test of the 1977 Descriptive Test of Language Skills) are like. That is, she found that fluent readers were active readers and notetakers (underlining, commenting on, and

interacting with the text) and non-fluent readers were not. There seems to be a parallel

between Kennedy and other researchers (e.g., Bergin, 1987; Campbell, 1990) in terms of

their findings. They argue for combining reading with critical or personal perspectives.

Transfer of Literacy Skills: First Language to Second Language

Eisterhold (1990) describes characteristics of L2 learners relative to their L1

counterparts when she asserts "L2 learners do not bring with them a fully developed

(second) language system as the basis for decoding and encoding written language in

their second language" (p. 94) and describes literate adult second language learners'

literacy skills as "seeking support from a language system" (p. 94). That is, when she

mentions the issue of transferring literacy skills from L1 to L2, she appears to build the

case for an understanding of a role played by L1 literacy skills, an area which she

implies helps understand the second language reading-writing relationship. She explains

Cummins' (1981) claim regarding transfer of literacy skills in the following way:

> Cummins' claim is that there is an underlying cognitive/academic proficiency that is
>
> common across languages which allows the transfer of literacy-related skills across
>
> languages. Thus, learning to be literate in a second language may be affected by literacy
>
> capabilities in the first language. However, Cummins also suggests that this transfer
>
> capability emerges only after individuals attain a threshold level of proficiency
>
> sufficient to permit cognitively demanding language use (Eisterhold, 1990, p. 95).

At the same time, Eisterhold suggests Freedle (1985) disagrees with Cummins'

claim. That is, Freedle hypothesizes that there is no automatic transfer of skills from one

domain to another. According to him, language subsystems are represented separately and therefore there is separate access to underlying cognitive skills.

After reviewing the two theories, Eisterhold offers her positions.

For Freedle, the movement is from the many to the one. Cummins, on the other hand, moves from the one to the many, claiming that separate language proficiencies arise out of a common underlying cognitive proficiency.

The positions I have outlined here allow for three possibilities for transfer of literacy skills across languages:

1. There exists a common underlying proficiency with a threshold level of language proficiency that allows skills to transfer.

2. There exists an underlying proficiency with a threshold level of language proficiency and a cognitive restructuring[1] that allows skills to transfer.

3. There exist separate language systems with a cognitive separation of language skills. Transfer occurs at the point where two previously separated but structurally similar language routines come together (Eisterhold, p.98).

It appears that the putative relationship between reading and writing is unclear and more research needs to be conducted. But my observations of both the current research subjects and my former (high school) students[2] lead me to tilt toward Cummins' theory. That is, my observations favor the notion that adult learners' L1

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[1] "In restructuring, new structures are added to allow for new interpretation of facts" (Eisterhold, p. 97).

[2] I taught English at high schools in Korea from 1984 to 1994.

background knowledge helps their L2 learning. Suffice to say teachers of English in

Korean high schools generally agree that students who are skillful at Korean are

normally good at English.

Responses to Different Topic Types

Reid's (1990) investigation may provide findings to help design writing topics.

She investigated differences in ESL students' responses to different topic types:

comparison / contrast and take a position (C/C); describe and interpret a chart or graph

(G). For example, in a task for the C/C topic type, students were asked to "compare the

benefits and drawbacks either of active or intellectual ways of spending leisure time, and

to choose one preferred way of spending their leisure time" (p. 193). In a task for the G

topic type, there was the "Farming topic" (p. 193). The task presented three bar graphs:

(1) number of farms, (2) size of farm population, and (3) average farm size. She found

some differences between the two types in essay writers' average word length and their

lexical choices: the high average word length in the G responses[3]; informal and more

concrete discourse in C/C topics. Apparently emphasizing a level playing field in a

testing environment, Reid argues for "comparability of topic tasks" (p. 205) as a primary

objective.

Friedlander's (1990) research appears to have implications for connections

between topic and language. He assigned 28 Chinese-speaking subjects at Carnegie

Mellon University (CMU) to write in English and Chinese on two different topics: One

was a Chinese topic (i.e., *Qingming*, a Chinese festival) and the other was an English

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[3]   Reid suggests a possible reason for these results: "The G prompts provided the student writers with fairly sophisticated vocabulary; if the writers repeatedly used the given vocabulary, they may have increased their average world length" (p. 198).

topic (i.e., CMU) in terms of the language related to the acquisition of topic-area knowledge. He found that when there was a match between a topic and a language (e.g., *Qingming* and Chinese), planning or drafting as part of composing process was active, and writing quality improved. He justifies his findings by explaining how the evaluation was done. He writes:

> The essays resulting from the plans in the match condition were longer and of superior quality than those produced in the mismatch condition. The essays from the match condition were over 100 words longer (484.96 vs. 365.77 words), suggesting a greater amount of content. This is confirmed in the ratings: The raters considered these essays superior in quality (4. 67 vs. 3.67). These ratings confirm that the essays produced in the match conditions did a better task of meeting the needs of their reader ... (Friedlander, 1990, p. 116).

L1 VS L2 Writing

By having ESL students speak about their perceptions of L1/L2 writing, Silva (1992) revealed ESL writers' difficulties. Based on an ethnography of ESL students at a U.S. university, Silva's research primarily focused on ESL writers' perceptions of L1/L2 writing differences. The subjects were asked to comment on (1) how writing in a second language is different from writing in a first language--with regard to both strategic and textual factors, and (2) given these differences, what ESL composition teachers can do to best meet their students' needs. He found that the L2 writing process tended to focus on grammar, while the L1 writing process tended to be content and organization-

focused. The ESL subjects talked about difficulties in retrieving L1-related (i.e.,

acquired in L1) information, and problems with cultural differences. Most shared a

frustration with their inability to manipulate lexical nuances and connotations. They

suggested that an emphasis on culture education was a solution to such problems. They

reported one of ESL writers' perhaps most-widely shared feelings: They were frustrated

with their expressions which are grammatically correct but did not make sense to native

English speakers. Some suggested that to overcome such difficulties, they should learn

contextualized English by reading, for example, English newspapers and magazines.

Writing Motivation / The Relationship Between Existential Questions and Writing

Campbell (1998) describes students' sense of writing achievement by comparing

intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. She suggests that an intrinsic motivation[4] is better at

getting student writers excited than an extrinsic motivation such as grades or course

requirements. According to her "the sense of accomplishment for [students writing from

intrinsic motivation] is deeper and more internal than when they turn in an academic

exposition because of the personal nature of what they reveal in their creative writing"

(p. 41). Because of assessment, a usual fixture in school curriculum, students may have

difficulty completely removing extrinsic factors from their writing motivation. But there

may be ways to marshal as much intrinsic motivation as possible in the service of

improving a student's reading and writing skills. For example, writing personal

responses to readings may be a way for a student to get excitement from writing his or

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[4]   Campbell's (1998) intrinsic motivation appears to mean the excitement students get from "putting
their ideas down on paper" (p. 40).

her opinion. Campbell suggests the process of writing personal opinions gives students "a new sense of self-identity"[5] (p. 41).

Recounting his experiences of teaching ESL to Spanish-speaking adult workers in a rural area of Colorado, Graman (1988) advocates Paulo Freire's pedagogy, the core of which is to empower learners. Roundly criticized by Paulo Freire as "banking education" (cited in Graman, 1988, p. 434) is teachers' attempts to transfer accepted information[6] and get students to endorse, remember, and reproduce it in class and on tests. Graman argues that "banking education" includes "this unstated proviso: Instead of using the reality of your experience and your innate capacity to construct knowledge and language, we (the knowing teachers) will invent 'reality' in the classroom and give 'knowledge and language' to you as deposits of information; you simply must reproduce what we have planned for you" (p. 434). Graman argues for critical perspectives which he promotes as necessary to "learning through posing and resolving existential problems" (p. 442). In a similar light, there may be a point in promoting "generative themes"[7] (p. 437 & p. 444) because of the possibility: A promotion of generative themes may make for a teaching and learning atmosphere in which a prescriptive guideline is so missing that "authentic" (p. 435) (as opposed to artificial) dialogues between students and teachers are possible.

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[5] For example, Campbell (1998) mentions that a student discovered a new self-identity as "a writer of the English language" (p. 41).

[6] By "accepted information," Graman appears to mean such information as the knowing teachers prepare for students. That is, the process of gaining the accepted information is far from "using the reality of [students'] existence and [students'] capacity to construct knowledge and language" (p. 434).

[7] Freire defines a generative theme as a "concrete representation of many ideas, values, concepts, and hopes, as well as the obstacles which impede man's full humanization" (cited in Graman, 1988, p. 437).

Graman suggests that it may positively affect students' lives outside classroom to integrate existential questions in students' lives into their language learning. That is, Graman found that unfolding around discussion of the existential questions related to students' lives and to the readings, foreign language class was instrumental in "accomplishing larger life tasks, such as personal, social, and political growth" (p. 447). Although, as implied earlier, he suggests that existential questions help to motivate students, he did not mention the potential that existential problems, combined with critical perspectives, have in ESL class. Existential problems, combined with critical perspectives, may make pedagogical sense when they are weighed against Savignon's (1991) claim that language learning takes place through "participation in communicative events" (p. 271) (i.e., interactions). That is, critical perspectives may be easily spurred by existential questions, and a combination of the two may make for active interactions in ESL class. Graman describes it as the humanizing purpose of education for teachers and students to win "the freedom to think and act as critically conscious beings" (p. 448). Absent-mindedness is typical of many ESL students weaned on the traditional teacher-fronted teaching method. That being the case, Graman appears to reveal a serious threat to language learning. He writes:

> ... the most difficult thing about applying the Freirean pedagogy is not
> disagreement or debate, which is highly desirable; rather, it is people's refusal to
> think for themselves. Thus, the most challenging task is to help people begin to

search for and examine critically the bases for their views (Graman, 1988, pp. 446 - 447).

Quality Improvements

Crowhust (1983) plays down expectations about the benefits of sentence-combining per se. According to her, people say that sentence-combining instruction results not only in increases in syntactic fluency in writing but improved quality as well. She cautions that increases in syntactic fluency in writing and improved quality do not come naturally to students who train themselves in simply combining sentences. At the same time, she questions whether or not an automatic linkage between sentence-combining and writing quality improvements exists. She writes:

> Teachers should be aware that sentence-combining may have an adverse effect on the writing of some students. It may encourage the production of excessively long, awkward and error-laden T-units (Crowhust, 1983, p. 64).

She maintains that syntactic fluency gains are likely to diminish in the months following sentence-combining instruction. Therefore, she suggests, practice in sentence-combining be given at regular intervals.

As mentioned earlier, Crowhust suggests that there are potential pitfalls in sentence-combining as a way of improving the quality of writing. She makes proposals concerning a more effective way of quality improvements. That is, she argues "[writing]

quality improvements are most likely to result if substantial time is spent on open, rather than cued, exercises, on whole-discourse problems, and on discussing the rhetorical effect of the various versions produced" (p. 70). According to her, sentence-combining improves writing quality when practice and other activities (i.e., open exercises, whole-discourse problems, discussing rhetorical effect) are integrated into sentence-combining exercises. In practical terms, to improve students' syntactic fluency and writing quality, teachers may need to nudge them in the direction of seeing what is behind sentence-combining. Sentence-combining per se seems to amount to little more than a catalyst for such subactivities as open exercises and discussing rhetorical effect. It appears that coupled with practices, such subactivities help students with syntactic fluency and writing quality. It also might be added that many ESL students have an additional problem. That is, they do not have a whole history (or experience) of reading, speaking and hearing the target language to base sentence-combining on.

<u>Students' Construction of Criteria for Better Writing</u>

Hillocks' (1986) review concludes that models and teacher comments are nowhere near "scales or sets of criteria" (p. 156) in terms of effect on students' writing. There are some implications in the process of constructing a set of criteria. Clifford (1978 & 1981, cited in Hillocks, 1986, pp. 157-158) shows a way of constructing a set of criteria: 1) a structured assignment is followed by oral brainstorming; 2) the oral brainstorming is followed by free writing; 3) the free writing is followed by small group discussion (with feedback sheets on standby) and here a set of criteria is developed; 4) based on the criteria, a tentative writing plan is drawn up.

Through brainstorming and discussion (or self-reflection), students are likely to integrate their personal meanings into a set of emergent criteria. Such a procedure seems to have the potential to enhance thoroughly students' personal involvement and motivation.

