

Improving Students' Writing Abilities through Content-Based Instruction: Effect of Skill Integration and Use of a Rubric

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1. Introduction

When people communicate with others in their daily lives, regardless of communication types, they tend to pay more attention to and to put more emphasis on meaning and content rather than grammatical accuracy. Regarding the importance of communication, listening, speaking, and reading skills are often prioritised; on the other hand, writing ability tends to be undervalued. People, nevertheless, have more opportunities to read and write English in various situations, such as through e-mail and social network services. Accordingly, it will be essential for language teachers to be able to help learners improve their communicative competence as well as their writing abilities in the target language by letting students focus on contents and meaning. Therefore, the researcher conducted this research to reveal how content-based instruction and rubrics can help learners to develop their target language abilities, especially writing skills.

2. Theoretical Background

There are mainly three sections in this theoretical background. First, Communicative Language Teaching including content-based language teaching integrating four skills will be defined. Second, teaching and learning second language writing, especially a process writing approach and content-based writing instruction, will be considered. Last, the use of rubrics will be considered.

i. Communicative Language Teaching (CLT)

a) Definition of CLT and the previous studies

“CLT is based on the premise that successful language learning involves not only a knowledge of the structures and forms of a language but also the functions and purposes that a language serves in different communicative settings” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 215). Therefore, CLT can focus on and facilitate both fluency and accuracy. Moreover, Savignon (2002) maintains that CLT can foster learners' communicative competence, which consists of grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociocultural competence, and strategic competence (p. 8). Therefore, learners can improve their communicative language ability, which is the capacity to express themselves and understand others, when they are in the situation where they have to participate in communication but not in consequence “of habit formation with grammatical items” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 51). Brown and Lee (2015) maintain the seven characteristics of CLT.

- a) Overall goals:
- b) Relationship of form and function:
- c) Fluency and accuracy:
- d) Focus on real-world contexts:
- e) Autonomy and strategic involvement:
- f) Teacher roles:
- g) Student roles:

(Brown & Lee, 2015, pp. 31-32)

From these traits of CLT, this approach seems capable of encouraging learners to acquire communicative competence. They need to engage themselves in authentic communicative activities by themselves to develop their language abilities. Moreover, as students can learn from each other through CLT, they can learn how to collaborate with others to accomplish the learning objectives. Hence, it appears that CLT could be the most practical teaching approach to achieve the overall goal which MEXT aims.

b) The Skill Integration Technique:

Regardless of the first language, people communicate with others, using the four language abilities, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Brown (2007) states that helping students to better the four language skills has been classified as supreme importance in English language teaching (p. 284). Hadley (2001) also argues that “[i]t is important to consider ways to integrate writing with practice in listening, speaking, and reading so that skills are not artificially separated” (p. 337). Accordingly, it seems that integrating the four skills is an essential aspect in CLT.

The following seven remarks are introduced to support this technique, cited from Brown (2007).

1. Production and reception are quite simply two sides of the same coin; one cannot split the coin in two.
2. Interaction means sending and receiving messages.
3. Written and spoken language often (but not always!) bear a relationship to each other; to ignore that relationship is to ignore the richness of language.
4. For literate learners, the interrelationship of written and spoken language is an intrinsically motivating reflection of language and culture and society.
5. By attending primarily to what learners can do with language, and only secondarily to the forms of language, we invite any or all of the four skills that are relevant into the classroom arena.
6. Often one skill will reinforce another; we learn to speak, for example, in part by modelling what we hear, and we learn to write by examining what we can read.
7. Proponents of the whole language approach...have shown us that in the real world of language use, most of our natural performance involves not only the integration of one or more skills, but connections between language and the way we think and feel and act. (Brown, 2007, p. 286)

c) Content-based Instruction (CBI):

Lightbown (2014) define content-based instruction (CBI) as an approach to teaching academic subjects in a language that students are still learning (p. 3). Brown (2007) argues that CBI can completely integrate the four language skills (p. 287). Moreover, this instruction can integrate “the learning of some specific subject-matter content with the learning of a second language” (Brown, 2007, p. 287). Research has shown that through CBI, learners better “comprehension skills, vocabulary, and general communicative competence in the new language” (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 211). However, in this teaching approach, content is more emphasised than language points (Lightbown & Spada, 2013, p. 215). According to Lightbown and Spada (2013), teachers and researchers have reported that although CBI can develop students’ ability to comprehend the content, the approach may not help students to keep developing their second language abilities, particularly language accuracy which does not interfere with meaning (p. 211).

ii) Teaching and Learning Second Language Writing

a) Process Approaches to Second Language Writing:

To diagnosis second language writers’ development, it is essential to analyse and understand their process of second language writing. According to Lyster (2007), “process writing is an instructional approach that views writing as a set of dynamically interrelated stages characterized by negotiation with peers and teachers alike” (p. 53). The process approach can provide learners with a chance to consider their writing (Brown & Lee, 2015, pp. 428-429), because they need to have as many opportunities as possible to better their writing abilities, namely “more practice writing, more opportunities to develop effective writing strategies, more familiar grammar, and more feedback” (Weigle, 2014, p. 226). Therefore, it is essential for second language writers to go through each stage of writing introduced below and to write ‘more than one draft of each piece of writing for feedback and evaluation’ (Weigle, 2014, p. 226).

Brown and Lee (2015) identified process approaches to teaching L2 writing is defined by adapting from Weigle

(2014, p. 227).

