

國立清華大學 106 學年度碩士班考試入學試題

系所班組別：外國語文學系 乙組（語言認知與教學組）

考試科目（代碼）：外語教學 (3602)

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General Directions:

This exam has three (3) parts. Please read the directions for each part carefully.

Part 1

Directions: Answer the following questions in paragraph format. Please make sure that you proofread and edit your answers for grammatical and spelling errors (**50% total**).

Questions:

(1) (**5%**) What does a classroom that adopts the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) Approach look like?

(2) (**15% total, 3% each**) The following teaching methods used to be popular in the past but are no longer widely adopted now. Explain:

- Their major characteristics
- Their weaknesses (the reason why they are no longer popular)
- Their strengths (potential contributions to CLT classrooms)

Method 1: The Grammar Translation Method

Method 2: The Audio-Lingual Method

Method 3: Suggestopaedia

Method 4: The Silent Way

Method 5: Total Physical Response

(3) (**30% total, 5% each**) Use your knowledge of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory and principles of second language teaching and learning to explain AND give at least one concrete example to support your explanation whether the following statements are **true or false**.

Statement 1: SLA researchers do not need to know about First Language Acquisition.

Statement 2: Motivation is the number-one most important factor in SLA success.

Statement 3: Accent is the best indicator of a person's ability to speak English.

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Statement 4: Some people just have a “knack” for learning foreign languages.

Statement 5: Krashen’s Input Hypothesis ($i + 1$) has been verified by other SLA researchers.

Statement 6: Taiwan’s Ministry of Education should start teaching English as a Foreign Language (EFL) early in elementary school, for example, in the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd grade, by teaching one or two hours of English per week. This is better than starting later (for example, in the 4th, 5th, or 6th grade) but including more hours of English lessons per week.

Part 2

Directions: Read the article by Shintani, Aubrey, and Donnellan (2016) which is attached to at the end of this exam and use the information from the article to answer the following questions. Answer the questions in paragraph format. Please make sure that you proofread and edit your answers for grammatical and spelling errors. (20% total)

Citation:

Shintani, N., Aubrey, S., & Donnellan, M. (2016). The effects of pre-task and post-task metalinguistic explanations on accuracy in second language writing. *TESOL Quarterly*, 50 (4), pp. 945-954.

Questions:

- (4) (4%) What is the area in English teaching that is being investigated in this study, AND why is it important to focus on this area of research? (See pp. 945-947)
- (5) (3%) What is “skill-acquisition theory” AND do the results of this study support it? (See pp. 946, 951-952)
- (6) (4%) Who were the participants in this study AND what did they have to do to provide data for the researchers? (See pp. 947-949, Figure 1 on p.948)
- (7) (9%) Summarize the study’s findings based on the three research questions. (See pp. 951-952)

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Part 3

Directions: The questions in this section are still related to Shintani et al.'s (2016) study which you have read in Part 2. This section, however, asks for your opinions. Please express your opinions in paragraph format and make sure that you proofread and edit your answers for grammatical and spelling errors (30% total).

Questions:

- (8) (4%) In your opinion, why did the participants in Shintani et al.'s study have to be randomly grouped? (See p.948, the *Participants* section)
- (9) (6%) The target grammatical structure in Shintani et al.'s study was *past counter-factual conditionals* ("If he had gone to Egypt, he could have visited the pyramids") (See p. 948). It was chosen because it was a difficult structure for Japanese speakers due to its syntactic and semantic complexity. Do you think this structure is difficult for Chinese speakers too and why? Use your knowledge of English grammar to explain your reason(s) supported by at least one example from your experience.
- (10) (20%) Here are examples of five types of conditionals in English:
- *If you heat ice, it melts.*
 - *If you don't hurry, you'll miss the train.*
 - *If I spoke French, I would be working in France.*
 - *If you had gone to bed earlier, you would have gotten up earlier.*
 - *If we had looked at the map, we wouldn't be lost.*

Imagine that you are a senior high-school teacher. Write a few paragraphs to do the following:

First, briefly explain the meaning of these five types of conditionals without using unnecessary technical terms (10%).