<u>Audience-awareness / Objective Perspectives and Writing</u>

According to Hillocks (1986), a skillful writer's composing process is marked by the following aspects of writing process: sociocentricity, assessment and discovery, attention to the whole (i.e., controlling purposes), and many alternatives. Hillocks' concept of a skillful writer's composing process appears to be closely related to a writer's ceaseless effort to put her or his composing process in objective (or unbiased) perspectives.

A virtue of such a composing process appears to go beyond helping a writer's written production make sense to others (i.e., being well-organized) toward challenging the writer to present her or his own ideas so that she or he could not be trapped in self-induced fallacy[8]. A writer's effort to put her or his composing process to an unbiased perspective may be applicable to the inward face of writing (i.e., reflection on oneself) as well as the outward face of writing (i.e., audience-consciousness). That is, an unbiased writer's (i.e., a writer who puts her or his composing process in objective

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[8] By 'self-induced fallacy,' I mean the fallacy for which a writer has only himself or herself --a dearth of interactions--to blame. Promoting interactive reading and writing as a way of writing to learn, Vacca and Linek (1992) appear to suggest a way to help preclude such fallacies. They assert that "talk can stimulate thinking and expose holes in an individual's knowledge" (p. 150).

perspectives) writing process would have a space for devil's advocates that many selves[9] as well as others (in imagination) play.

The role of audience-awareness in the composing process may be interesting to those who look for ways to improve the quality of writing. Hillocks (1986) asserts that audience-awareness is a promising research avenue in which a writer's knowledge of audience/product relations and his or her use of that knowledge can be examined. Inherently audience-awareness seems to help writers to make as much effort as possible to make their written productions understood by others. That is, writers would reckon with many factors (e.g., audience needs, and interest-sparking ways). Scarcella and Oxford (1992) state: "Using writing purposefully to convey authentic messages to real audiences ... facilitates writing development" (p. 121).

ESL Students' Reading

Gunderson (1991) writes:

A reader of English uses her knowledge of syntax and semantics, her personal experiential background, and her knowledge of the world to make predications in reading. ESL readers also apply their syntactic and semantic knowledge as they read, but their ability to apply this knowledge may be limited by their English proficiency... ESL readers object to the notion that they don't have to read every word in order to understand a text. Indeed, their basic approach is more often to use their dictionary to

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[9]   Hillocks (1995) explains "a deconstructive view of writing" (p. 7) as a way to write well: A writer needs to take on many identities - a reader, to divide himself/herself from the text (from self), to generate a second, third, or fourth self to see what is written from the outside.

understand every word in an English text, a procedure that both slows their reading rate

and lowers their comprehension (Gunderson, 1991, pp. 139-140).

Truthfully, most university-level ESL students are uncomfortable with the concept of

skimming, because they are convinced their task is to read and comprehend every word

in the text (Gunderson, 1991, pp. 147-148).

His finding suggests that comprehending every word in the text is not necessary to

understanding the text adequately. The suggestion may constitute a start in a direction of

investigating a connection between reading and writing, for example, a connection

between a student's written response to the reading and the level of his or her

comprehension of the text words per se.

L1 as an Assessment Tool

    There is little doubt that research participants' accurate and complete answers are

crucial to a researcher's effort. Brucker (1992), for instance, argues that ESL students

should use their L1s in their responses to research questions. She writes:

I encouraged the students to answer this evaluation in Spanish. Although I don't read

Spanish well, I can always find a staff person or another teacher to translate for me.

This extra step is worth my time because students can give me "true," that is to say,

more accurate and more complete answers, using their first language. They feel freer to

express themselves and let me know what they want (cited in Auerbach, 1993, p. 22).

<u>Using the Newspaper to Teach ESL Learners</u>

Olivares (1993) extols the virtues of using the newspaper to teach ESL learners by stating that the newspaper is "context-embedded" (p. 11) and "cognitively demanding" (p. 11) material. Olivares' suggestion may provide an approach to use context-embedded newspaper articles as target language-learning material.

> Context-embedded communication is full of environmental or context clues. An example is the interaction between a foreign tourist and a salesperson in a fruit market. If the tourist wishes to buy something, she does not need too much proficiency in the oral language to give meaning to her message. Gestures, facial expressions, and other body language can take the place of oral language to communicate meaning (Olivares, 1993, p. 11).

Olivares' suggestion focuses on language function (or meaning). In my opinion, however, there also appears to be a benefit of the contextualized second language-learning that is largely overlooked. Weaned on the decontextualized grammar (or words)-based English learning, for example, Korean students are usually plagued by the so-called Konglish (Korean English) problem: Their English productions tend to be grammatically correct (at least in their opinions) but idiomatically incorrect. Quite a few Korean college students say 'I want to improve my ability of English' rather than 'I want to improve my ability in English.' Context-embedded English-learning may be an effective way to help solve a problem such as Konglish.

Olivares discusses Cummins' concepts regarding students' language proficiency: basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS) and cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP). Building the case for cognitive academic language proficiency (CALP) in the following way, Olivares appears to pick up on where basic interpersonal communication skills have their limitations.

> BICS allow the L2 learners to communicate in colloquial conversations; they are the language survival skills. However, BICS are not enough to succeed in a classroom environment, where the communication process frequently requires cognitive skills in the second language and usually demands the use and comprehension of context-specific concepts. For these uses, second-language learners need a more complex and comprehensive set of language skills; this is where CALP comes in (Olivares, 1993, p. 10).

Olivares suggests that in order to help LEP (Limited English Proficiency) students develop the more sophisticated language proficiency needed to understand abstract academic concepts, teachers "should create a learning atmosphere in which BICS and CALP can be combined" (p. 15). According to Olivares, the cooperative learning approach can provide such an environment; and using the newspaper in groups can greatly enhance the benefits of the cooperative learning approach.

Olivares recommends an integration of reading and writing as the culmination of newspaper activities (which include mastering some basic structures of language and speech and conducting oral interactions). Olivares is less than specific, however, about

strategies to integrate reading and writing. In my opinion, using the newspaper in

language class is facilitated by an exploration of how students' written responses are

affected by different topics (e.g., politics, economics and science) and different types of

article (e.g., news reports, editorials, and columns).

<u>Summary and the Need for the Current Research Project</u>

Studies reviewed suggest ways to use the relationship between reading

proficiency and writing skills in the ESL classroom. My overall impression of the

existing research is that it seems to fall somewhat short of supporting a practical model

for teaching. Such a model is needed to meet the goal of helping students use effectively

the connection between reading and writing. In my opinion, the goal is extremely

important because by putting the relationship between reading and writing skills to good

use, students may improve their reading and writing skills. As witness, my former

Korean colleague teachers agreed that well-read students are at an advantage when

confronted with writing tasks. My overall impression of the existing research is based on

a lack of a tested method to implement the research findings in an integrative way in

classroom-based situations. Despite their practical tips (e.g., see Belanger, 1987; Bergin,

1995; Kennedy; 1985), the researchers as a whole seem not to have gone far enough to

provide examples of how the research findings can be implemented by students (i.e., as

part of students' daily study life). While details of how to implement reading and writing

integration are beyond the scope of this research, this project does seek to examine

Korean adult ESL learners' perceptions of reading logs used in peer study which may

contribute to developing strategies for ESL/EFL learners to integratively enhance

reading, writing, and oral discussion skills in an effective and relatively easy way. That is, it explores one possible method for integrating reading, writing, and oral discussion skills. A reading log has such features as summary and personal response, and the participants in my research project limited their reading logs to one page.

Chapter Three

Method

The 1997 Pilot Research

The 1997 pilot research lasted from September, 1997 to November 1997. Two

populations were sampled: Canadian graduate students and Korean adult ESL learners.

Twelve Canadian participants, my graduate course (LANE 534, winter term 1, 1997)

colleagues, were teachers at various levels in the school system. (LANE--Language

Education-- 534's full title is Theory and Research in Written Composition.) They were

required to write and submit at least nine reading logs on academic articles as part of

their course activity. They decided on the articles on which they wrote their reading logs.

Time was provided for them to share their reading logs during every class period. But

they were actually invited to do so anytime throughout the class period if their reading

logs were relevant to an ongoing topic. Five Korean adult ESL learners also participated

in the pilot research. Of the five Koreans in the pilot study, three also participated in the

current research project. In detail, Participant 1, Participant 3 and Participant 4

participated in both the 1997 pilot research project and the current research project; the

two others in the pilot research project were an exchange student of mathematics and a

full-time homemaker. (Any investigation into differences between the old-timers and the

first-timers was beyond the scope of the current research project.) In the pilot research

project, the Korean participants and I met on a weekly basis. Our weekly meetings lasted

for approximately three hours. In principle, the Korean participants had a say in deciding

on news report articles or editorials. But with no Korean subjects subscribing to a daily

newspaper, sometimes I provided them with many English news articles or editorials one of which they chose. They read the newspaper article, and wrote their reading logs. As a researcher, I limited my role in the study group to striking up and facilitating a discussion (i.e., unless I was asked to explain grammatical information embedded in sentences, my presence was not dominant). Beginning their Canadian residence that year, the Koreans volunteered to participate in the pilot research where they expected to improve their English competence, especially in academic writing and oral discussion. Their study plans had prompted them to try to improve their academic writing and oral discussion skills. The research questions which I sought to answer in the pilot research were as follows: 1) While keeping their reading logs, what do the writers find about their general competence in writing? 2) What difficulties and benefits do the writers find when they summarize reading material? 3) What difficulties and benefits do the writers find when they write personal responses to a given reading material? 4) Are there indications that what writers do in their reading logs carries over to their oral work in meetings?

The Participants in the Current Research Project

I organized a peer study group of Korean adult ESL learners who volunteered to participate in my research project. I announced at a gathering of Korean students (i.e., graduate students of a Canadian university) that I would organize a peer study group; the participants who were interested in participating volunteered. (Hearing Participant 3 speaking about the peer study group, Participant 6 joined the group from the fifth meeting on.) In celebration of the New Year's Day, the President of the

Korean Graduate Student Association invited Korean graduate students (and their

families), Korean visiting scholars (and their families), and Korean faculty members

(and their families) to an annual potluck party. The gathering (about twenty students and

their families; about ten visiting scholars and their families; two faculty members and

their families) took place on January 3 , 1998 at the Commonsblock of the university's

Family Housing complex. During my announcement, I described the group as a

research-specific one where adult Koreans would read newspaper articles in English,

write reading logs and conduct oral discussions. Starting March 3, 1998, the study group

met every Tuesday at my home within the Family Housing complex. Each meeting

lasted for about two hours. The data are based on seven weeks of meetings (i.e., March

3, 1998 to April 14, 1998). Given my curriculum vitae (i.e., B.A. in English, teaching

experience, and a candidate for a master's degree in Teaching English as a Second

Language), they seemed to invest me with the authority to help them with their English-

learning. As witness to this, they turned to me whenever they could not clearly

understand some English sentence structures they read in newspaper articles. As

indicated in the latter part of this paper, I assumed the role of peer in the peer study

group.

• Participant 1: She was in her early 30s. She earned her Ph. D. in marketing from a

Korean university. For five years she was a researcher with a transportation and

logistics company in Korea. Since July 1997, she had been in the Canadian university in

her capacity as a visiting scholar. The second half of 1997 saw her attending three to

four ESL classes a week and taking a course in writing at the Writing Centre affiliated

with the university. After she came upon a Law School student from Korea in winter

1997, she rekindled what she called her long-delayed dream--becoming a lawyer. When

she graduated from high school, she wanted to apply to the department of law, but her

parents discouraged her from doing so. Then most Korean parents used to regard

pursuing a law career as unsuitable for women. For the next few weeks after her

encounter with the law school student from Korea, she crammed for the LSAT (Law

School Admission Test), an examination most North American law schools require their

prospective applicants to take. In early February, 1998, she took the test for the first

time. As of writing this paper, she was applying to two Canadian law schools. Since her

arrival in Canada, she has taken TOEFL (Test Of English As A Foreign Language) three

times with sights set on her second Ph. D. in commerce at a Canadian university. After

the LSAT, she said that focusing on measuring particularly applicants' reading and

writing skills, the test embarrassed her. Her LSAT experience seemed to convince her of

the value of the reading log method when she said to me that she badly needed reading

log-based English learning. (She participated in my pilot research project which lasted

from September 1997 to November 1997.) She was so dedicated to learning English that

almost every weekday saw her doing something related to her English learning. For

example, at the suggestion of a college professor with whom she forged a friendship

during worship services at a Catholic church, she observed the professor's class three

times every week and then in oral English she reported to the professor what she

observed. She said that the professor who had written a law school recommendation

letter for her was committed to helping her become proficient in English. Three times

every week she took a private lesson in ESL from a tutor whom the professor introduced to her. She also began to observe a Korean-Canadian professor's graduate course twice a week and reported to the Korean-Canadian professor what she observed. She had difficulty in understanding the Canadian professor's lecture on classics while she felt she was an expert in the Korean Canadian professor's commerce classroom.