Table 1

Process approaches to teaching L2 writing

Phases	Techniques
1. Prewriting: Activities provide background information, stimulate interest	Readings, videos, discussion, whole-class, group or pair work, researching, brainstorming
2. First draft: [Learners] sketch out ideas without much preplanning	Freewriting, little or no emphasis on form (grammar, spelling), focus on content
3. Commenting: Peer or teacher reads first draft and comments	Peer reviews (pair work), teacher conferences, feedback on content
4. Second draft: [Learners] look at whole essay, use peer/instructor feedback, rethink, revise	Learner reorganizes, restructures, adds details, clarifies
5. Third draft: Learner edits, attends to writing conventions, rhetoric, grammar, vocabulary	Checklists, grammar logs, proofreading practice, dictionary checks
6. Postwriting: [Learners] share finished products	Discussion, pair/group work following up on topics covered, share products online, enter product into portfolio
7. Evaluation: Self, peer, and teacher assessment of the final written product	Using rubrics, teacher-student conferences, self-assessment

(reproduced from Brown & Lee, 2015, p. 444, bold in original)

b) Second Language Writing and Content-based Writing Pedagogy (CBWI):

Regarding writing tasks, Hyland (2003) argues that by focusing on content, learners will have some background knowledge of the topics and “be able to write meaningfully about them” (p. 14). Accordingly, to accomplish the purpose, content-based writing instruction (CBWI) seems to be a reasonable teaching method. CBWI could be defined as an instruction integrating reading and writing activities, which contents are prioritised and “grammar and vocabulary play the role of attendant foci” (Hinkel, 2011, p. 533). Shih (1986) defined this approach as writing instruction integrated with reading and listening materials (p. 620).

Concerning issues of CBWI, Hinkel (2011) maintains that “in the context of L2 writing curricula, it is not always clear what content should be included for the purposes of language and L2 writing instruction in content-based courses” (p. 534). Writing teaching instruction tends to emphasise language forms and accuracy in EFL contexts. However, as writing activity is a part of communication, it seems that the content and meaning should also be prioritised in language teaching. Therefore, it will be essential to reveal what kinds of topics in CBWI can help L2 writers to develop their writing skills in EFL contexts.

iii) Feedback through the use of a Rubric:

Rubrics can play an important role to help learners realise and foster their development. As to student evaluation, a rubric is a group of evaluation criteria for assessing students’ accomplishment (Wiggins, 1998, p. 154). Rubrics, thus, can help students to evaluate their performance (p. 162). Wiggins (1998) also states that using them can make evaluation more credible and reasonable – “that is, criterion-referenced-discrimination of performances” (p. 154). However, rubric makers need to meet certain conditions to be successful (Wiggins, 1998, p. 154).

Wiggins (1998) states that “[i]f analytic, it has multiple rubrics corresponding to each dimension of performance being scored” (p. 163). “Analytical scoring is analogous to componential scoring” (Lee & VanPetten, 2003, p. 271). There are several categories, and the description is written in each category. Importantly, the allocation marks need not be equal in

each category, but “should reflect the importance of the category” (Lee & VanPatten, 2003, p. 271). Therefore, analytical scoring can help teachers to give students “more precise diagnostic feedback” (Hadley, 2001, p. 334). Hence, Lee and VanPatten (2003) suggest that analytical scoring should be used to diagnosis learners’ language in detail (p. 114).

iv) Research Issues

The teaching of listening and speaking skills can influence the teaching of second language writing (Cumming, 2012; Weigle, 2014; Brown & Lee, 2015). Kroll (1998) maintains that because of the perception that non-native English language learners can better their writing abilities by interacting with other language skills, evaluating their proficiencies is difficult (p. 219). Moreover, although it is said that receptive language skills, namely reading and listening, can foster writing, how the development of each skill can be correlated with other skills is still unclear. Especially, the interrelation between speaking and writing skills has not been apparent.

Furthermore, L2 writing research in secondary educational contexts has rarely been conducted (Leki, Cumming, & Silva, 2008, p. 17). In terms of CBWI, “it is not always clear what content should be included for the purposes of language and L2 writing instruction” (Hinkel, 2011, p. 534). Therefore, it is still unclear how this approach can help learners develop their writing abilities in educational contexts; especially, “few such investigations have been carried out in the contexts of L2 writing” (Hinkel, 2011, p. 532).

Moreover, although it seems that rubrics can help learners to consider their learning process and their language learning objectives by themselves (Wiggins, 1998, p. 162), these goals are usually set by language teachers, and how students find the usefulness of language assessments and the benefit of rubrics to better their language abilities is not apparent.

These issues being considered, this research was conducted to reveal how students develop their writing abilities through CBI and use of a rubric-learning process in a Japanese high school.

v) Research Questions

How do students engage in writing activities through content-based instruction?

How do students perceive assessment including the use of a rubric?

How do students develop their writing abilities through content-based instruction?

3. Methods

i) Research context and participants

The researcher conducted this research at a private senior high school in central Japan during the 2016 school year. In this research, the target participants were initially 28 students (10 males and 18 females) from the lower-level stream of the International Course during the first term. Three males and one female in this class were returnees who had a gap year in the previous year to study abroad for one year and returned to this school from that April. Therefore, the researcher divided the participants into two groups, namely one-year study abroad experience group (OSAE) and non-one-year study abroad experience group (Non-OSAE). More than half of the students, however, took one year off to study abroad from September until the middle of next school year. Moreover, learners who had taken a gap year from September in the previous year to study abroad returned to school from the second term. Accordingly, as the researcher excluded students who left and entered from September, the total number of the main subject participants became 13 (3 males and 10 females).