Second, briefly explain how you would teach these five types of conditionals. Justify your rationale for your teaching methods with your knowledge of Second Language Acquisition (SLA) theory and principles of second language teaching and learning, explain your rationale for the activity that you created (10%).

(This is the end of the exam questions. The article by Shintani et al. (2016) follows.)

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TESOL Quarterly invites readers to submit short reports and updates on their work. These summaries may address any areas of interest to Quarterly readers.

Edited by LAWRENCE JUN ZHANG

University of Auckland

MARY JANE CURRY

University of Rochester

The Effects of Pre-Task and Post-Task Metalinguistic Explanations on Accuracy in Second Language Writing

NATSUKO SHINTANI

University of Auckland

Auckland, New Zealand

SCOTT AUBREY

Kansai University

Suita, Japan

MARK DONNELLAN

Kwansei Gakuin University

Nishinomiya, Japan

doi: 10.1002/tesq.323

A plethora of research has examined if and how instructional interventions in second language (L2) writing facilitate second language acquisition (SLA). These interventions constitute a type of form-focused instruction or “any pedagogical effort which draws the learners’ attention to form” (Spada, 1997, p. 73). The kind of form-focused instruction that L2 writing research has primarily been concerned with is written corrective feedback (see Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). Other pedagogical interventions include providing post-writing

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language reflections (Swain & Lapkin, 2008), post-writing oral feedback sessions, and explicit instruction followed by learners' self-revisions (e.g., Shintani & Ellis, 2013). However, these interventions can take place before writing by explicitly teaching a predetermined language feature before a writing task to help learners use that feature in their writing. Whether or not form-focused instruction is effective when provided before (pre-task) or after (post-task) a writing task is an under-researched issue. This topic is the focus of the current study.

Metalinguistic explanations (MEs) are generally considered to directly lead to explicit knowledge (e.g., Frantzen, 1995), which plays an important role in second language writing (Polio, 2012; Williams, 2012) and in writing processes such as monitoring and revising text (Manchón, 2014). In previous studies, ME has been provided in a variety of ways. For example, ME can be provided by means of error codes indicating on a learner's text the type of error that has been made (as in Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986) or by numbering errors and then providing a brief metalinguistic explanation (as in Bitchener & Knoch, 2010), or it can take the form of a handout providing an explanation of the target structure (as in Shintani & Ellis, 2013). Furthermore, MEs can be administered at different times.

Pre- and post-task MEs entail different writing processes. The model of the first language (L1) writing process suggests that writing simultaneously involves planning (setting goals, generating and organising ideas), translation (formulating and producing texts), and text revision (comparing the text already written with the writer's mental representation of the text, both at the linguistic and conceptual levels, and executing the revision) (e.g., Kellogg, 1996). Learners who receive a pre-task ME might develop explicit knowledge prior to the writing task, being able to use such knowledge to monitor and revise text online. The theory of transfer-appropriate processing (Blaxton, 1989) claims that repeatedly producing accurate forms under similar conditions is beneficial in learning a particular skill. In this way, a pre-task ME might help learners practice a grammatical feature under actual conditions.

Skill-acquisition theory also lends support to pre-task ME (see DeKeyser, 2015). This theory suggests that grammatical rules should be taught to establish students' explicit knowledge before performing exercises to anchor it solidly in the students' consciousness in declarative form (DeKeyser, 2015). A pre-task ME might develop learners' declarative knowledge (i.e., explicit knowledge) and the task itself may provide opportunities for learners to practice and proceduralise their knowledge.

Scant research has investigated the effects of pre-task ME. In one study, Wang and Wang (2014) found that university students who received grammar instruction prior to a composition reported that such instruction was beneficial to their writing and editing abilities.

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Some studies have investigated the effects of isolated explicit grammar instruction when combined with corrective feedback (e.g., Frantzen, 1995). These studies showed the positive effects of such instruction on grammatical accuracy in a subsequent writing task. However, no research has examined the effectiveness of a pre-task ME alone on accuracy in a new writing task.

