1. Introduction

Recently, there has been a major development in composition theory and research. The emphasis has shifted from the product to the process of writing. In this paper, the process-centered approach to teaching writing is introduced. In order to evaluate the approach, a study was conducted at an English writing class. Suggestions for utilizing the approach and findings from the study are also discussed.

2. Theoretical Background

There has been a major shift in composition theory and research during the past decade. The focus has moved from the product to the process of writing. The product-centered traditional paradigm, which stressed expository writing, made style the most important element in writing. It also maintained that the writing process is linear and determined by writers before they start to write.

The process-centered paradigm, however, emphasizes writing processes. It teaches strategies for invention and discovery through a consideration of audience, purpose, and context of writing. It focuses on recursiveness in the writing process, distinguishing between the aims of discourse such as expression, exposition and persuasion and the modes such as description, narration, evaluation and classification. Within this paradigm, research on texts and text analysis is developing rapidly. Recent research in linguistics and cognitive science related to the new paradigm for teaching writing emphasizes that process theory is diverse, flexible, and still emerging.

Scholars have articulated various synergic relationships between process and product research and have called for theories of writing integrating the two views. Phelps (1985), for example, argues for a unified theory in which the overarching process is a cooperative enterprise whereby writers and readers construct meanings together. This analysis stresses the dynamic interactions between readers and writers.

The process-centered approach is concerned with the production and comprehension of texts. In the text analyses for this approach, sentences are typically reduced to propositions. Because many of the models were developed for the purpose of assessing the text comprehender’s understanding of texts, this approach emphasizes the superstructures of texts more than a linear representation of sentences.
Empirical research using the procedural approach has examined many aspects of texts that have implications for the teaching of ESL writing. This text-linguistic approach has been applied to a variety of genres, including persuasive writing and business letter writing, using both accomplished texts and student writing. Research using semantic representations of text is described to illustrate the advantages of this approach for a writing theory that integrates product and process.

Zamel’s (1983) study of six advanced second language (L2) students provided support for a theme that was developing among L2 writing process studies—that L2 writers compose in a similar manner to first language (L1) writers. For this study, Zamel used a case study approach which involved observing her subjects while they composed, interviewing them upon conclusion of their writing, and collecting all of their written materials for the production of one essay each which they had unlimited time to complete. The element of direct observation differentiated the research method of this study from that of Zamel’s (1982) earlier study. Her subjects were her own university-level students, designated as skilled or unskilled on the basis of evaluations of their essays by other L2 composition instructors. The skilled L2 writers in her study revised more and spent more time on their essays than the unskilled writers. In general, they concerned themselves with ideas first, revised at the discourse level, exhibited recursiveness in their writing process, and saved editing until the end of process—all writing strategies similar to those of skilled L1 writers, as described in L1 writing process studies. Zamel’s unskilled L2 writers revised less and spent less time writing than the skilled writers. They focused on small bits of the essay and edited from the beginning to the end of the process. She also investigated how writing in a second language influenced the composing process. Her subjects did not view composing in a second language in and of itself as problematic, thereby indicating that writing in a second language did not have a major impact on the composing process in general. She maintained that the skilled writers in her study clearly understood what writing entails, whereas the unskilled writers did not.

Jones (1985) set out to investigate further the factors that might constrain L2 writers. He videotaped nine advanced L2 students while they wrote three different compositions. Each composition was of a different discourse type—personal experience, description, and generalization—and the topics were drawn from Pianko’s (1979) L1 writing process study. Each subject was given unlimited time to complete each composition. Jones also interviewed the subjects on their writing processes for each composition and on their opinions about how their L2 writing processes differed from their L1 processes. Applying Krashen’s monitor theory to analyze the writing behaviors of two subjects in this study, Jones reported that “monitoring does not lead to improved writing,” and he maintained that monitoring was, then, a factor constraining the L2 writing process. He speculated that monitor use among L2 learners might result from instructional methods. Jones’s study, like Zamel’s (1983) study, provided support for the use of process-oriented composition pedagogy in L2 classes, especially in light of the call for L2 classrooms to be places enabling the acquisition of English rather than just places for the learning of English: an emerging “paradigm shift” which will be discussed earlier.

Urzua (1987) articulated the benefits of process-oriented composition teaching for L2 learners. She came to some conclusions about the benefits of process-oriented teaching with L2 writers when she reported on the writing process of four children, two fourth graders and two sixth graders, over six months’ time. She set out to assess process-oriented composition pedagogy in an L2 context. Her data consisted of transcripts of peer response sessions, weekly compositions, and twice-weekly dialogue journals. She observed that the children ac-
quired three significant composing skills: (a) a sense of audience, (b) a sense of voice, and (c) a sense of power in language.