As to their experience of study abroad, 12 out of 13 students, including four returnees, had studied or lived abroad. Therefore, it seems that almost all the participants already became used to taking English classes in English. Moreover, all of the participants, including the one who had never studied abroad, would like to study and live abroad.

Using the textbook named ELEMENT II English Communication II published by Keirinkan, the class met four times per week during the 2016 school year, and each lesson lasted 50 minutes. All of the participants including returnees were instructed English with a four-skill integration approach based on CLT by their former teachers when they were first-year students.

ii). Research Design

To collect the data, the researcher conducted five methods: 1) flash writing activities, 2) surveys, 3) self-evaluation, 4) both writing and speaking performance tests, 5) interviews with six deep-data participants (See Table 2). Surveys, self-evaluations, and interviews were carried out in Japanese, and the researcher translated it into English.

Regarding flash writing activities, the researcher logged the result every time to understand the progress of students' writing fluency. Moreover, in order to compare the results of their writing fluency, they also took pre-test when the main theme was introduced, and took post-test when they finished learning about it.

All the participants took writing and speaking performance tests at least once per term, the results of which were used to compare and integrate with the survey results administered at the end of each term. Surveys on the usefulness of activities and assessments to improve their writing abilities were administered on the condition of anonymity. Conversely, self-evaluation was done to reflect upon their development; thus, the participants wrote their name. All of the students answered the five-point Likert scale survey questions including some open questions at the end of each term by reflecting upon their learning experience through CBI and tests using rubrics during the school year. All the items of self-evaluation questions were based on the categories and descriptions on the rubrics used for both speaking and writing performance tests.

Concerning interview with the six deep-data students, most of the questions were formed based on questions for surveys and self-reflection. The researcher asked the six-deep data students to bring their essays and their self-evaluation sheets, and interviewed them about their development of writing abilities and the factors while reflecting upon their work together. After gathering information, the researcher integrated the results from all sources of data.

Table 2

Data Collection Schedule

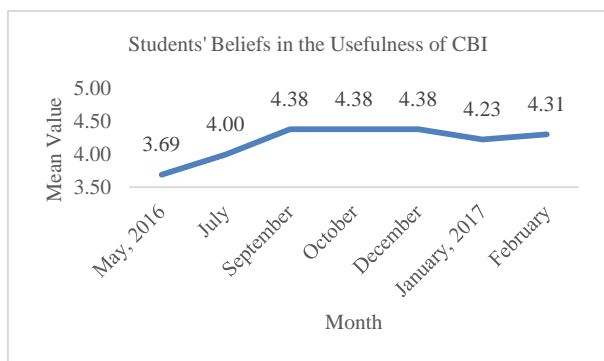
Instruments		Time Administered									
		1st term				2nd term				3rd term	
		April 2016	May	June	July	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec	Jan	Feb
1	Flash Writing	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
	Pre-Test		○1			○2	○3			○4	
	Post-Test				○1		○2		○3		○4
2	Surveys about English Communication II	○			○	○	○		○		○
3	Self-Evaluation about Speaking and Writing		○		○		○		○		○
4	Speaking Tests		○		○		○		○		○
	Essay Assessments		○		○		○		○		○
5	Interviews				○		○		○		

4. Results

i) Survey and Interview Data

Content-Based Instruction

Table 3 Students' Beliefs in the Usefulness of CBI



Sample Students' Comments

As I have many times to write essays in this class, my writing skills have developed. (surveys, December 2016 and February 2017)

As I had many occasions to talk with my classmates in English, I became able to listen and speak English gradually. (survey, December 2016)

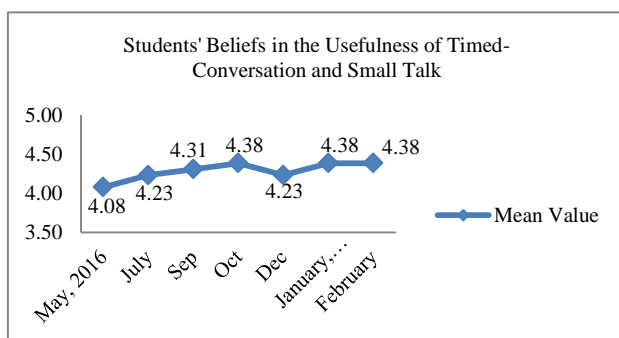
Although I had not been good at reading and writing at the beginning of the school year, I became able to read and write English better as I took this class. (survey, December 2016)

Source: Surveys Conducted in May, July, October, December 2016, and February 2017

Although the mean value in May was less than 4, it rose to 4.38 in September and became stable; therefore, it seems that many of the participants believed that CBI was helpful to improve their target language ability (See Table 3). In fact, none of the students had a negative impression of this approach from July until February. According to their open-ended questions, four of 13 students thought it was useful to develop their writing skills; eight believed it was helpful to improve their oral skills; one stated that he or she bettered his or her literacy abilities through CBI. Moreover, the interview data revealed that five out of the six deep-data students believed that CBI helped them to improve their listening and writing skills. As they had to understand what the teacher and their classmates talked about, they had to listen to them actively; furthermore, as they had to write essays, they also needed to develop their writing skills to argue their ideas clearly. Therefore, this result seems to show that some participants found the correlation between listening and writing abilities through taking CBI.