Post-task ME involves learners revising their original text based on the ME. In this sense, post-task ME functions similarly to written corrective feedback, which has been shown to lead to an improvement in the accuracy of new pieces of writing (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012). Corrective feedback has been shown to be beneficial because it provides input and potentially leads learners to notice and reconstruct their interlanguage system (Williams, 2012). Two studies have investigated the effects of post-task ME. Shintani and Ellis (2013) and Shintani, Ellis, and Suzuki (2014) provided L2 learners with an ME handout immediately after a writing task and asked them to revise their text based on it. The results showed that the treatment facilitated the accuracy of the target grammatical feature in a subsequent writing task.

The current study adopted Shintani and Ellis's (2013) method of providing MEs via a handout that explains the target structure. We used this method to examine the comparative effectiveness of pre- and post-task MEs. The effects were measured as accurate production in a new writing task because this provides a means to test whether the learners demonstrate improvement in subsequent writing (e.g., Truscott, 1996).

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

1. Does a pre-task metalinguistic explanation (ME) affect the accuracy of a subsequent writing task?
2. Does a post-task ME affect accuracy in a subsequent writing task?
3. Which is more effective, pre- or post-task MEs in improving accuracy in a subsequent writing task?

METHOD

Participants

Sixty-one (26 male and 35 female) Japanese learners of English ages 18–20 from three intact classes in an intensive English course at a Japanese university participated in the study. Students were second-year students majoring in sociology, economics, and English literature.

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They obtained scores ranging between 460 and 725 on the TOEIC before participating in the project. They had learned English at junior and senior high schools for 6 years, but 18 of the participants had had some experience living in foreign countries for more than 1 month (ranging from 1 to 12 months). Participants were further randomly divided into three groups: pre-task, post-task, and control.

Design

Figure 1 presents an overview of the research project. All participants first completed the text reconstruction task (TR task) as a pre-test. One week later, the participants attended two sessions. In the first session, the three groups completed the writing task in accordance with the different treatments. Two days later, all the participants completed TR task 2, which served as a posttest. Two weeks after the posttest, all participants completed TR task 3 as a delayed posttest.

Target Structure

The target grammatical structure was the past counterfactual conditional (e.g., *If he had gone to Egypt, he could have visited the pyramids*). It is considered a difficult structure for L2 learners because of its syntactical and semantical complexity (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Studies have shown that university-level Japanese learners have difficulty using this writing structure, even if they have some explicit knowledge of the structure (Shintani & Ellis, 2013).

Treatment	Pre-Task ($n = 21$)	Post-Task ($n = 22$)	Control ($n = 18$)
Week 1	Text-reconstruction (TR) task 1 (pretest) Pre-task (at home)		
Week 2 Session 1	Reading the EI sheet (5min)	Writing task without the EI sheet (20 min)	Writing task without the EI sheet (20 min)
	Writing task without the EI sheet (20 min)		
		Edit their writing with the EI sheet (5 min)	—
Week 2 Session 2	TR task 2 (Posttest)		
Week 4	TR task 3 (Delayed posttest)		

EI: explicit instruction

FIGURE 1. Overview of the research project.

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Treatment Materials and Procedures

Explicit instruction (EI) sheet. An A4-size handout included the metalinguistic explanation of the target grammatical structure, which was adopted from Shintani (2015) (see Appendix A in the supporting information available online). The handout included the L1 (Japanese) explanation of the grammatical construct, the meaning of the structure, and sample sentences in the L2 (English). The pre-task group received the EI sheet before the writing task and was given 5 min to study it. The post-task group received the EI sheet only after completing the writing task and was given 5 min to revise their writing based on the EI information. The control group did not receive the EI sheet.

Writing task. The writing task involved two phases: preparation and composition. The preparation took place at home as homework. The participants were asked to write five English sentences describing five events that had changed their lives. The participants were instructed that they could use a dictionary if they needed to do so. The preparation phase enabled the learners to prepare the content and vocabulary necessary to complete their compositions. The composition phase occurred in a classroom. The participants were asked to write an English essay about what would have happened if these five events had not occurred and were not allowed to use a dictionary for this task.