• Participant 2: She was in her early 40s. She earned a bachelor's degree in law from a Korean university. For about 15 years she had been working as a reporter with a major broadcasting corporation in Korea. She came to a Canadian university in May 1997 in her capacity as a visiting researcher. That is, she was invited by The Centre for Korea Research at the university. For the first six weeks of her residence in Vancouver, she attended an ESL course offered by an institute loosely affiliated with the university. She recalled her frustration with an undercurrent of the ESL programs: LEP (Limited English Proficiency) is equivalent to "LIP (Limited Intellectual Potential)" (De la Reyes, 1992, p. 434). She resented that, targeted at adults, the institute's program contents (e.g., social or science matters) in general were far from being cognitively demanding (i.e., intellectually stimulative) or thought-provoking. A frustration with institutional ESL programs like the university institute ones prompted her to turn to a tutor for her English-learning. She maintained that taking a private lesson in English from a tutor has the advantage of providing a customized curriculum (i.e., adjusting a curriculum to a learner's need). But in her case, she said, the effectiveness of private lessons was blunted because advance and careful preparation for teaching was missing from her tutor whose teaching was marked by excessive improvisations (e.g., not providing her with

reading materials in advance). The tutor persistently ignored her requests for advance availability of reading material. Drawn by the title of a course ("Current Events: Radio and Newspaper") which struck her as guaranteeing a cognitively or intellectually challenging ESL course, she registered herself in a community center ESL class more than a month before she began to participate in my research project. At the same time, she also attended a theology school course in Bible studies. In the community center ESL class, articles from a Vancouver-based newspaper were read. For her, coupled with a low level of her classmates' (ethnically heterogeneous adults) proficiency in English, the instructor's superficial teaching style (i.e., focusing on language form to the detriment of newspaper article contents) made for an unsatisfactory ESL course. To her disappointment, it was next to impossible for the classmates to conduct oral discussions in English, their potential lingua franca. After experiencing what she described as false starts (e.g., her ESL experience at the Canadian university-affiliated language institute) in learning English in Vancouver, she said that she was attracted particularly by the two aspects of the study group: using newspaper articles and writing reading logs.

• Participant 3: He was in his early 30s. He was a Ph. D. student who was studying animal science at a Canadian university. He earned both a bachelor's and a master's degrees in animal science from a Korean university. While he was working as a milk specialist with a leading milk company in Korea, he used to help the company's president with English interpretation and translation. He arrived in Canada in late April, 1997. He also participated in the pilot research project in 1997. Feeling that, focusing on

spoken English, his English proficiency was not adequate for academic tasks (e.g., academic writing and discussion), he was enthusiastic about the study group.

• Participant 4: She is a full-time homemaker in her early 30s. She earned a bachelor's degree in computer science from a Korean university. For years she had worked as a computer programmer for a Korean company. During the period ranging from her arrival in Canada late April, 1997 to the end of 1997, she attended four ESL classes a week. During the peer study, she expected to train herself to write in English. She also participated in my pilot research project in 1997.

• Participant 5: She was in her mid-30s. She was an exchange student at the Canadian university. She earned a bachelor's degree in business administration from a Korean university. She lived in Japan for about seven years and worked toward earning a Ph. D. in business administration at a Tokyo-based university. Under an agreement between the Japanese university and a Canadian university, she began to attend MBA (Master of Business Administration) classes at the Canadian university in December, 1997. She said that her experience of learning Japanese inspired her with confidence in her own ability to learn foreign languages. She said that when she began a new life in Japan about seven years before, she was not familiar even with basic Japanese. She attributed what she called her success in Japanese-learning to association with native speakers. Hoping for a similar success in learning English, she chose a Canadian roommate in Vancouver. In the study group, she hoped to train herself especially in oral discussion skills, something that she described as crucial to a group meeting, part of her MBA course.

• Participant 6: She was in her late 20s. She earned her bachelor's degree in landscape architecture from a Korean university. For about six years she worked at a Korean company specializing in landscape architecture. While Participant 3 was working on his master's degree at a Korean university, Participant 6's relative was Participant 3's faculty advisor. Participant 3's former faculty advisor asked him to support her with her English-learning in Vancouver where her residence began in November, 1997. Participant 3 introduced her to the peer study group. Setting sights on graduate studies in North America, she was preparing for TOEFL by attending ESL classes at a private institute in the city.

<u>Methodology</u>

Ethnographic methods (e.g., my observations of the participants doing oral discussion and my interviews with them) were employed. The participants' written productions (i.e., reading logs, pre-meeting activity sheets, newspaper summary forms, and project evaluation forms) were analyzed. Audio-tapes were also used.

To investigate subjects' pre-observation English writing and oral skills, participants who began to be exposed to the reading log method for the first time (i.e., Participants 2, 5 & 6) were asked to write a self-description about their writing and oral skills: to summarize a reading; to write their personal responses to it; to present orally their opinions of it. The pre-observation investigation occurred in the following way. Prior to our first meeting, the participants received the same English newspaper article and wrote a reading log in both English and Korean. They were allowed to generate ideas in Korean when they were in the process of drafting their reading logs. Their first

language (not used in the 1997 pilot research project) helped to head off the possibility that the participants might have oversimplified (i.e., simplified ideas or opinions to the degree that they were distorted in meaning) or given up explaining their original ideas or intentions when they had difficulty in expressing themselves in English. During the first half of the first meeting, an English discussion on the newspaper topic took place. (If the participants had difficulty in expressing their ideas in English, they were also encouraged to turn to Korean and then put them into English.) During the second half of the first meeting, there was time for a kind of self-reflection: In written form they were asked to describe what they felt about writing their reading logs and oral discussions. To ensure accuracy in (and facility with) which they could express themselves, the written reflection was done in their first language. After that, there was time for initiating all the participants into all the details of the research procedure (i.e., how to write a reading log; fill out pre-meeting activity sheets; fill out newspaper summary forms; fill out reflection forms; see appendix for details). (The 1997 pilot research project procedure consisted of only writing English reading logs, oral English discussions and filling out a project evaluation form.) After the first six weeks (two weeks for participant 6) of their participation in the peer study group, the participants did not fill out the newspaper summary form because they said they came to know how to have the main points of the form directly (i.e., without filling out the form) reflected in their reading logs.

Materials and Resources

The participants hoped that articles for the peer study group would come from Canada's national newspaper (as opposed to provincial newspapers) largely because of

their interest in international perspectives. Because they saw me as their group leader,

they also asked me to collect newspaper articles from which they would choose an

article every week. As a subscriber to *the Globe and Mail*, a Canadian daily, I collected

newspaper articles deemed to potentially spark the participants' interest and asked them

to choose an article for a given day from among the collected newspaper articles. The

newspaper articles were selected to strike a balance between participant-friendliness and

the research purpose. That is, when I selected the articles (about three potential articles

for a weekly meeting), I took into consideration the fact that the participants were

Koreans, adults, and ESL learners. For example, articles on the economic situation in

Korea were chosen over articles on Northern Irish peace talks. While my decision on

the potential articles was made after I had read all the articles, usually the participants'

choice tended to be based on the impression a newspaper article title made on them (i.e.,

they checked articles' titles against their interest). (As shown in chapters four and five of

this thesis, some participants had difficulties in writing personal responses because of a

lack of background knowledge about a given newspaper article topic. The difficulties

indicated that a level of background knowledge about a given topic was not reflected in

their way of deciding on a newspaper article.) To minimize my intervention, I had kept

silent on details of article contents throughout their choosing process. I did not act in

contravention of my self-imposed non-intervention principle. That is, I limited my role

to providing the participants with a pool of the to-be-potentially-read articles from their

agreed daily. My non-intervention attitude usually took a form of being silent. In detail,

my non-intervention attitude manifested itself in my silence about the participants'

weekly chosen article to make sure that I, as a researcher, would not happen to influence their opinions about it.

One of the research questions (i.e., Question 3a) was to examine the participants' responses to different topics (i.e., topics with which newspaper articles mainly deal) or article types (e.g., news reports, editorials, and columns). The participants were to read a new article every week, which helped to secure the diversity of topics and facilitated a search for answers to the research question. But the initial plan of providing them with article types as varied as possible needed to be fine-tuned at the participants' request somewhere along the way (for details including the reason, see chapters four and five of this thesis).

Once the participants got into the swing of the peer study group (i.e., from the second meeting), their pre- and in-meeting activities unfolded in the following way. In advance of a meeting, the participants were asked to do the following things: read the newspaper article (on which they decided); fill out a pre-meeting activity sheet (featuring vocabulary, grammatical structures and passages which individual participants might have difficulty in comprehending). One pre-meeting activity sheet titled "English Newspaper Reading Class" (see Appendix A) was prepared for each newspaper article. Missing from the 1997 pilot research project, the pre-meeting activity sheet was designed to help the ESL participants understand both English form and content. I believe that ESL learners in general struggle with the intricacies of some English vocabulary and grammar usage. Such a belief is supported by Auerbach and Paxton's (1997) finding that "in general, [ESL college] students saw a lack of L2

proficiency (vocabulary, grammar) as the biggest obstacle to L2 reading and had a sense of insecurity about their reading" (p. 244). For Korean adults whose English learning in their home country is overwhelmingly form-based, the reality is that an accurate understanding of English passage content entails an accurate understanding of English form (i.e., if they cannot understand English words, or English forms embedded in a given passage, they tend to feel stuck). The items of the pre-meeting activity sheet were designed to reflect the participants' (all Korean adults) ways of learning English by asking them to think over difficult vocabulary, sentences and passages. In detail, the participants were asked about the vocabulary they didn't understand when they read a given newspaper article. They were asked to write down what they thought an unfamiliar vocabulary word meant. When they came across a difficult word, they were encouraged to guess its meaning rather than consult a dictionary immediately. In the process, I conjectured, they would practice or further develop an important reading strategy: taking advantage of context information (e.g., sentence structures and a writer's tone or logic) while trying to understand content. After guessing, they were asked to write down a dictionary definition. If there were grammatical structures they had difficulty in understanding, they were asked to write them down and their own analyses with rationales for their interpretations (i.e., analyses). The same procedure applied to passages they had difficulty in comprehending. (During oral discussion, they shared their guesses or rationales with each other.)

The participants were given Johnson's newspaper summary form (see Appendix B). The form was also missing from the 1997 pilot research project. As mentioned

earlier, for the first six weeks of the meetings, the newspaper summary form was used. They filled it out as part of a pre-meeting activity. The newspaper summary form was designed mainly to help the participants comprehend content and nurture their critical and analytic perspectives with an eye to facilitating the process of writing their reading logs. (The section for definitions of terms in chapter one of this thesis shows the newspaper summary form's major features.) When I decided to use the newspaper summary form as part of the pre-meeting activity sheet, the decision was inspired by a ministry reference set (Ministry of Education of British Columbia). The ministry reference set asserts that "If one is engaged in critical thinking, one is, by definition, involved in assessment or evaluation (i.e., in making judgments about the adequacy, accuracy, etc. of beliefs, reports, ways of acting, and so on)" (p. 149). In a similar vein, I recall what I found during more than ten years of teaching experience at Korean high schools: If a learner is short on a critical perspective, she/he tends to intellectually draw a blank when she/he is asked to speak or write about a book she/he has read. The participants filled out the newspaper summary form either in English or Korean at their option. (As will be explained in chapter five of this thesis, I think not only the participants' actual reading logs but also their in-meeting discussions revolved roughly around the newspaper summary form's major features.) The participants capped their pre-meeting activities with writing their reading logs. To encourage the participants' critical perspectives through the use of their own words (see Campbell, 1990), the participants were strongly advised that copying verbatim reading material was not expected of them. The participants' less than high proficiency in English (i.e., their

inability to express themselves fully in English), I feared, would have adverse effects on the quality and quantity of their English reading logs. Writing their reading logs in Korean constituted a start for heading off such a possibility. Both Korean and English versions of their reading logs were handed in to me.

There was also an emphasis on the value of the personal response portion in a reading log. In a reading log (preferring, by definition, original explanation or transforming information to something else), for me, the personal response seems to be more pedagogically informative than a summary. Drawing on the pilot research finding that a personal response was a better learning experience than a summary, I asked the participants to limit their summaries to less than a third of their reading logs if possible. There was a page restriction: one page (letter size). During the 1997 pilot research project, I found merits in the page restriction: All of the Canadian and Korean participants felt that it helped to maximize their intellectual operations by making them more thoughtful and more concise than they would have been if it had not been for the page restriction (provided that a verbatim copy was strictly avoided). In my opinion, as will explained in chapter five of this thesis, for the participants, the page restriction seemed to be a recipe for seriously discerning levels of importance of information.