Timed-Conversation and Small Talk

Table 4 Students' Beliefs in the Usefulness of Timed-Conversation and Small Talk



Sample Students' Comments

By asking my classmates some questions about the given theme, I think I have improved my speaking skill and expand my ideas, which was also transferrable to develop my writing skills. (survey, December 2016)

Thanks to these activities, I could deepen and clarify my ideas and learn something new from my classmates. (interview, December 2016)

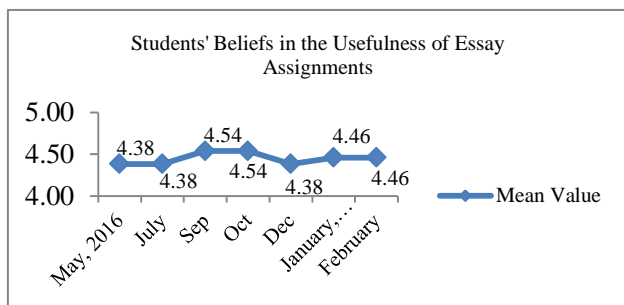
Source: Surveys Conducted in May, July, October, December 2016, and February 2017

Regarding oral interactive activities, the majority of the learners believed that they helped them to improve their target language skills (See Table 4), especially speaking and listening skills. However, the interview data revealed that four of the six deep-data students believed that these activities encouraged them to argue their ideas clearly in both speaking and writing as they could deepen their thoughts in speaking and wrote about them in their essays. Therefore, it seems that some participants found the relationships between speaking and writing. Moreover, the participants also tended to believe that these activities helped them to deepen their understanding of given themes. In fact, all the six deep-data students commented that they were able to understand given subject matters deeply and expand their perspectives on the topics as they could focus on content and meaning rather than grammatical accuracy. Thus, it seems that the learners thought that

content-based interactive activities could encourage them to learn and understand the subject matter deeply.

Essay Assignments

Table 5 Students' Beliefs in the Usefulness of Essay Assignments



Sample Students' Comments

Regarding grammar learning and vocabulary learning as well as ways to argue ideas consistently, I think that essay assignments can be useful to develop both writing and speaking skills. (interview, December 2016)

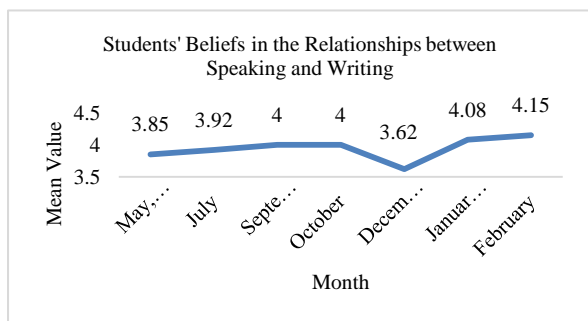
Essay assessments helped me to clarify my ideas and argue my ideas better in speaking. (interview, December 2016)

Source: Surveys Conducted in May, July, October, December 2016, and February 2017

The majority students have had a positive impression in essay assignments to develop their target language abilities since the beginning of the school term, especially writing skills. Six out of the 13 participants stated that they became able to argue their ideas better than before by working on essays; two participants had many occasions to learn grammar and vocabulary through writing essays. Five learners became able to deepen their ideas through essay assessments. The six deep-data students being examined, four of them insisted that essay assessments could encourage them to improve their speaking ability; one of them emphasised her ability to deepen her ideas in speaking, and the other three found the task efficient to argue their ideas coherently and use words in speaking. Accordingly, it seems that they believed that essay assessments could help them to improve their writing abilities as well as their speaking skills.

Relationships between Speaking and Writing

Table 6 Students' Beliefs in the Relationships between Speaking and Writing



Sample Students' Comments

As I can acquire more background knowledge and clarify contents in writing, I can also argue my ideas clearly in speaking. (surveys, December 2016, February 2017)

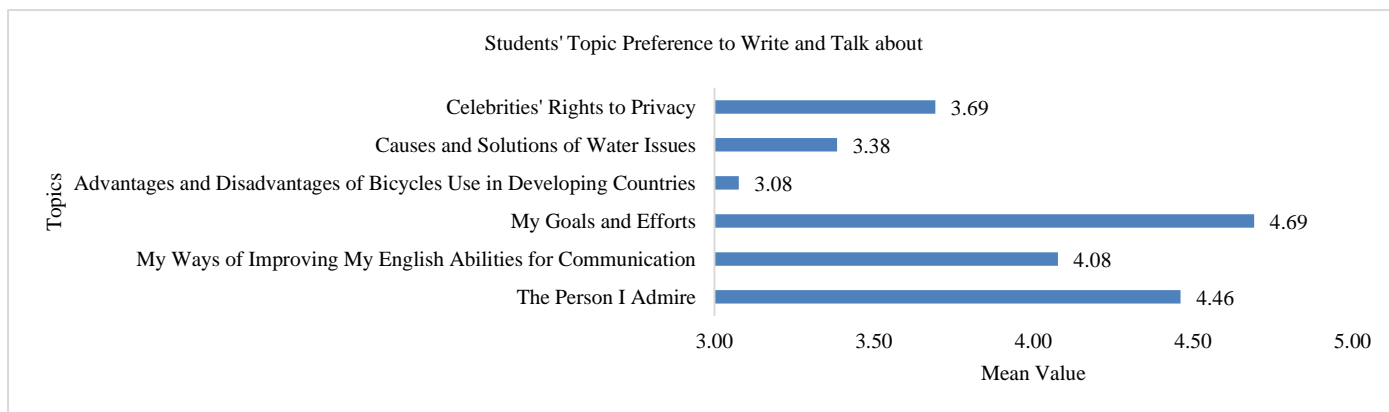
I was able to deepen and clarify my ideas and learnt new grammar and expressions through interaction with my classmates in English orally, and I was able to apply it to my writing naturally, and vice versa. (interview, December 2016).