3. The Study

In order to examine the appropriateness of the process-centered approach to writing, the present study was undertaken using an English writing class at Juntendo University School of Medicine. An English writing course was required for all freshman students for one year. Students were divided into three classes according to their writing abilities. The study was conducted in a class of thirty-two middle level students. There were 22 male and 10 female students. The class met every Friday from 9:00 to 10:30 in the morning. The assigned textbook was Linda Lonon Blanton’s Composition Practice Book 3, Second Edition; Heinle & Heinle Publishers. Every two weeks in the class, the instructor gave students an assignment selected from the textbook. Students wrote their first drafts at home or in class and brought them to the class the following week. Then, students were asked to read their peer student’s writings and comment on them by using the Writing Edit Sheet or Peer Response Sheet as shown in the Appendix.

As to the purpose of this exercise, instead of finding specific errors or showing the writers how to patch up parts of their texts, student reviewers help to sabotage the writers’ conviction that the drafts they have written are complete and coherent. Ideally, the comments offer the writers revision tasks of a different order of complexity and sophistication. Reviewers need to develop an appropriate level of response for commenting on a first draft, and to differentiate that from the level suitable to a second draft. The peer reviewers need to suit their responses to the draft they are reading. In a first draft, they need to respond as any reader would: registering questions, reflecting befuddlement, and noting places where they are puzzled about the meaning of the text. Comments should point to breaks in logic, disruptions in meaning, or missing information. After that, each student receives the comments from their peer reviewer and is required to revise the first draft. Finally, they compare the first and the second drafts and discuss how their writing has developed and what they have learned from their peer. Then they study what processes are important for improving their writing ability.

4. Findings

Most writing teachers tend to focus on language-specific errors and problems when they respond to student writing. They just edit student texts as final products. However, as Zamel has pointed out “such responses to texts give students a very limited and limiting notion of writing for they fail to provide students with understanding that writing involves producing a text that evolves over time” (1985). Therefore, writing teachers need to develop much more appropriate responses in order to comment on student writing. “They need to facilitate revision by responding to writing as work in progress rather than judging it as a finished product”. She notes that teachers take at least twenty to forty minutes to comment on an individual paper. If there are more than forty students and a teacher has to respond to every paper, that would be a very hard job for a teacher.

There, however, are some solutions for those disadvantages. As shown in this paper, “Writing Edit Sheet” and “Peer Response Sheet,” peer responses through letters are effective for students and helpful for teachers. If this sheet is used and students are asked to comment on
other students' writing, a teacher does not need to work as hard and we can expect varieties of responses. Similar to the findings of Urzúa (1987) and Suddards and Watson (1985), this study has indicated that students are able to provide valuable feedback to their peers. Therefore, we can use these peer responses instead of teachers responses in order to emphasize on the process-centered approach to teaching writing.

APPENDIX

WRITING EDIT SHEET

Date: _____________

#: ____________________

Editor's Name:

Assignment: ____________________

Writer's Name: ____________________

1. From the writing, I understood or learned

1. ____________________

2. ____________________

3. ____________________

2. I did not understand or I want to know more about

1. ____________________

2. ____________________

3. ____________________

3. In the writing, I found errors

1. ____________________

2. ____________________

3. ____________________
PEER RESPONSE SHEET

Date: ________________________________

Assignment: Analysis by contrast

Editor's # & Name: ________________________________

Writer's # and Name: ________________________________

Evaluating the writing: Yes = 5 points, No = 0 point.
1. Does the writer use an appropriate data, graph, or chart?
   Yes ___________ No

2. Does he/she form paragraphs? (Margin, Indent)
   Yes ___________ No

3. Does he/she have at least four paragraphs, three reasons and conclusion?
   Yes ___________ No

4. Does he/she give details or support or each reason?
   Yes ___________ No

5. Does he/she explain what is happening?
   Yes ___________ No

6. Does he/she give statistical support in the conclusion?
   Yes ___________ No

Total Points: ___________ / 30

Understanding from the writing:

1. What is happening?

________________________________________________________________________

2. What three reasons does he/she explain for that happening?

   1. _________________________________________________________________

   2. _________________________________________________________________

   3. _________________________________________________________________

3. What details or support does he/she give for each reason?

   Reason 1: ____________________________________________________________

   Reason 2: ____________________________________________________________

   Reason 3: ____________________________________________________________

4. How does he/she summarize the reasons in the conclusion?

________________________________________________________________________

5. What data does he/she use as statistical support?

________________________________________________________________________
REFERENCES


[和文要約]

草案過程を中心とした作文教授法

近年、作文教育における著しい変革は、従来の作文中の誤字、文法を訂正するだけの編集的なものから、草案過程を中心とした、思考や論理法、意見交換などを重視するものへの進展である。そこでこの論文では、最新の作文教授法の理論を報告するとともに、順天堂大学医学部一年生のEnglish Writingクラスにおいて行われた、英文草案時の論理法や学生間の意見交換等に重点をおいた、最新教授法の実践例について論じる。