The participants' meeting activities revolved around the features of the pre-meeting activity sheets: discussions over difficult vocabulary, grammatical structures and passages; sharing reading logs in oral forms. I think every meeting found the participants ready for class activities thanks to their pre-class activities.

In principle, the language vehicle for class activities was English. If individual participants had difficulty demonstrating their ideas in English, however, they were encouraged to turn to their first language, Korean, and then put the Korean version into English. Confronted with the task of putting Korean into English, all the participants also found themselves pooling their resources (e.g., their acquired English lexical knowledge), which was an ideal model for cooperative learning. During the task which encouraged their English resource retrieval (i.e., encouraged them to retrieve their already learned English knowledge, or information --e.g., words, structural patterns), the participants realized the benefits of collecting (in a stronger term, internalizing) useful English expressions. That is, they realized that their facility with useful English expressions would help them with their self-expression in English.

After every meeting, the participants filled out a reflection (evaluation) form (see appendix C) featuring 1) a description of their preparation: areas to which they paid much attention; areas to which they paid relatively less attention 2) a description of meeting activities: areas which they found easy; areas which they found difficult 3) the day's meeting management: tasks or strategies which helped them; suggestions for improvement in the future. Each description was supposed to contain relevant examples from the day. Because of concern for accuracy in (and facility with) which the participants expressed themselves, the evaluation form was filled out in Korean, their first language.

At the end of the research project, the participants were asked to evaluate their participation in it by filling out a self-reflection form (see appendix D). The form

featured the following questions (i.e., roughly the same as the research questions): 1) "What influence did you think keeping a reading log had on your general competence in writing?" 2) "What difficulties did you feel when you summarized a given newspaper article?" 3) "How did writing a summary help (or not help) you?" 4) "What difficulties did you face when you wrote your personal response to a given newspaper article?" 5) "How did writing a personal response help (or not help) you?" 6) "What effect did the one-page restriction have on your composing process?" 7) "In what ways did the reading log method influence your oral discussion when the study group met?" 8) (optional) "How did you think the reading log method might help (or not help) Korean college students?" 9) (optional) "What problems did you feel Korean college students would face if the reading log method were implemented in Korea?" The participants were asked to substantiate their answers with examples.

Data Collection

My data collection was based on

1. The participants' written productions

    1-1. Pre-observation (i.e., before their exposure to the full-featured reading log method)

        1-1-1. Reading logs (Korean and English versions)

        1-1-2. Self-description about their English writing and oral discussion skills in the first half of the opening meeting (for participant 6, the fifth meeting was her opening meeting): the first-time participants (i.e., participants 2, 5 and 6 did it in Korean)

    1-2. Post-observation (i.e., after their exposure to the full-featured reading log

       method)

       1-2-1. Pre-meeting activity sheets

           1-2-1-1. Difficult vocabulary, grammar, passage sheets (in Korean)

           1-2-1-2. Newspaper summary forms (either in Korean or English)

           1-2-1-3. Reading logs (in Korean and English)

       1-2-2. Reflection (on both pre-meeting and in-meeting activities) sheets (in

         Korean)

       1-2-3. Project evaluation sheets (in Korean)

2. Audio tapes featuring in-meeting discussions and interviews: each session was audio-

taped. The participants were debriefed about details of their composing process (e.g.,

their responses to article topics and types of articles). I used the audio-tapes when I

transcribed what the participants said.

3. My observations of the participants at every stage of the research project (i.e., during

and after every meeting): I took notes during every meeting and wrote in a journal after

every meeting while listening to the audio tapes. During the transcriptions, I listened to

all of the audio-tapes in principle and translated virtually all of the participants'

responses into English, even though this thesis itself does not accommodate all of the

transcriptions. During the data analysis, I found myself referring to some of the audio-

tapes again for more accuracy in describing the participants' feelings.

During the debriefing session of every meeting, Korean was used. In this thesis, the direct quotations from the remarks which the participants made during the debriefing session were translated into English by me (see appendix E for an example).

Summary

All of the six participants in the current research project were Korean adult ESL learners. Because of their desire to improve their academic English writing skills, for seven weeks (from March 3, 1998 to April 14, 1998) they volunteered to participate in a weekly peer study meeting which lasted for about two hours at a time. I was the group leader and observed their meetings. They read English newspaper articles and wrote English reading logs about the articles before they met for weekly oral discussion about the articles. They optionally drafted their reading logs in their first language. While writing their reading logs, they also filled out such activity forms as asked them to take notes of syntactically and/or semantically difficult sentences and summarize the articles. In the end of every meeting, the participants filled out another form asking them to write about their preparation state and in-meeting activities in a form of self-reflection. In the end of the current research project, the participants also filled out an evaluation form largely featuring the research questions. They gave me all their written works including their reading logs. I interviewed the participants in the end of each meeting mainly to get their written responses clarified. Every meeting was audio-taped for data collection and analysis.

Data collection was based on the participants' written works and my observations of their meetings and my interviews with the participants.

Chapter Four

Research Results

This chapter is about the research results, or research findings. The description of

the research results revolves around the categories into which the participants' responses

to the research questions fell: benefits or drawbacks reported by the participants;

difficulties reported by the participants; questions related to types and topics/questions

related to transfer of learning; question related to language.

With the current research project typical of a case study of adult ESL learners,

the research findings are detailed in describing the participants' and feelings and their

responses to the research questions.

<u>Benefits or Drawbacks Reported by the Participants</u>

The benefits or drawbacks of the reading log strategy were examined by

pursuing answers to the following research questions: 1) What influence did the

participants think keeping a reading log had on their general competence in writing? 2)

How did the participants report writing a summary helped (or did not help) them in their

opinions? 3) How did the participants report writing a personal response helped (or did

not help) them in their opinions? and 4) How did the participants report the one-page

restriction helped (or did not help) them in their opinions? All of the participants

reported that there were few noticeable drawbacks of the reading log strategy. Instead,

they reported that they benefited from the reading log strategy in the following ways.

Asked about any influence keeping a reading log had on her/his general

competence in writing, each participant responded by describing keeping a reading log

as both benefiting her/him and offering an opportunity for realizing a real (as opposed to 'assumed', 'untested', 'unproven') level of her/his competence in writing. The participants' written and/or oral answers to the question took the form of self-reflections on their participation in the research project. With Korean versions of reading logs considered as a stop on their road to writing English versions (i.e., just helping the participants write their English reading logs by facilitating idea generation, for example), their responses focused on writing English versions of their reading logs. In general, all the participants' responses came down to two things. First, every participant shared the feeling that she/he benefited from the reading log method. In detail, when they thought of the benefits from writing their reading logs, all of the participants in the current research project reported their enhanced abilities in organizing, thinking and focusing, and their increased opportunities for writing. They also said that they found writing did shape thinking. For example, Participant 1 said that not until she began to write a reading log had she comprehended what was mentioned in a somewhat difficult article. She attributed her difficulty with the article to what she called her "little background knowledge" about the article's topic, the Canadian medicare system. The article, an editorial, was titled "Can we talk about medicare?" (The Globe and Mail, 1998, March 2, p. A18). Usually having little opportunity to write in English on a substantial scale (e.g., writing an English letter or e-mailing in English) even in Vancouver where they resided at the time of their participation in the research project, all of the Korean participants shared the feeling that keeping their reading logs helped to improve their competence in writing by increasing opportunities for writing in English.

Second, every participant reported the fact that while writing, she/he discovered the deceptive and/or poor nature of her/his knowledge about English or writing competence. That is, all of the participants in the current research project felt that their English was better than it really was before they had written their English reading logs. The participants referred to what they called "a shocking self-awareness" of the level and/or state of their general writing competence. That is, they reported that they were "shocked" at the "poor" level and/or state of their knowledge of English vocabulary or structures and their ability to retrieve or appropriately use their already acquired English knowledge. When they reflected on their participation in the research project, with the wisdom of hindsight, they counted the "shocking self-awareness" among the benefits from writing their reading logs. That is, the participants felt their "shocking self-awareness" pointed out the "urgent" need for efforts to correct their weaknesses. Before writing reading logs (i.e., before a level and/or state of their knowledge or competence were tested), they thought that their facility with English and their writing competence were enough for their self-expression in English. While writing reading logs, they came to realize that the knowledge which they thought they had mastered or the writing competence which they thought they had owned was not at their disposal (i.e., they realized that a real level and/or state of their knowledge or competence were too poor for a reasonable level of their self-expressions in English). For example, Participant 2 said that she was unable to compose grammatically correct sentences even though she had thought her expertise in English grammar was "exceptional." Participant 1 said that she

came to realize what she called her own "database for English expressions" "abysmally paled" in comparison with what she hoped to express in English.

Benefits of writing a summary. This paragraph describes the benefits the participants reported writing a summary gave them. They saw the summarizing task as a "useful exercise" because they had to grasp what they called the "essential and most pertinent" aspects of the material. They added that the summary helped them to "digest reading material and ultimately remember it better" than they otherwise would. Participant 2 cast the task of summarizing articles in the light of a personal experience. She said that so far what she thought her "limited proficiency in English" had "forced" her into copying "verbatim" a text when she summarized it. However, during oral debriefing sessions she reported that she found herself "eagerly" seeking and internalizing useful English expressions. During both oral debriefing sessions and written self-reflections, Participant 4 also shared with other participants her personal experience that the sheer fact of repeated reading which her summary entailed helped her to comprehend reading material more clearly.

Benefits of writing a personal response. The next few paragraphs describe the participants' self-reported benefits from writing personal responses. Their accounts were also partly about the benefits from dealing with existential problems in a critical way. The participants reported that they experienced the following benefits while writing personal responses. Participant 4 said writing a personal response (in her case, mainly in Korean) seemed to "help perceptively her with reading comprehension." She felt that a complete understanding of a given article is "a prerequisite for writing a personal

response." The task of writing her personal response prompted her into reading a given article "repeatedly and more carefully." In similar but more concrete words, Participant 2 described the benefit of writing a personal response. She said that writing a personal response was "instrumental" in enhancing her reading comprehension because, while writing, she had to "check repeatedly or recursively her thinking against the content of a newspaper article."

Participant 1 promoted the writing of personal responses by making a comparison between the task of writing a personal response and that of writing a summary. Compared with the task of writing a summary, she said, "writing a personal response challenged me to be more critical and helped me to generate ideas more actively." For her, as a result, "writing a personal response was more interesting than writing a summary."

Presumed to be culturally more accustomed to one kind of writing--the personal opinion piece--than the Korean participants were (either in the 1997 pilot research project or the current research project), the Canadian participants in the 1997 pilot research as a whole felt that writing a personal response helped them to internalize reading material and to consider how they could apply its content to their own teaching practices. One Canadian participant asserted that "linking reading material to individuals' own personal experiences and prior knowledge, the personal response to a given reading material is perhaps the most valuable feature of the reading log." Her feeling was shared by most of the Canadian participants in the 1997 pilot research.

The Korean participants in the current research project found that the task of writing personal responses prompted them into dealing with their existential issues in a critical way. For example, while writing her personal response to a column in which immigration policies in the United States and Canada were analyzed (Simpson, 1998), Participant 1 found herself putting Korean society into a critical perspective by replacing ethnic issues in the newspaper article with class issues (e.g., gender issues, and a gap in socio-economic status between the economically better off and the economically worse off) in her reading log (and actually during oral discussion also). By including such social issues in the definition of a struggle between groups, she claimed that, even though Korean society, an ethnically homogeneous one, " is said to be immune from ethnic struggles", it is "not at all immune from struggles between social classes" caused by "sexual inequality and unequal distribution of wealth." She ended her personal response by arguing that U.S. and Canada policy-makers' "expertise" in developing harmony among ethnic groups might be largely "applicable" to solving such social problems as sexual inequality and unequal distribution of wealth in Korea.