Source: Surveys Conducted in May, July, October, December 2016, and February 2017

Although some of the participants had a rather negative impression in the interrelation between speaking and writing at the beginning of the school semester, the mean value slightly increased and reached to 4.15 in February (See Table 6). However, it did not seem that the mean value significantly changed during the research term. Students' comments being considered, it appears that some students found the relationships between speaking and writing activities, and these skills could be transferable to the other so as to argue their ideas clearly and to learn grammar and vocabulary. Furthermore, one learner also remarked that activities integrating between speaking and writing abilities helped them to clarify and deepen their ideas and argued them better. Moreover, five of 13 participants stated that they think they spoke English longer without having noticeable pauses and hesitation as they wrote more. Accordingly, some learners seem to believe that they found the relationship between speaking and writing.

Topic Preference to Write and Talk about

Table 7 Students' Topic Preference to Write and Talk about



Source: Surveys Conducted in May, July, October, December 2016, and February 2017

According to Table 7, it seems that students tended to prefer familiar topics to unfamiliar and challenging themes. Especially all of the participants appear to have enjoyed talking and writing about their goals and efforts as they started to think about their future paths at the same time. On the other hand, only three out of 13 students had a positive impression in advantages and disadvantages of bicycle use in developing countries and seven had a neutral feeling on the theme. Five out of the six deep students commented that they had difficulty in coming up their ideas and keeping longer conversation due to their ignorance. To determine the relationships between the topic preference and the participants' learning outcome more deeply, this result will need to be discussed later.

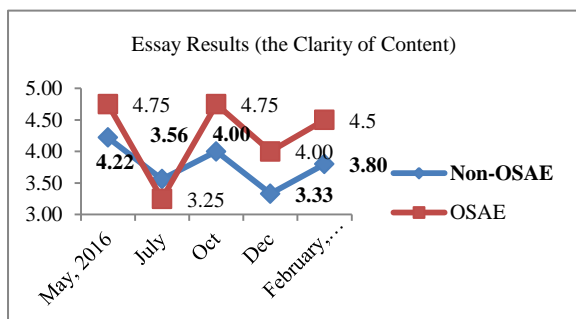
Rubrics

The majority of the participants found rubrics helpful to develop their target language abilities. They tended to set their personal goals based on the evaluation criteria and pay attention to readers and listeners so as to argue their thoughts clearly. In fact, all the six deep-data students commented that they sought to accomplish their goals set based on the rubrics. However, they also remarked on the description of evaluation criteria and the difficulty. When the description was unclear, learners had difficulty in setting their attainable goals. Conversely, when they had enough skills to fulfil the requirement, they tended not to pay attention to the rubrics. Therefore, it seems to be essential to consider how to improve the evaluation criteria so as to help learners to develop their target language abilities.

ii) Students' Learning Outcomes and What They Did to Improve their Skills

Writing

Table 8 Essay Test Results (the Clarity of Content)



Sample Students' Comments

I referred to feedback from my classmates and the teacher. (self-evaluations, December 2016, February 2017; interviews, December 2016)

I sought to deepen the reasons and examples to clarify my thoughts. (self-evaluations, December 2016, February 2017)

Interactive activities helped me to expand my ideas and clarify my arguments. (interview, December 2016)

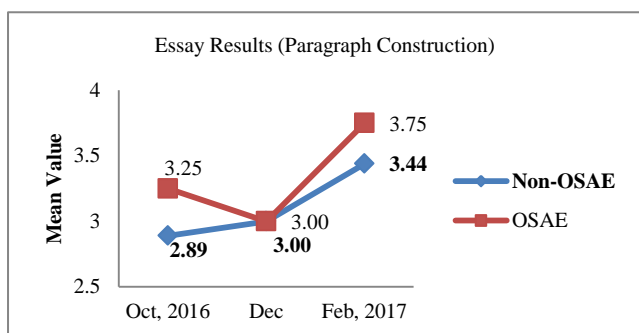
Source: Essay Tests Conducted in May, July, October, December 2016, and February 2017

All the participants became able to write essays using at least 400 words at the end of the school term even though a few of them had difficulty in using more than 250 words at the beginning of the term. Moreover, they also improved their writing fluency within five minutes according to the flash writing test results. According to Table 8, it seems that the

participants sometimes argued their ideas clearly and sometimes not, which also seems to have depended on the given theme. When they wrote and talked about familiar topics, especially “My Goals and Efforts”, they deepened and clarified their ideas. Conversely, when they thought about unfamiliar and challenging topics, such as about advantages and disadvantages of bicycle use in developing countries, their result tended to be low. However, according to six deep-data students’ essays which an ALT evaluated periodically, all of them developed their clarity of contents as they went through the stages recursively regardless of the given themes.

According to the participants’ self-evaluations, regardless of learners’ proficiency, they tended to know how to argue their thoughts better by referring to comments from their classmates and the teacher. Moreover, some of them also sought to write some reasons and examples to make their ideas more understandable for readers. Three of the six deep-data students commented that content-based interactive activities helped them to expand their ideas and argue them better; therefore, it seems that speaking activities were helpful for them to develop their writing skills to clarify their ideas.