Testing Materials and Procedures

Text reconstruction task (TR task). Three TR tasks were adapted from Shintani (2015) (see Appendix B in the supporting information available online). They were designed to measure the learners' accuracy in using the target writing structure (the past counterfactual conditional). The prepared materials included (a) audiorecorded stories (185-, 199-, and 215-word lengths), (b) a note-taking sheet, and (c) a text reconstruction sheet. The participants listened twice to an audio-recorded text, which included six past counterfactual conditional sentences, and were asked to take notes on the sheet provided. They were then given the text reconstruction sheet and asked to reconstruct the text as accurately as possible within 20 min. The three TR tasks were counterbalanced to avoid test bias.

Scoring and data analysis. The scoring scheme, which was adapted from Shintani et al. (2014), allowed us to score different levels of errors for the past counterfactual conditional structure (see Appendix C in the supporting information available online).

Statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS. Cronbach's alphas for the seven categorical items to score the three TR tasks (pretest)

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were .88, .81, and .82, respectively, which determined the internal consistency. Inter-rater reliability for the accuracy scores was established by having two raters (one of the researchers and one research assistant) analyse 15% of the data. It was calculated as .79, .81, and .85 respectively. The comparative analysis employed a repeated measures analysis of variance (ANOVA) followed by planned multiple comparisons using Bonferroni adjustment. Effect size values were also used to make interpretations according to Cohen's benchmarks (i.e., .2 = small, .5 = medium, and .8 = large).

RESULTS

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics for the three TR tasks (pretest, posttest, and delayed posttest).

A repeated-measures ANOVA showed significant effects for time ($F(2, 116) = 24.42, p < .01, \eta^2 = .28$), for group ($F(2, 58) = 3.58, p = .03, \eta^2 = .11$), and for Time \times Group interaction ($F(4, 116) = 3.57, p = .01, \eta^2 = .11$). Bonferroni pairwise comparisons showed that the two experimental groups significantly improved from pretest to posttest (the pre-task: $p < .01, d = 1.42$; the post-task: $p < .01, d = .96$) and pretest to delayed posttest (the pre-task: $p = .01, d = .77$; the post-task: $p = .028, d = .57$), while the control group did not show any significant improvements (posttest: $p = 1.00, d = .23$; delayed posttest: $p = 1.00, d = .01$).

In group comparisons, there were no significant differences between any of the groups in the pretest. In the posttest, the pre-task group showed a significant advantage over the control group with a large effect size ($p = .01, d = 1.50$). The post-task group showed a near-significant p -value with a medium effect size ($p = .05, d = .71$) in comparison with the control group. In the delayed posttest, the pre-task group maintained the advantage over the control group ($p = .04, d = .88$), but there was no significant difference between the post-task group and control group ($p = .33, d = .52$). No significant differences were found between the two experimental groups in either of the posttests.

TABLE 1

Descriptive Statistics for the Text Reconstruction (TR) Task (Maximum = 6)

Treatment	N	Pretest Mean (SD)	Posttest Mean (SD)	Delayed Posttest Mean (SD)
Pre-task	21	1.97 (1.81)	4.02 (1.06)	3.33 (1.79)
Post-task	22	1.81 (1.30)	3.28 (1.79)	2.76 (2.05)
Control	18	1.78 (1.57)	2.12 (1.54)	1.78 (1.81)

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DISCUSSION

Research Question 1 asked if a pre-task metalinguistic explanation (ME) affected accurate production in a new writing task. The answer to this question is *yes*. The pre-task group showed significant gains from pretest to posttest and from pretest to delayed posttest. This group outperformed the control group in the posttest and delayed posttest. The results suggest that a pre-task ME with a composition task leads to the accurate production of the target grammatical feature, which endured for 3 weeks. This supports skill acquisition theory's assertion about the importance of developing declarative knowledge before proceduralising such knowledge through practice (DeKeyser, 2015).

Research Question 2 asked if a post-task ME affects accuracy in a new writing task. The answer to this question is also *yes*. This group showed significant improvement from pretest to posttest and from pretest to delayed posttest. The significant advantage over the control group, however, was only evident in the posttest. The delayed posttest group failed to show a significant advantage over the control group. The overall positive effects support the effectiveness of post-task form-focused instruction in L2 writing (Bitchener & Ferris, 2012) and, more specifically, the effectiveness of post-task ME on accuracy in a subsequent writing task (Shintani et al., 2014). The decrease in the long-term effects is comparable with a previous study. Shintani et al. (2014) investigated the effect of metalinguistic explanation on accurate use of the past counterfactual conditional in a new piece of writing among university students of English as a foreign language (EFL). Shintani et al. reported marked improvement from the pretest to the immediate posttest 1 week later ($d = 2.65$) but a significant decrease in the delayed posttest completed 2 weeks later ($d = -.89$). This suggests that the metalinguistic explanation mainly resulted in developing the learners' explicit knowledge, which is less durable than implicit or automatized linguistic knowledge.