Benefits of the one-page restriction. The research question was: How did the participants report the one-page restriction helped them in their opinions? Including the Canadian participants in the pilot research project, the participants both in the pilot research project and the current research project saw the one-page restriction as pressuring them to be more concise and to discern more seriously levels of importance of both text information and personal responses. In the face of the one-page restriction, they felt more intellectually challenged. A Korean participant (a math major) in the 1997

pilot research project expressed a feeling shared by the other participants (in both the 1997 pilot research and the current research project) in the following way: "Relentlessly calling for succinct but logical thinkings," the one-page restriction demanded "a sustained tension." On her self-reflection sheet, Participant 2 in the current research project wrote:

> The page restriction wonderfully worked in improving my understanding of the whole content [of the reading material] by having me rewrite the content in my own words. Facing no such a page restriction[10], I tended to copy reading material verbatim [when I critiqued it as part of my college course assignment]. [In retrospect I feel that] my college-year habit of copying reading material verbatim worked against my full understanding of the reading material. My experience of writing reading logs [in the current research project] convinced me of an important thing: Only when I understand reading material fully can I rewrite the content of the reading material in my own words.

Difficulties Reported by the Participants

The following paragraphs describe the participants' self-reported difficulties they faced when they wrote their reading logs. In this regard, there were three research questions: 1)What difficulties did the participants report facing when they summarized reading material? 2) What difficulties did the participants report facing when they wrote

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[10] Like Participant 2, I was a college student in Korea in the late 1970s and the early 1980s. My experience pointed to a general feeling shared by students across schools and departments: Then professors as a whole had a marking policy adding up to promoting quantity at the expense of quality. That is, then students experienced the tendency that their professors gave high grades to a long written assignment regardless of its quality.

their personal responses to reading material? 3) What difficulties did the participants report facing when they tried to follow the one-page restriction?

In general, the participants in the current research project considered it quite challenging to summarize a newspaper article mainly for two reasons. One involved the type of article (i.e., a quotation-based article). The other involved what they thought a low level of their proficiency in English.

During an oral debriefing session, all of the participants in the current research project reported that they felt difficulty in summarizing a quotation-based column ("From the good ship monkey business to president monkey business," The New York Times, cited in The Globe and Mail, 1998). The author devoted most of the column to quoting directly and indirectly what a former U.S. politician thought of the sitting U.S. President's sex scandal. (The former politician's presidential candidacy was dropped because of his own sex scandal.) As a result, for all of the participants, the author's position on the column topic (i.e., the sitting U.S. President's sex scandal) was "elusive." The elusiveness of the column author's position led all of the participants to feel difficulty in summarizing the column and concomitantly they had difficulty writing personal responses.

Participating in the 1997 pilot project, my twelve Canadian classmates attributed the challenging nature of the task to the higher level of skills required than just reading and/or interpreting, and the Canadians' feeling about the nature of the task was also largely shared by the Korean participants both in the pilot research project and the current research project. For the first three weeks of her participation in this research

project, for example, Participant 6 was unable to summarize effectively (i.e., to the extent that she thought a summary could make sense to others) the newspaper articles which she said she managed to understand.

But what set the Korean participants' difficulty in summarizing apart from the Canadians' was found elsewhere. The Korean participants described the difficulties they faced when they summarized reading material. They held their self-assumed limited proficiency in English responsible for the difficulties. That is, they had difficulties mainly in understanding English sentences. Their difficulties were compounded when they found their dictionary entries did not explicitly (i.e., to the extent that even to the uninitiated, explanations make sense) include what they were looking up. For example, all the participants were wrong in understanding (or analyzing) the phrase "the predictable reactions from some quarters to the census data" in the following passage.

> We should also remember that Canada is not the United States. Canadians, breathing deeply of American discourse, have a habit of forgetting that. Thus the predictable reactions from some quarters to the census data, demanding new affirmative action programs, to better mirror the population in every job category in all fields of endeavour. That's a very American idea, driven by a very American circumstance: 400 years of poisoned relations between blacks and whites, 300 years of slavery garnished with 100 years of Jim Crow ("Canada then, Canada now," 1998).

All of the participants were mechanically applying a Korean way to their analyses of the phrase. In Korea where decontextualized grammar or vocabulary memorization prevails,

students usually learn by heart a set form of the structural pattern, 'from ... to ...'. The participants were confident that 'from some quarters to the census data' is a syntactically inseparable unit. After arguing out all options of what they thought the phrase means, they turned to me for help. Listening to my explanation of the phrase 'reactions to ...', they began to make sense of the passage. Participant 3 also cited an example in which his dictionary did not assist him in understanding "remarkably few downsides" in the sentence "This great, gradual change has brought many benefits and remarkably few downsides" ("Canada then, Canada now," 1998).

There was a case in which a participant's culturally different background was responsible for her difficulty in summarizing an article because a portion of the article did not make sense to her. In the end (i.e., in the debriefing session) of the discussion on a newspaper editorial about immigration titled "Canada then, Canada now", Participant 5 raised a question which she thought difficult. She said that there was an incongruity between the use of the pronoun "they" (in second and last paragraphs)[11] and the author's promotion of harmony among racial groups throughout the editorial. Although, for other participants, the use of the pronoun "they" was above any grammatical and semantic controversy, she felt "appalled" over what she thought was out of place. In Korea, the pronoun 'they', under certain circumstances, refers to those who do not side with us. Participant 5's culturally tinged interpretation of an English usage kept her from

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[11]   "Not long ago, non-white Canadians were nearly invisible--and they were almost none of them" ("Canada then, Canada now," 1998)--1st paragraph. "...Americans of mixed race want to be able to classify themselves as such... Mixed-race Canadians--such as hockey stars Paul Karyia, Jarome Iginla and Vicky Sunohara--create no such dilemmas. They can be who they are. And they are what nearly one in five respondents, and one in four Quebeckers, called themselves when the census asked their ethnic origin. They are Canadian. Period" ("Canada then, Canada now," 1998)--last paragraph.

understanding fully the editorial, and her inadequate understanding led to her difficulty in writing a summary.

Regardless of the participants' general acknowledgments of the virtues which summarizing in their own words has (e.g., Participant 2 on page 61), they as a whole seemed to struggle with using their own words as with Participant 4 who forgot to change a personal pronoun (i.e., our) in her own summary. The pronoun seemed to be out of place because she is not a Canadian. The following sentences from the day's reading material passed for Participant 4's self-worded summary in her reading log dated March 3, 1998.

> Not long ago, non-white Canadians were nearly invisible. . . . That Canada is history. . . . *Our* [italics added] visible minority population . . . has been rising steadily for a generation. It now stands at 11.2 per cent, nearly double the proportion of only 10 years ago ("Canada then, Canada now," 1998).

The participants were asked what difficulties they faced when they wrote their personal responses. According to their oral and written answers, difficulties in writing personal responses were due to the following four factors: non-existence of contentious ideas in articles (for details, see the paragraphs devoted to a difference in the participants' responses to different topics or types of articles on pp. 70-76); a mismatch between a predetermined (i.e., determined ahead of reading an article) direction of writing a personal response and items mentioned in an article; a lack of their background knowledge (or information) about a given article topic; their inadequate understanding

of a given article's content itself (because, for example, some sentence structures were too complicated for the level of their proficiency in English). As this thesis progresses, the reader will note that, in terms of a root cause of their difficulties in understanding a given article, the line between the lack of background knowledge and their low level of English proficiency seemed to be sometimes blurred.

Participant 1 experienced difficulty in writing her personal response because of a mismatch between the items she anticipated and the items actually mentioned in an article on women's employment environment ("Where women work, and why," 1998). Even before reading the article, she said, she was "determined" that she would focus her personal response on "criticizing" prejudice against women, the evidence of which she had expected to find in the article. After more than ten readings of the article, she could not find any such evidence and was "at a loss for how to write a personal response." In contrast, Participant 3 had little difficulty in writing a personal response to the same article because he had no pre-determined writing direction. He focused his first-time reading of the article on grasping its overall idea. When he read it for the second time, he said, he found the direction of his personal response "beginning to take shape." While he read it for the third and final time, he made a "firm" decision on the direction of writing his personal response.

Participant 3's response represented the difficulty which the Korean participants in both the pilot research project and the current research project generally faced when they wrote their personal responses to articles which contained unfamiliar terminology. He recalled that a lack of background (prior) knowledge about a given topic (or

terminology in a given article) was an overwhelming impediment to writing his personal

response. For example, in an article on Korea's economy ("Pop star may build in South

Korea," International Herald Tribune, cited in The Globe and Mail, 1998), he struggled

with such words as composite (in "the composite stock index") and monetary (in

"International Monetary Fund"). Even though he was familiar with the topic itself (i.e.,

the economic crisis in Korea), his difficulty with such terminology led him to be less

than confident that he got a firm grasp of the article's content. He found that his

"weakened self-confidence" in his comprehension of the article content, in turn,

"dampened" his "enthusiasm" about writing his personal response. However, at least in

terms of self-confidence in comprehending the article content, Participant 1 with a Ph.D.

in marketing did not experience what Participant 3 did. Her difficulty came from the fact

that the article was such a news report--as opposed to an opinion article--as is usually

free of contention or controversy in content. Such difficulty was common to all of the

participants in the current research project (for details, see the paragraphs devoted to a

difference in responses to types of article on pp. 70-76).

In terms of the difficulties attributed to a lack of background knowledge, there

was another example highlighting a contrast between the participants. In an article on

politically different fates facing two politicians linked to sex scandals at different times--

Gary Hart (a U.S. presidential candidate in the 1980s) and U.S. President Bill Clinton--

was a sentence which the participants other than Participant 2 had difficulty in

understanding. The difficult passage ran as follows:

>Mr. Hart was not offered political rehabilitation in the form of an appointment by
>President Bill Clinton, who was probably loath to see cartoons about the pair chasing
>chicks together. And Mr. Hart has resisted the scuzzy redemption offered by the
>scandal food chain. He has not written a confessional book or become a media analyst
>on cable TV. . . ("From the good ship Monkey Business to President Monkey
>Business," The New York Times, cited in The Globe and Mail, 1998).

The sentence in question was "And Mr. Hart has resisted the scuzzy redemption offered by the scandal food chain." Participant 2 said that she "immediately understood" what the sentence meant when she read it because, as a journalist, she was familiar with "the scandal food chain." She said she did not have to turn to the next sentence for the meaning of "the scandal food chain." While she had little difficulty writing her personal response to the article topic, the other participants found that their fears of "misunderstanding" some sentences like that were "impeding" their otherwise potentially free "flowing" of personal responses.

One cause of difficulty in writing their personal responses was a lack of socio-cultural background knowledge. When they read a column on immigration policies both in the United States and Canada (Simpson, 1998), they had difficulty in grasping what "a melting pot" or "a multicultural mosaic" looks like. Korean society is so ethnically homogeneous that such an expression as "the politics of ethnic identity" was strange to them. In general, they found it difficult to write their personal responses when they felt that their comprehension of the article was "shaky."

The participants also reported some difficulties they had in following the one-page restriction. Participant 1, for instance, wrote about the difficulty she faced when she tried to follow the one-page restriction. During the project evaluation she wrote:

> I had to do the formidable task of squeezing summary and personal response into one page. For me, an usual problem was that my reading log exceeded one page rather than fell short of being one page. The early part of my one-page reading log was filled with a summary and the latter part of it was occupied with a personal response. The summary tended to be lengthy and there was inadequate room for the personal response. [As a precaution against a limited space for personal response,] I repeatedly cut summary down to as few lines as possible and tried to secure adequate space for personal response. Anyway, even though it was difficult, I made efforts to make the content [summary] as compact as possible.

Questions Related to Types and Topics/Questions Related to Transfer of Learning

The research question related to types and topics was: What was the difference in the participants' self-reported responses to different topics (e.g., politics, economics and science) and different types of article (e.g., news reports, editorials, and columns)? Answers were pursued by asking two sub-questions: 1) What topics did the participants think most or lest helpful to writing their reading logs and/or doing oral discussion (i.e., facilitated their reading log-writing and/or oral discussion) and in what ways? 2) What types of article did they think most or least helpful to writing their reading logs and/or doing oral discussion (i.e., facilitated their reading log-writing) and in what ways? These

questions were closely related to another research question about transfer of learning: Were there self-reported indications that what the participants did in their reading logs carried over to their oral work when they met? For the answers to the question about transfer of learning, I examined the number of topics and kinds of topics (per meeting) mentioned in reading logs and during oral discussion.

A difference was found in the number of topics and kinds of topics (per meeting) mentioned both in the reading log and during oral discussion. The difference was due to article type. If the content of a newspaper article was contentious or subjective, the number of topics and kinds of topics mentioned during the oral discussion tended to be more than in the reading log. For example, my observations of two meetings illustrated such a difference. One article was an editorial ("Canada then, Canada now," 1998). It contained a statement that some participants thought contentious:

Aside from the fact that the U.S. is now in the process of dismantling affirmative action, remember too that it was created to deal with America's violently entrenched racism. That is not our history and, more to the point, it isn't Canada today.