Table 9 Essay Test Results (Paragraph Construction)



Sample Students’ Comments

To learn how to compose paragraphs and revise paragraphs in my essays, I try to read feedback from the teacher and the sample essay. (interview, December 2016)

I started to refer to evaluation criteria from September. (interview, December 2016)

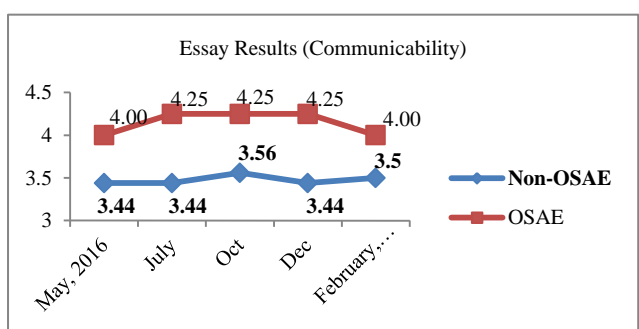
I reread my essays objectively so that readers could understand my ideas smoothly. (surveys, December 2016, February 2017)

Source: Essay Tests Conducted in October, December 2016, and February 2017

Regarding paragraph construction, the participants in the both groups seem to develop their writing skill to compose paragraphs during October and February (See Table 9). These two groups compared, the Non-OSAE students seem to improve their skills as the time elapsed, whilst the OSAE group learners rapidly became able to better their ability even though the mean value decreased once. To better their paragraph constructions, two out of the six deep-data students sought to refer to feedback from the teacher. Moreover, all of them also started to use evaluation criteria to know how to compose paragraphs. In addition to this, some learners also reread their essay drafts to improve their paragraphs. Accordingly, a paragraph writing approach seems to have helped the participants to make their essays reader-centred.

The ALT also mentioned that all the six deep-data students developed their paragraph construction gradually as they recursively wrote about the given topics even though they had difficulty in improving their paragraph construction and it took a longer time to do it when they wrote about unfamiliar and challenging themes. Therefore, it seems that content-based writing instruction helped their skills to argue their ideas logically eventually regardless of the familiarity of the topics.

Table 10 Essay Test Results (Communicability)



Sample Students’ Comments

Before checking my grammar with a dictionary or a grammar reference book, I read my teacher’s feedback to know what to do. (interview, December 2016)

I did not use difficult words and grammar (self-evaluations, July and December 2016, February 2017)

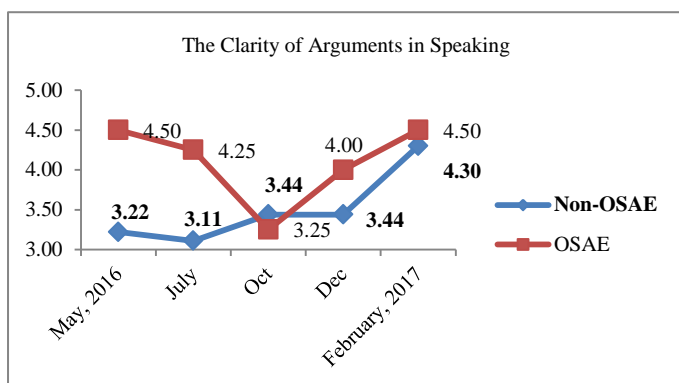
I used a grammar reference book to revise my essays (self-evaluation, December 2016)

Source: Essay Tests Conducted in May, July, October, December 2016, and February 2017

Regarding communicability in writing, students in the both groups did not show any significance differences through the research term (See Table 10). However, to write readable essays, the participants seem to have used a grammar reference book and referred to feedback from the teacher. As a result, some of them thought they became able to make less grammatical mistakes not hindering readers from understanding their ideas. Although the participants' test results did not show any significant difference, in fact, the ALT commented that the six deep-data students gradually developed their communicability through writing essay drafts. Therefore, they seem to have developed their communicability in writing through the process.

Speaking

Table 11 Speaking Test Results (the Clarity of Arguments in Speaking)



Sample Students' Comments

I tried to argue what I wrote about in my essay during speaking activities. (self-evaluations, December 216, February 2017)

I sought to refer to paragraph constructions in my essays so as to clarify my ideas and make them more coherent. (interview, December 2016)

I always seek to use expressions which I have used and argued ideas which I wrote in my essays. (interview, December 2016)

Source: Speaking Tests Conducted in May, July, October, December 2016, and February 2017

Although a few participants in the Non-OSAE group had difficulty in having a two-minute conversation in English at the beginning of the school term, almost all of them in the both groups had a four-minute conversation with fewer noticeable pauses and hesitation at the end of the term. Therefore, it seems that their fluency was improved through this research term.

Regarding the clarity of arguments in speaking, according to Table 11, it seems that students in the Non-OSAE group improved their speaking ability to express their ideas clearly more than the participants in the OSAE group. To argue their ideas clearly, some participants referred to their essays. One of the six deep-data students commented that he tried to argue his ideas clearly and logically by paying attention to paragraph constructions in his essays. Moreover, another learner also remarked that she tried to use expressions she learnt when she wrote essays in speaking. Five out of 13 participants sought to brainstorm about the given theme and consider their reasons and ideas carefully. Accordingly, essay assignments also helped the learners to develop their clarity of content in speaking as well.

5. Discussion

Research Question 1: How do students engage in writing activities through content-based instruction?