Research Question 3 asked about the comparative effects of pre- and post-task MEs. Although both experimental groups showed similar gains in the posttest, the pre-task group showed advantages over the post-task group in the delayed posttest in two ways. First, the pre-task group outperformed the control group while the post-task group did not. Second, the effect sizes were larger for the pre-task group (.88) than for the post-task group (.52).

The advantages of the pre-task condition were apparent in the durability of the effects. Two explanations might be possible. First, the pre-task condition enabled the learners to proceduralise the knowledge in the composition task because they had acquired explicit

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knowledge prior to the task. Skill learning theory highlights the importance of establishing and then practicing explicit knowledge. Developing learners' explicit knowledge played an important role in improving their accuracy in the writing task. Second, the pre-task condition enabled the learners to use online metalinguistic knowledge to monitor and revise their text, which is similar to the actual writing process. This approach might allow learners to practice using transfer-appropriate processing (Blaxton, 1989) as discussed earlier. The cognitive process in the post-task might not be similar to an actual writing condition because the revision session after writing did not include the *formulation* and *monitoring* aspects of the writing process.

A possible reason for the disadvantage for the post-task learners was that these learners had to revise their original text as well as studying the EI sheet, whereas the pre-task learners were allowed to focus only on studying the EI sheet. The former might have been more demanding if the learners were not familiar with the target structure.

CONCLUSION

The current study was motivated by the lack of research on the timing of isolated explicit instruction for L2 writing. The overall positive effects for the two experimental groups suggest that a metalinguistic explanation in isolation from a writing task is effective in improving accurate production in subsequent writing tasks. The effects were more apparent and durable for the pre-task condition, possibly because the learners in this group had an opportunity to use the information in actual writing production processes. L2 writing involves simultaneous complex cognitive processes (Manchón, 2014), which include noticing and attentional focus on form processes and formulation of hypotheses about linguistic forms and functions. Equipping learners with explicit knowledge prior to a writing task might help these processes, which may result in developing L2 knowledge that the learners can use in new writing contexts.

The study has some limitations. First, the effects were only measured via accuracy in a new writing task. It would be better to measure the learners' explicit knowledge to confirm whether they acquired metalinguistic knowledge as a result of receiving the ME. Second, the sample size was relatively small; thus, the findings should be interpreted with some caution. Third, the time allocation for the explicit instruction might have been biased against the post-task EI group, as this group had to revise their text as well as study the metalinguistic explanation within 5 min.

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Future researchers can expand on the current study by investigating other linguistic features. The past counterfactual conditional is a complex and salient feature. Roehr (2008) suggested that difficulty learning grammatical rules explicitly varies with features of the grammatical structure, such as schematicity, conceptual complexity, technicality, truth value, stability, and context independency. Explicit instruction on features with varying levels of difficulty might result in different outcomes. Learner differences require further research. For example, studies have shown that learner differences influence their ability to notice forms in writing (Sachs & Polio, 2007). Learners with different proficiency levels might benefit differently from pre-task and post-task MEs. Future research should explore these areas.

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THE AUTHORS

Natsuko Shintani is a senior lecturer at the University of Auckland. Her research interests encompass roles of interaction in second language acquisition, task-based language teaching, and form-focused instruction for second language writing.

Scott Aubrey is an associate professor at Kansai University. His research and pedagogical interests subsume the areas of L2 motivation, task-based language teaching, and computer-mediated L2 writing instruction.

Mark Donnellan is an assistant professor at Kwansei Gakuin University. His research interests include task-based language teaching, using corpus data in the classroom, and the use of computer-assisted language learning (CALL) tools to create a blended learning environment.

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