The other was just a news report (i.e., by definition, it is an objective report) on Korea's economy ("Pop star may build in South Korea," 1998).

In responses to the editorial's contentious statement, the participants were divided into two groups with one participant (Participant 5) sitting on the fence. Participants 1 and 2 disagreed with the editorial author. Participants 1 and 2 cited as evidence of a less than race-blind Canada a pending proposal for immigration reforms

(which would require potential immigrants to be skillful at either English or French) and the discrimination experienced by "second or third generation of Korean immigrants" in the Canadian employment environment (e.g., recruitment and promotion). Examples to support their ideas in their reading logs were limited to what they viewed as racial discrimination in two aspects of the Canadian employment environment: recruitment and promotion. As in their reading logs, participants 3 and 4 came to defend the author's description of Canada as race-blind. A free-wheeling and spirited oral discussion during the meeting went beyond each participant's initial remarks in his or her reading log. In reaction to participants 1 and 2, Participant 3 went so far as to insist that the "somewhat bad treatment new comers receive in Canada be taken for granted," given what he called the tendency "inherent in the human society" to preserve vested interests (actually he said "to conserve what they [Canadians with European ancestors] have"). Participants 1 and 2 were also quick to call attention to what they saw as the magnitude of the problem by saying that Participant 3's view was in danger of "threatening Canada's national campaign" (Participant 2; she was referring to Canada's campaign for multiculturalism) and violating "human rights" (Participant 1). Even amid the unpredictable direction of the discussion, Participant 2 was often seen to try to root her oral opinion in what she said in her reading log when she argued that "the new proposal would pose a threat to Canada's campaign for multiculturalism." But Participant 1's response to participant 3 was unscripted (i.e., not in her reading log but improvised). Reminding other participants that second or third generation of ethnic Korean-Canadians are every bit Canadians, except for their physical appearance, Participant 1 claimed that they have a

legitimate right to be treated equally and she added that she meant a meritocracy-based treatment by an equal treatment in the Canadian employment environment (e.g., recruitment and promotion). The argument was so spirited that it was sometimes teetering on the verge of a verbal fighting.

I found that a level of contentiousness in a given article's content was responsible for a difference in the number of topics and kinds of topics mentioned between in the reading log and during oral discussion. In stark contrast, a news report on Korea's economy was far from sparking a spirited discussion. This news report was titled "Pop star may build in South Korea" (International Herald Tribune, cited in the Globe and Mail, Saturday, February 28, 1998. p. A7B) was written along a strictly objective line. When the participants' reading logs and oral discussion were about the news report, there was a similarity in the number of topics and kinds of topics mentioned both in the participants' reading logs and during oral discussion.

All of the participants said that they had difficulty in writing their reading logs on the news report because contentious or subjective issues were missing from it. They said that their difficulty was heightened when they wrote their personal responses. That is, their personal responses were not elicited by the news report itself but their resentment at the dire situation of their home country's economy. As a result, it appeared their personal responses were ethnic-specific rather than text-specific. Participant 1 recalled such a difficulty as arose from a dearth of contentiousness in an article. During the project evaluation, she wrote:

... when the author did not stake out a position in strong terms but took a technical

approach to a phenomenon [she referred to techniques for studiously avoiding any

potential controversies by just listing phenomena to the exclusion of commenting on

them], I felt that any need for my response lost ground. In such a case, I felt that I

was eliciting a personal response from myself in a forced manner.

After experiencing news reports and opinion articles (i.e., editorials and

columns), they asked me to choose opinion articles as potential reading materials which

they would read weekly. Their requests were based on their experience that opinion

articles were "instrumental in eliciting" their responses. The experience also led to their

feeling that, compared with news reports, opinion articles helped them to learn English.

In terms of the number of topics and kinds of topics, on the surface, there was

little difference between all of the participants' reading logs about the news report and

their oral discussions about it. But a careful observation found that an oral discussion-

specific change came into play even during the discussion on the news report . For

example, both in her reading log and oral discussion, Participant 2 mentioned Michael

Jackson's (an American pop star) investment in Korea and Korean conglomerate

owners' hands-on management. But there was a difference in the way she demonstrated

her opinion or idea. In her reading log, she did not give the pop star's investment plan

more significance than just "an example of much-needed foreign investment in Korea."

But during the oral discussion, she focused on implications which the pop star's

investment (in a ski resort) had for "attracting foreign investors to Korea." The shift in

her opinion focus seemed to reflect her impression or agreement with another participant

(Participant 1) who asserted that "the pop star's publicity has the potential to attract foreign investors' attention to Korea."

It was hard to measure the time the participants spent in drafting their reading logs on specific topics because most of them usually did not always write them in a single sitting. Because, for them, a thorough understanding of a given article constituted a start for writing reading logs, they were concerned with how many times they had to read a given article before writing reading logs. For example, Participant 3 said that he would usually read a given newspaper article three times before he began to write a reading log but sometimes found himself reading an article about ten times (e.g., an article on Canadian medical insurance, an area about which he had limited prior knowledge).

As for topics which they thought most helpful to writing reading logs, all of the participants described their feelings in terms of topic familiarity. But in terms of the effect which their topic familiarity had on writing their reading logs, their responses were mixed. Describing the pedagogical usefulness of topics in terms of his topic familiarity, Participant 3 found that his familiarity with a topic "dampened his enthusiasm about it." For instance, when he read an article on Korea's economic situation ("Pop star may build in South Korea," 1998), he felt he was so "superior to the foreign news reporter" (when it came to the familiarity with Korea's current economic situation) that "it did not" intrigue him. However, he added that he had difficulty in understanding some sentences in the article where he was unfamiliar with some words (e.g., "composite" in "the composite stock index" and "monetary" in "International

Monetary Fund"). Meanwhile, Participant 1 recalled a case in which she benefited from her familiarity with a topic. Her topic familiarity made it easy for her to guess accurately the meaning of an otherwise difficult word. In the same newspaper article, she hadn't known the meaning of the word "fervent" in the clause "in the southwestern Cholla region, the area where Mr. Kim draws his most fervent support." But because of her familiarity with the regional base of the newly elected Korean President Kim Dae Jung's political support, she had no difficulty in guessing the meaning. As a result, she did not feel that her understanding of the article content was inadequate for writing her reading log. (Actually her difficulty in writing her reading log about the article, she said, came from the type of the article--i.e., such a news report as lacks contentious statements.)

The types of articles the participants felt were most helpful to writing their reading logs were those that elicited their critical responses. That is, the participants' oral and written responses showed that a contentious content helped them write reading logs and/or do oral discussion. All of them counted subjectivity (or contention)-rich articles (e.g., such opinion articles as editorials and columns) among their helpful articles[12].

During both oral and written debriefing sessions including the one marking the end of their participation in the current research project, all of the participants recalled their experiences involving a relationship between topic familiarity and helpful articles. No participants included their familiarity with topics in the definition of helpful articles.

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[12]   The participants in the current research project felt that if an article helped them write their reading logs, it was a helpful article.

However, a level of contentiousness in content was crucial to their perceptions of how helpful an article was in writing their reading logs. For all of them, for example, the editorial on Canadian immigration ("Canada then, Canada now," 1998) provided an unfamiliar topic but was a helpful article, while the news report on Korea's economic situation ("Pop star may build in South Korea," 1998) provided a familiar topic but was an unhelpful article for them. As mentioned above, the participants found that a contentious statement was more "instrumental in eliciting" their critical responses (which is, by definition, most valuable in the reading log) than topic familiarity.

I asked the participants' (both in the pilot research project and the current research project) about their perceptions of the relationship between their reading logs and their oral discussion. As the following samples of their responses indicate, all of their perceptions were basically positive.

Some samples of the written responses by the Canadian participants in the pilot research project:

- It shaped my position ahead of time.

- I am not usually a strong contributor in large group discussions, However, the
       reading log helps me to feel that I have an informed opinion which I can share.

- It assists my logic.

- [The reading log] prepares me for discussion since I have been forced to consider the article in more depth than just reading it.

Some samples of the written responses by the (Korean) participants in the current research project:

Because I participated in a discussion with my position already shaped, I had confidence in my readiness when I entered into a discussion. Of course, at times, I found myself abandoning my opinion and accepting others' opinions if I felt that others' opinions are more convincing (Participant 3).

... I found a possibility of new perspectives put into the same article while listening to others. And the writing of reading log assisted me in listening to others and exchanging opinions (Participant 4).

However, there was a difference between the Canadian participants and the Korean participants in their perceptions of how much what they did in their reading logs actually carried over to their oral work. In this regard, for all of the participants, according to their written and oral reflections, what counted was whether there was time enough for them to share their reading logs during oral discussion or in class. That is, for most of the Canadian participants in the pilot research, the overall impression was that

the articles for their reading logs almost varied from participant to participant and time could not be provided for them to share their reading logs interactively. Most Canadian participants in the pilot research project recalled that the variety of the academic articles led them to be usually just on the receiving end of other participants' (i.e., colleague classmates) oral work.

It has been unfortunate that there has not been more opportunity for us to share our reading logs in a class discussion format. This may, however, be somewhat problematic given that most people have selected articles different from the others. Therefore, it is difficult to respond to or appreciate articles which have not been read by the entire group.

Another Canadian participant in the pilot research project wrote in a similar vein.

It would influence my oral participation much more if we got more of a chance to discuss. Generally, we always seem to run out of time. I think the idea, however, to present "the best of the reading logs"[13] is a very good idea. Perhaps I would have a reading log presented in each class.

On the other hand, for the participants in the current research project, with an article read by the entire group, there was no time bar to sharing orally reading logs. As

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[13]   The last three weeks of the course saw the instructor set some time apart from each class time. He provided each student with a three-minute session for what he called "the best of the reading logs." In each weekly class, students took turns to share orally what they thought of as the best of their reading logs.

a result, none of the participants in the current research project shared the concerns of most of their Canadian counterparts in the pilot research project: Limited time for sharing an individual's reading log might blunt the effectiveness of an attempt to transfer skills developed in writing reading logs to oral discussion skills. Instead, all of the participants in the current research project felt that the writing of their reading logs helped them with oral discussion in the following ways.

In her written project evaluation, Participant 1 wrote:

> Writing a reading log guaranteed me [psychological] security when I entered into oral discussion. I didn't have to improvise because I had already had my opinion shaped in my own words. And I had already organized the content into an English summary. I believe that such aspects of writing a reading log helped considerably reduce the anxiety which otherwise I would have felt about oral discussion. Meanwhile, the sheer fact of having written down my own opinion had me be predisposed to concentrating on others' opinions and, as a result, I could participate in oral discussion very actively.

In her written project evaluation, Participant 2 wrote:

> Because [writing a reading log had me] have a firm grasp of the content, I could participate in oral discussion actively. And during oral discussion, I came to understand the sentences I had difficulty understanding [semantically and/ or

syntactically] before. My first-hand experience of such things convinces me that

writing a reading log is a good way to learn English effectively[14].

Question Related to Language

What self-reported role did a Korean version of a participant's reading log play

in generating ideas and writing an English version of a reading log? Behind the asking

of the research question was one of the 1997 pilot research findings. Using only English,

most of the Korean participants in the 1997 pilot research had experienced what most of

the participants in the current research project did not: confronted with a situation in

which they could not express or demonstrate their ideas or opinions in English, most of

the participants in the pilot research project tended to unreasonably (i.e., to the extent

that their original ideas or opinions were compromised or tampered with) oversimplify

or give up expressing or demonstrating their original ideas or opinions.

In the current research project, the participants' responses to the role of a Korean

reading log were mixed. Participant 2's response represented the majority of responses.

She recalled that "the scope of her thinking was limited" if she tried to write directly an

English reading log (i.e., skip a stage of drafting her reading log in Korean). Supported

by Korean, she did not feel "stuck", at least while she was generating ideas. However,

Participant 1 had a different experience. (In this regard, Participant 1 was the only

participant whose experience was different from Participant 2'.) She felt that a Korean

reading log was "a drag on writing an English reading log because the consciousness of

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[14]   Participant 2 wrote in Korean literally: "a good way to better enormously the effectiveness of an attempt to learn English."

having to write [semantically and lexically] identical reading logs" both in Korean and English took its toll on recursive thinking. She said that she usually found herself "writing a new version of a reading log" while trying to translate her Korean reading log into English. (She said she was also curious about what would happen if she translated English reading log into Korean.) She said she got used to generating ideas directly in English (i.e., without drafting in Korean) when she took the TWE (Test of Written English).

Summary

So far we have explored how the Korean participants in the current research project perceived four major aspects of the reading log strategy used in their peer study: benefits or drawbacks; difficulties; the roles of article types and topics; the role of their L1 reading logs.