Most of the participants took part in content-based activities to improve their target language abilities. As the majority of the students found the usefulness of content-based activities, such as timed-conversation and small talk (see Tables 3&4), it seems that the skill-integration approach played an appropriate role to help them to understand the given topics. As CBI can encourage learners to use the target language for authentic communication and also to pay attention to given topics (Lightbown, 2014, p. 134), it seems that students sought to deepen their understanding of the given topic and their argument by co-operating with their classmates in English during the research term. As Shih (1986) states that writing is correlated with reading as well as listening (p. 618), five out of six deep-data students also reported that they developed their listening skills through CBI. However, in this research, as displayed in the interview data, some noticed the connection between speaking and writing activities, whilst others did not. Upon examining the six deep-data students' various degrees of connection can be seen. Moreover, by doing speaking activities, the learners could expand their ideas and deepen their

content, and they became able to argue their thoughts in writing.

Hinkel (2011) stated that “it is not always clear what content should be included for the purposes of language and L2 writing instruction” (p. 534). However, the mixed method research study revealed that familiar topics could be more efficient than unfamiliar topics so as to develop learners’ writing abilities and motivate learners to engage in the activities. Therefore, it could be said that familiar themes, especially topics which can allow students to explore varying aspects, will be more appropriate in CB(W)I even though the impact of topics will depend on learners’ preference.

Research Question 2: How do students perceive assessment including the use of a rubric?

Most of the participants believed that essay evaluations and rubrics could help them to better their writing abilities and deepen their understanding of the given topics (see Table 5). As a result, language testing encouraged the participants to write more so as to improve their language abilities and to engage in their learning more. Examining six deep-data students’ interview data, all of them reported that essay assessments provided them with opportunities to develop their writing abilities. Moreover, four of them also indicated that they were able to better their speaking skills through working on essay assessments. Therefore, essay assessments may seem to work as a facilitator to develop both speaking and writing skills.

Many participants used a given rubric to assess their writing and their partner’s writing when they wrote their essay drafts. It seems that rubrics played a significant role in maximising their learning. Lee and VanPatten (2003) mention that the allocation marks need not be equal in each category, but “should reflect the importance of the category” (p. 271). Furthermore, some participants remarked on the importance of clear description in a rubric. Therefore, the assessors will need to consider ways to clarify the requirement when they make evaluation criteria. In addition, when the learners already had enough abilities to fulfil the requirement written in the rubrics, they rarely utilised the evaluation criteria. Thus, it would be essential for the assessors to understand learners’ language proficiency to match the level of the evaluation criteria. This result can refer to changing the weight on different categories so that students can keep challenging themselves (see Lee & VanPatten, 2003).

Research Question 3: How do students develop their writing abilities through content-based instruction?

Through CBI, it seems that the majority of the participants were able to improve their writing abilities regarding the number of words used, the clarity of content, paragraph construction and communicability, compared to the beginning and the end of the research term.

Moreover, all of the learners went through a process approach for second language writing as part of content-based writing instruction. According to Lyster (2007), “process writing is an instructional approach that views writing as a set of dynamically interrelated stages characterized by negotiation with peers and teachers alike” (p. 53). In process writing, moreover, feedback is more valuable on drafts than on the last essays handed in for assessments (p. 53). Because of many activities integrating four language modalities, learners had many opportunities to deepen their comprehension of the theme and clarify their ideas by doing brainstorming and discussion with their classmates, and receiving feedback from them and the teacher. As a result, they became able to argue their ideas more clearly and logically (See Tables 8&9). Although the participants in both groups received higher marks when the themes were familiar and easy to personalise, they could not argue their ideas better when the topics were rather unfamiliar or unfamiliar (see Table 3.8). However, to pay more attention to the process of writing, the ALT reported that all the deep-data students argued their thoughts became better as they went through the process. Therefore, CBWI can encourage learners to develop their writing ability to convey their ideas better.

Moreover, as the learners became able to write longer paragraphs, they also became able to have longer conversations. On the other hand, the clarity of arguments in speaking did not seem to be interrelated with the clarity of content in writing in this study. However, qualitative data indicated that students tried to argue their thoughts better by

referring to their learning experiences through CB(W)I and essay assessments. Moreover, the interview data also remarked on the correlation between speaking tests and essay assessments. Three out of six deep-data participants maintained that they sought to consider their consistency in speaking through working on essay assessments. Moreover, four out of six deep-data learners also stated that essay assessments encouraged them to learn new vocabulary and grammar and use them to argue their thoughts better. Thus, the data also seems to reveal the relationships between writing and speaking activities.

It was questionable, however, that the approach helped students to develop their precision and readability. “Success in understanding academic content is no guarantee that students’ L2 proficiency will continue to develop toward greater accuracy, sophistication, and appropriate use” (Lightbown, 2014, p. 126). As both test-takers and the assessor emphasised contents and meaning much more than grammatical accuracy, they tended to ignore errors that did not seem to hinder readers from understanding. Therefore, it was inevitable that grammatical accuracy was not emphasised in this research.

6. Limitations and Conclusion

From the overall survey and interview data, including results of writing tests and flash writing, CBI and the use of rubrics seem to be useful to develop learners’ writing skills, especially to write faster and sometimes to argue their thoughts better when familiar topics were administered in class. The participants also found it effective to take activities integrating four language abilities and focusing on content and meaning.