The participants' perceptions of the reading log strategy were that the strategy was beneficial to their attempts to learn English with no any noticeable drawbacks. All of the participants valued opportunities for their academic English writing, a task which the strategy occasioned. Most of them reported that such an opportunity had been almost missing from their lives until then. For all of the participants, the strategy also occasioned their awareness of how far their academic writing skills were from being up to scratch.

All of the participants in the current research project felt that summarizing a newspaper article and giving their personal responses to it helped them understand it thoroughly by having them monitor a level of their grasp of its content. All of the

participants also shared the feeling that the one-page restriction helped them have a firm grasp of an article's content by getting them predisposed toward two tasks: summarizing and giving personal responses to the article as concisely as possible in their own words. But all were difficult.

All of the participants reported having difficulties writing their reading logs when they had a shaky grasp of an article's content. Their shaky grasp of the content was attributed largely to a lack of their background knowledge. In terms of writing their personal responses, their difficulties also had something to do with types of article. That is, all of the participants felt that they had difficulty writing their personal responses to news reports as opposed to opinion articles such as editorials and columns because a level of contentiousness in news reports was lower than in opinion articles.

All of the participants felt that writing their reading logs helped them actively participate in oral discussions by having them prepare in advance, that is, having them have a firm grasp of an article's content and having their positions established. My observations showed that when there were contentious issues in an article's content, a concomitant active or sometimes spirited oral interaction among them led their oral discussion to be beyond their reading logs in terms of the number and/or kinds of topics.

Most participants felt that drafting their reading logs in their L1, that is, Korean, helped them write their English reading logs by heading off the problem into which they reported they would have run otherwise: The less than high level of their English proficiency would have taken its toll on generating ideas without recourse to Korean in the stage of drafting their reading logs.

Chapter Five

Discussion

All of the participants in the current research project felt that the task of writing

reading logs was beneficial to their English learning by helping detect their weaknesses

and helping point the way to how they could learn EFL/ESL effectively. The detection

of weaknesses and a sense of how to learn EFL/ESL effectively came their way while

the participants went through major aspects of implementing the reading log strategy:

its benefits; its difficulties; transfer of learning /experience of different article types and

topics; questions to language.

A Generic Benefit Of The Reading Log Strategy: A Provision Of Writing Opportunities

What influence did the participants think keeping a reading log had on their

general competence in writing? The participants' responses to the research question

revealed a kind of know-yourself-experience. That is, the participants as a whole

reported that keeping reading logs benefited them by having them not only improve their

rhetorical skills (e.g., keeping an essay well-organized), but also realize (and stimulate

them to correct) what they called their "poor" level of writing competence. A level of

the participants' seriousness about their newly-realized writing competence appeared

couched in what they called "a shocking self-awareness" of their general writing

competence. That is, they reported that they were "shocked" at the "poor" level and/or

state of their knowledge (about English vocabulary or structures) and their ability to

retrieve or appropriately use English they assumed they had acquired. With the benefit

of hindsight, they included the "shocking self-awareness" in the benefits from writing

reading logs. Their experience of such benefits may be attributed to a trite but important virtue of the reading log strategy: It provides students with opportunities to write on a regular basis.

Daoud (1998) suggests that it is important to have (or not to succumb to the potential temptation to shun) opportunities for academic writing. She describes academic writing teaching/learning-related difficulties in terms of the nature of writing tasks. She writes:

[Motivational and affective factors] are of vital importance in teaching/learning academic writing for two main reasons. First, writing is not generally the activity that student writers would willingly do (see Raimes, 1983); even when some professional writers acknowledge finding it challenging (e.g., Widdowson, 1983). Second, it has been shown that writing, more than any other language skill, is a constrained activity on many levels: communicatively, textually, linguistically, and contextually (Frederiksen & Dominic, 1981, pp. 18-20). In ESL contexts, it can be painful for adult learners who lack the effective English to express their conceptual and experiential knowledge. Contextual constrains (e.g., time and timing of sessions) could aggravate the situation and lead to writing-related anxiety, which in turn lead to "lower levels of verbal production," according to Gardner & MacIntyre (1993, p. 6) (Daoud, 1998, pp. 394-395).

Results of the current research suggest that the reading log strategy helps secure or increase opportunities for writing. Involved in a broadcasting corporation's writing

contest titled "Book That Changed My Life," a writing contest judge appeared to drive

home the significance when he appeared on a radio show and spoke about writing as

fellows:

> Writing is like learning to ski or play the piano. It's something which you discover
>
> through practice, through experience. It is 95% sweat and 5% inspiration. It's the day-
>
> to-day practical dimension of sitting down in front of the computer, or typewriter or
>
> piece of paper, and picking up a pen or starting to say something that I think really
>
> teaches you the most (The Canadian Broadcasting Corporation's Early Edition, 1998,
>
> August 11).

A Specific Benefit of the Reading Log Strategy as Empowering Learners

As indicated by all of the participants' self-reported opinions about the writing of

their personal responses and most participants' self-reported feelings about L1 drafts,

the reading log strategy seems to empower ESL learners. Studies (e.g., Graman, 1988;

Voller, 1997) show that an empowerment of ESL learners entails their critical

perspectives and autonomous learning. (I restrict this section to the reading log method's

role in critical perspectives because autonomous learning goes beyond my research

data.) In an effort to apply Paulo Freire's empowerment pedagogy to ESL education,

Graman (1988, p. 434 & p. 442) argues for nurturing learners' critical perspectives and

using the reality of their experiences and their innate capacity to construct knowledge

and language. Graman argues for "learning through posing and resolving existential

problems" (p. 442). Defining the teacher in autonomous language learning primarily as

facilitator, counselor and resource, Voller (1997) describes "a transfer of control to the learner" (p. 113) as predisposing an atmosphere to autonomous language learning. Voller's description suggests what empowering learners looks like. Instead of giving hungry people fish, teaching them how to catch fish makes sense in terms of empowering people. In the same way, transmitting knowledge to learners (which is typical of teaching in the Korean participants' home country) needs to give way to putting autonomous learning in place. For the participants as a whole, writing personal responses was an essential feature of the reading log method. Writing personal responses elicited critical responses. They indicated that articles or topics eliciting critical responses were helpful to their English learning. Combined with a newspaper article which reflects things around us, a personal response in a reading log, by definition, covers existential problems.

By turning to Korean for their self-expressions, all of the participants said, they had little problem in dealing with the reality of their experience either in their reading logs or during oral discussion. By drafting their reading logs in Korean, most participants had little trouble in expressing themselves or generating ideas. Otherwise, most of the participants said, with their level of English proficiency being less than high, they would have faced what might pose a threat to their empowerment from the outset: difficulty in expressing themselves or generating ideas.

Reading Log Writers' Difficulties: a Relationship Between Reading Comprehension and Writing

Some research questions (i.e., Questions 2a, 2b, and 2c) were aimed at exploring difficulties reported by the participants during their implementation of the reading log strategy. Their oral and written responses showed that a level of the participants' comprehension of a given newspaper article affected how they proceeded with writing reading logs. Although such factors as topics, article types, and background knowledge affected a level of their reading comprehension, one thing was clear. That is, they felt the less firm their grasp of newspaper article contents was, the more they struggled with writing reading logs.

Campbell (1998) describes the relationship between reading and writing. She argues that a level of authority over background reading text and/or their own emerging written text affects second language writers' writing process. What she means here by authority is understanding any background reading text or writers' own emerging text. According to her, a lack of second language writers' authority over background reading text is caused by their failure to understand it fully. She also suggests that unfamiliarity with the genre or rhetorical approach, for example, may be responsible for a lack of second language writers' authority over their own emerging written texts. While she sees a lack of authority over background reading text or their own emerging texts as drawbacks facing second language writers, she finds a second language writer's big advantage elsewhere. That is, according to Campbell the big advantage that second

language students have is "the personal experience they bring to their writing to integrate as illustration, explanation, and insight" (p. 14).

The participants' difficulties in writing their reading logs seem to suggest a principle: A firm grasp of background reading text helped the participants with their writing tasks. Mohan's knowledge framework (1986) might be helpful to those who try to have a firm grasp of background reading text. Mohan describes human experience in terms of activity. His concept of activity consists of action situation and background knowledge. The action situation is specific and practical. It includes description, sequence, and choice. The background knowledge is general and theoretical. The background knowledge includes concepts (and classification), practice, and evaluation.

An application of Mohan's knowledge framework might take the form of having a student analyze and synthesize the content of background reading text. Along the way, a student might have the experience of honing his or her thinking skills and gain a firm grasp of the content.

Transfer of Learning: the Reading Log Strategy as a Catalyst For Integrating Language Skills

Research questions 3a and 3b were aimed at exploring differences in the participants' responses to different types and topics of newspaper articles and transfer of learning from writing reading log to doing oral discussion respectively. Findings showed that the transfer of learning was closely related to types and topics of newspaper articles, with contentious issues in an article's content responsible for a disparity between

reading logs and oral discussion in the number and kinds of topics mentioned, for example.

It appears that participants' answers to the research questions 3a and 3b may suggest an important definition of the reading log strategy: The reading log strategy is a catalyst for interactions. That is, the reading log method seems to have the potential to help language learners in practical ways. By having language learners practice reading, writing and oral discussion, the strategy asked the participants to do language practices in a two-stage way of interactions. While writing reading logs, they interacted with a newspaper article (i.e., a reporter, an editorial author, or a columnist). During oral discussion, they interacted with peer participants. All of the participants in the current research project felt difficulty summarizing a quotation-based article and giving personal responses to it. They felt that the elusiveness of the author's position on the topic caused the difficulty. It appears that the idea of viewing the writing of reading log as interactions goes a long way toward explaining the difficulty. That is, the participants in the current research project appeared to be confused about their interaction partners while reading the quotation-based article.

There is another research finding that appears to shed light on the relationship between interaction and language learning. As evidenced by the difference in their responses to an editorial on Canada's immigration and a news report on Korea's economy, all of the participants in the current research project felt that article types more positively affected their writing processes than topic familiarity. That is, according to the participants, the author's strong position or opinion common in such opinion articles as

an editorial and a column helped elicit their active responses. For a similar reason, they felt that opinion articles were more helpful to their English learning than news reports. In my opinion, this finding appears to support the notion that interactions are crucial to language learning. I think that the participants actively participated in interactions with authors or peers in the form of their active responses.

The importance of language practices or interactions in language learning is illustrated by such researchers as Savignon and Spolsky. Savignon (1991) asserts "No researcher today would dispute that language learning results from participation in communicative events" (p. 271). Spolsky (1989, cited in Peirce, 1995, p. 14) claims that exposure to the target language and the opportunity to practice the target language are crucial to second language learning.

The interactions mentioned above seem to have some pedagogical values in its own right. Echoing the Canadian participants in the 1997 pilot research project, the Korean participants in the current research project found their positions on a given newspaper article topic were shaped while writing their reading logs. An interaction with peer participants provided the opportunity for the participants to compare notes. During oral discussion, the participants said they could stretch themselves linguistically by demonstrating their opinions or having their opinions make sense to peers or defending their opinions. For instance, Participant 2 recalled that, shaped by writing ahead of time, her thinking facilitated her participation in oral discussion. Among Participant 3's self-reported benefits from writing reading logs was confidence inspired in him when he participated in oral discussion. Participant 1 referred to some benefits

which came from her conviction that she had thoroughly comprehended the content of a given newspaper article through the writing of a reading log. According to Participant 1, the conviction went beyond facilitating her own opinion sharing. It helped her to make sense of and respond to peer participants' opinions. Shared by his peer participants, Participant 3's experience was that oral discussion also provided opportunities for him to correct his views or opinions if peer participants' views or opinions were more appealing to him.

Summary and Conclusions

Providing opportunities for both academic writing and personal responses, the reading log strategy may help writers improve their ways of both learning and living. As a witness to improving the way of learning, the participants found themselves checking their understandings against a given article content while writing reading logs. The participants' experiences convince me that reading log writers are likely to monitor their understandings of reading material and, as a result, detect and correct their weaknesses. The participants' perceptions of writing a personal response point to confidence that the reading log strategy has the potential to improve reading log writers' way of living. For example, after reading a newspaper article on racial conflicts in U.S. and Canada, Participant 1 wrote her personal response from the viewpoint of exploring a possibility of applying North American expertise in resolving racial conflicts to dealing with socio-economic conflicts in her ethnically homogeneous home country. As with Participant 1, while writing reading logs, the participants found themselves constructing their own meanings from reading material and trying to apply the meanings to dealing with their

existential problems. The finding mentioned above leads me to conclude that the writing of personal responses might be a recipe for training writers in putting things into critical perspectives and concomitantly empowering them. The participants used their L1, if necessary. According to the participants, it proved that the use of their L1 added up to empowering them by helping spare them the trouble which otherwise they would have in harnessing their existential questions to their English learning and expressing themselves.

As reported by all of the participants who experienced content-based writing tasks, writers have difficulties doing writing tasks when they have a shaky grasp of reading material content. Based on the participants' written and oral evaluations of the current research project, the finding regarding the relationship between reading comprehension and writing may constitute a basis of the generalization that the root cause of such a shaky grasp of content tends to be a lack of background knowledge and/or language skills (i.e., semantic or syntactic knowledge).

It appears that critique-style writing tasks, by definition closely associated with personal responses, are difficult for writers if contentious issues or the authors' positions are missing from reading material. Contentious issues or authors' positions in reading material seem to be important because they take the form of increasing what Savignon (1991) views as crucial to language acquisition: written and/or oral interactions.

According to the participants, the reading log strategy helped improve and transfer language skills across language-learning tasks by causing a chain reaction to materialize. That is, a firm grasp of reading material facilitated writing a reading log;

writing a reading log in turn helped the participants participate in oral discussion actively or spiritedly. The finding leads me to speculate that the writing of reading log has the makings of a good strategy for enhancing and integrating reading, writing, and oral discussion skills.

English Newspaper Articles as Good Materials for ESL/EFL Learners

I came to observe how useful English newspaper articles can be to teaching and learning ESL/EFL. I believe newspaper articles have the potential to provide common topics to the participants whose specialties differ. Mainly thanks to their context-embedded and cognitively demanding nature (especially in case of such opinion articles as editorials and columns) (Olivares, 1993), I believe, English newspaper articles are good materials for ESL/EFL learners.

Implications for EFL Education in Korea

The experiences of the Korean participants show that the reading log method may have many important implications for English education in Korea. With the teacher-fronted method prevailing in the class in Korea, students' participation (as opposed to students' attendance) in class activities tends to be markedly missing from the class and students' absent-mindedness tends to be common in the class. The curriculum in the country revolves around test preparations (e.g., weekly, monthly, mid-term and final exams). Korean students usually think that the best way to prepare for tests is learning by heart what their teachers emphasize in the class. Combined with the test-focused curriculum, the classroom atmosphere (which allows students' absent-mindedness) is conducive to promoting reviews of lessons (i.e., in a usual form of

memorizing what teachers in class taught) at the cost of previews (e.g., reading ahead in the course syllabus). As a result, for Korean students, class lectures usually constitute their first encounter with the information in a given reading assignment (e.g., a text). Asking students to read ahead and interact with reading materials (by writing reading logs) and with peers (in oral discussions), the reading log method seems to have the potential to lead students to be active in their academic tasks. I think that the academic atmosphere prevalent in Korean schools makes students cope with academic tasks in a passive way because it requires no pre-class activities in a systematic way--e.g., the reading log method. The atmosphere also seems to be far from nurturing students' creativity during their academic tasks because it requires that students learn by heart what teachers taught as the best way to prepare for tests.

Limitations and Delimitations

It may be that self-reported assessments were not be valid. The participants may have written that they had learned a lot just because they wanted to please me, their leader. In other words, they might not write negative things because they might have offended me. In order to avoid this possibility, in principle the participants were asked to substantiate their opinions with examples from the day and my intervention was minimized (e.g., by having myself occupied with asking questions rather than voicing my opinions or by having the participants take their turns offering their opinions ahead of me during oral discussion). In the few cases of confusion caused by a difference between the participants' self-assessments and my observations of them, I tried to clarify

their positions by either questioning them later (e.g., in the next meeting) or repeatedly listening to audio-tapes featuring in-meeting discussions and interviews.

The participants were adults. Obviously, I was not capable of unfairly influencing the adults who were supposedly independent-minded.   .

Even though the research site was in Vancouver, a similarity in research conditions between Canada and Korea helps to make the research applied to Korea. English newspapers are easily available in Korea. Aimed mainly at foreign language learning, peer study groups are common at least on college campuses in Korea. It should also be mentioned that the participants had a good deal of expertise in English (much more than a student who studies in Korea) and they were studying in an English environment (e.g., they heard English in stores; they were exposed to English radio and T. V.).

Further Studies

This research project did not explore the relationship between the reading log method and independent learning. But throughout the research period, I felt that the method may have the potential to train students in independent learning. That is, while undergoing the stages of writing summaries and personal responses by constructing their own meanings or knowledge from reading material by themselves, the participants experienced independent learning. During oral discussion with peer participants, the participants experienced an expanded form of independent learning (i.e., cooperative learning).

There is another example of the relationship between the reading log method and the autonomous learning. The study group was heterogeneous in terms of levels of competence in English. Put into a pedagogical perspective, its heterogeneous nature may have been a boon for them because the heterogeneity would almost guarantee spirited meaning negotiation among the participants, adult volunteers who were bound together by an enthusiasm to learn English, the language necessary to meet the objectives (e.g., study or expanded experience) of their residence in Canada. More importantly, their practice in cooperative learning was fueled by their shared disillusionment with the highly competitive atmosphere which marked their schooling in Korea. When they wanted to be understood by (and wanted to understand) other participants, they turned to their first language, Korean, as a last resort and invited peers to pool their English resources (e.g., their acquired English lexical knowledge) to put Korean into English. Thanks to the heterogeneity, the participants' meeting activities were a good example of learning in which mutual benefits were highlighted (e.g., the participants shared the feeling that they solidified knowledge already gained during discussions).

Given the fact that independent learning is ever-more appealing to educators because of monetary constraints (Murray & Kouritzin, 1997) and its pedagogical implications (e.g., helping students to be self-motivated), further studies aimed at exploring the relationship between the reading log method and independent learning would help to explore the role of the reading log method in ESL/EFL classrooms.

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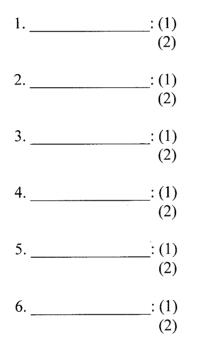
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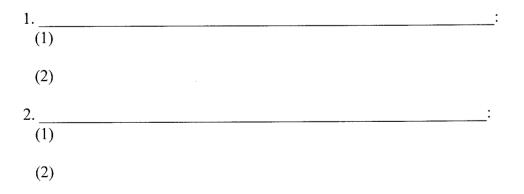
<Appendix A>   **English Newspaper Reading Class**

Name: _____ First Language: _____ Class Date: _____
Newspaper: _____ Date: _____ Section: ____
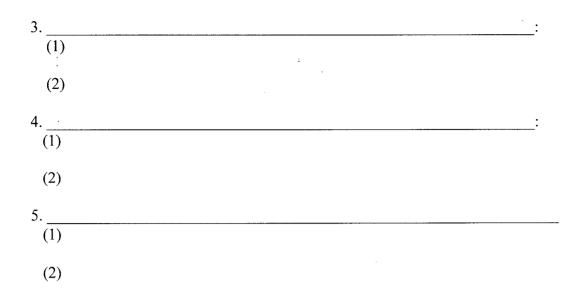Article's Headline:
"
_____
"

A. the vocabulary which I didn't understand when I read the article (for the first time) (1) the meaning of the word which I guessed when I read it for the second time (2) a brief definition by my dictionary

1. _____: (1)
                      (2)

2. _____: (1)
                      (2)

3. _____: (1)
                      (2)

4. _____: (1)
                      (2)

5. _____: (1)
                      (2)
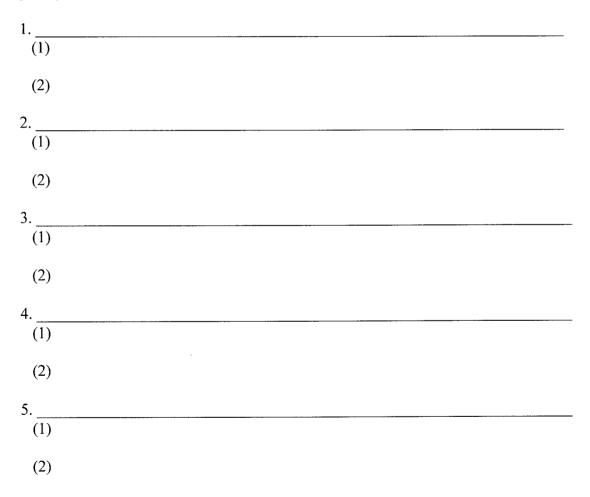
6. _____: (1)
                      (2)

Note: If you find more than six new words that you wish to write down, use the bottom of the back side of this form.

B. Grammatical structures I had difficulty in understanding (1) my analysis of them. (2) rationale for my analysis.

1. _____:
   (1)

   (2)

2. _____:
   (1)

   (2)

3. _____ :

   (1)

   (2)

4. _____ :

   (1)

   (2)

5. _____

   (1)

   (2)

C. Passages I had difficulty in comprehending (1) My opinion about the meaning of the passage (2) Rationale for my opinion

1. _____

   (1)

   (2)

2. _____

   (1)

   (2)

3. _____

   (1)

   (2)

4. _____

   (1)

   (2)

5. _____

   (1)

   (2)

< Appendix B >
Directions: Fill out the **Newspaper Summary Form**.

Newspaper Summary Form

Name _____   First Language _____   Class Date: _____
Newspaper _____ Date _____   Section ____
Article's headline:

_____

(A) My new headline for the story:
" _____ "

(B) *Brief summary*: Write one or two short sentences describing the article you have just read.
What happened:

_____
To Whom:

_____
Where:

_____
When:

_____
Why:

_____
How:

(C) My **opinion** of the story

(D) I still have these questions about the topic:

(E) Have you heard any other news about this story?
From what source?

Did this paper's information differ from the other reference? If so, *how*?

Did you notice any *cultural biases* or *attitudes*?

< Appendix C >   **Self-Reflection (Every Meeting)**

Name: _____ Meeting Date: _____

Newspaper: _____ Date: _____ Section: ____

Article's Headline:

" _____ "
_____

A. My Preparation

1. Areas to which I paid much attention (examples included):

2. Areas to which I paid relatively less attention (examples included):

B. My In-Meeting Activities

1. Areas which I found easy (examples included):

2. Areas which I found difficult (examples included):

C. Today's Meeting Management

1. Tasks or Strategies which helped me (examples included):

2. Suggestions for improvement in the future (examples included):

< Appendix D >   **Self-Reflection (Project Evaluation)**

Name: _____

Date: _____

****

(1) **What influence did you think keeping a reading log had on your general competence in writing? Please give examples.**

(2) **What difficulties did you face when you summarized a given newspaper article? Please give examples.**

(3) **How did writing a summary help (or not help) you? Please give examples.**

(4) **What difficulties did you face when you wrote your personal response to a given newspaper article? Please give examples.**

(5) **How did writing a personal response help (or not help) you? Please give examples.**

(6) What effect did the one-page restriction had on your composing process? Please give examples.

(7) In what ways did the reading log method influence your oral discussion when the study group met? Please give examples.

(8) (optional) How did you think the reading log method might help (or not help) Korean college students? Please give examples.

(9) (optional) What problems do you feel Korean college students would face if the reading log method were implemented in Korea? Please give examples.

(10) Other comments?

<Appendix E>   **An Example of Translation**

● Korean Version:

"Reading Log 작성은 Oral Discussion할 때 안심하게 만든다. 임기 응변식으로 하는 발표가 아니라 이미 나름대로 의견을 정리한 후이고, 영어로 그 내용을 정리해 본 이후이기 때문에 Oral Discussion에서의 두려움을 상당부분 줄일 수 있었다고 본다. 한편, 자신의 의견을 정리했다는 것이 다른 이의 의견에 보다 집중하게 만듦으로써 Oral Discussion에서의 보다 적극적인 참여를 유도했다고 생각 된다."

(Participant 1's written project evaluation, May 6, 1998)

● English Version (see p. 83)

In her written project evaluation, Participant 1 wrote:

> Writing a reading log guaranteed me [psychological] security when I entered into oral discussion. I didn't have to improvise because I had already had my opinion shaped in my own words. And I had already organized the content into an English summary. I believe that such aspects of writing a reading log helped considerably reduce the anxiety which otherwise I would have felt about oral discussion. Meanwhile, the sheer fact of having written down my own opinion had me be predisposed to concentrating on others' opinions and, as a result, I could participate in oral discussion very actively.