As to the limitations of this study, a short period of time, ways of data gathering, and the research context should be considered. This research was carried out only for nine months, and the survey and interview data had to be collected and analysed during a limited time. What should be remembered was that all the participants were in the International Course of a private senior high school; thus, most of them were highly motivated to learn English even before this study started to be conducted. What is more, only 13 students stayed in the target class during the research term. Accordingly, it was a special class, not common in other high schools. Hence, the findings may not be generalised in other teaching contexts; however, insights may be transferable. To prove the usefulness of content-based instruction and rubrics in a more objective way, it will be essential to conduct a longitudinal research in more general school contexts.

The research results being considered, topics for CBWI and language testing using rubrics will need to be selected to set the appropriate difficulty for learners, especially for less proficient learners. Furthermore, to clarify learners’ language accuracy, more students’ language samples in writing will need to be collected and more analysed, and conversation analysis should be conducted.

CBWI can provide learners with many opportunities to interact with each other and negotiate for meaning. From a sociocultural perspective, Weigle (2014) maintains that writing is considered “as part of a socially and culturally situated set of literacy practices shared by a particular community” (p. 223). Although the mixed method study revealed that the participants sought to reinforce their ideas in writing through oral communicative activities, the researcher did not analyse the data based on sociocultural theory in this research. To determine the effectiveness of CBWI and language assessments using evaluation criteria more deeply, therefore, how learners learn from each other and better their writing abilities in a community will need to be revealed based on sociocultural theoretical perspectives.

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ライティング/スピーキング能力向上のための活動の有効性についてのアンケート

Instruction

①このアンケートは授業及び課題として行っている課題がどのように皆さんのライティング・スピーキング能力向上に役立っているかを知るためのものです。

②このアンケートは皆さんの評価には一切関係ありません。

③自由回答も含め、全ての質問に答えてください。

Q0: 2016年度のコミュニケーション英語Ⅲは4月から受けていますか? 9月から受けていますか?
4月 / 9月

Q0-1: All English での内容理解に重点を置いた授業及びペア活動に重点を置いた授業形態を受けてきてどのように自分の英語力に影響を与えていると感じますか? 自分の英語力は伸びたと思いますか?

	かなりそう感じる	そう感じる	どちらともいえない	あまり感じない	全く感じない
2017年1月					
2017年2月					

特にどの力が伸びましたか? また、それはなぜですか?

Q1: 定期的に行われる教科書内容に関連したトピックでの Flash Writing 活動は自身のライティング能力向上に役立っていると感じますか?

	かなりそう感じる	そう感じる	どちらともいえない	あまり感じない	全く感じない
2017年1月					
2017年2月					

Q2: 自身のライティング能力向上のために Flash Writing 活動がどのように役立った・役に立たなかったかをできる限り具体的に教えてください。

Q3: Brain Storming 活動は自身のライティング・スピーキング能力向上に役立っていると感じますか?

	かなりそう感じる	そう感じる	どちらともいえない	あまり感じない	全く感じない
2017年1月					
2017年2月					

Q4: 自身のライティング・スピーキング能力向上のために Brain Storming 活動がどのように役立った・役に立たなかったかをできる限り具体的に教えてください。

Q5: 授業内で行っている教科書内容に関するトピックでの Timed-Conversation 及び Small-Talk は自身のライティング・スピーキング能力向上に役立っていると感じますか?

	かなりそう感じる	そう感じる	どちらともいえない	あまり感じない	全く感じない
2017年1月					
2017年2月					

Q6: 自身のライティング及びスピーキング能力向上のために Timed-Conversation 及び Small-Talk がどのように役立った・役に立たなかったかをできる限り具体的に教えてください。

Q7:どのトピックが面白かったですか？どのトピックがつまらなかったですか？

	とても面白かった	面白かった	どちらともいえない	つまらなかった	とてもつまらなかった
Causes and Solutions of Water Issues					
Celebrities' Privacy					

Q8: 約 1 カ月程かけて行う教科書内容に関連したトピックに関するエッセイ課題は自身のライティング及びスピーキング能力向上に役立っていると感じますか？

	かなりそう感じる	そう感じる	どちらともいえない	あまり感じない	全く感じない
2017年1月					
2017年2月					

Q9: 自身のライティング・スピーキング能力向上のために約 1 カ月程かけて行う教科書内容に関連したトピックに関するエッセイ課題がどのように役立った・役に立たなかったかをできる限り具体的に教えてください。

Q10: 自身のエッセイ下書きに書かれるクラスメートからのフィードバック・コメントは自身のライティング能力向上に役立っていると感じますか？

	かなりそう感じる	そう感じる	どちらともいえない	あまり感じない	全く感じない
2017年1月					
2017年2月					

Q11: 自身のライティング能力向上のためにクラスメートからのフィードバック・コメントがどのように役立った・役に立たなかったかをできる限り具体的に教えてください。

Q12: 自身のエッセイ下書きに書かれる教員からのフィードバック・コメントは自身のライティング能力向上に役立っていると感じますか？

	かなりそう感じる	そう感じる	どちらともいえない	あまり感じない	全く感じない
2017年1月					
2017年2月					

Q13: 自身のライティング能力向上のために教員からのフィードバック・コメントがどのように役立った・役に立たなかったかをできる限り具体的に教えてください。

Q14: 自身のスピーキング能力が向上するにしたがってライティング能力が向上しているように感じますか？（または、自身のライティング能力が向上するにしたがってスピーキング能力が向上しているように感じますか？）

	かなりそう感じる	そう感じる	どちらともいえない	あまり感じない	全く感じない
2017年1月					
2017年2月					

Q15: Q14 で答えた理由についてできる限り具体的に教えてください。

アンケートは以上です。ありがとうございました。