



Exploration of the Integration of Reading and Writing in Narrative Writing Instruction for Junior High School English

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Abstract: Under the guidance of the new curriculum standards and in line with the requirements of English subject core literacy, this instructional practice aimed to explore the feasibility, effectiveness, and transferability of integrating reading and writing in narrative writing instruction for junior high school students. Through a one-semester teaching experiment, the study yielded the following findings: 1) Compared to the control group, the experimental group demonstrated significant differences in overall writing achievement, writing content, and the organization of writing structure; 2) The integration of reading and writing in narrative writing instruction positively influenced students' interest in writing and their confidence in the writing process. Finally, this paper discusses the potential transferability of the reading and writing integration instructional model to writing instruction in the Kashgar region, as well as reflections on the teaching experiment.

Keywords: reading and writing integration, narrative writing instruction, junior high school English, writing instruction

I. Introduction

Reading-writing integration is a newly introduced approach to reading and writing instruction in China. Esteemed domestic scholars such as Wang Chuming, Ge Bingfang, and Qian Xiaofang have conducted theoretical investigations on reading-writing integration and published relevant articles in reputable academic journals, highlighting the efficacy of this approach in enhancing English language proficiency [1]. Reading-writing integration, a teaching requirement aligned with core literacy, aims to bridge the gap between reading and writing classes and emphasizes their seamless integration [2]. By promoting reading input and writing output, this approach enables students to experience a synergistic effect, wherein improvement in one skill triggers improvement in the other, thereby attesting to the significance of multimodal learning in foreign language education.

These ideas have made a positive impact on the English teaching community and captured the attention of English teachers on the frontlines. In August 2021, following China's compulsory education "double reduction" policy, students returned to campus to resume their learning under the guidance of school education and English teachers. Consequently, English teachers face new challenges and contemplate ways to enhance their English writing classes in a more efficient manner. Given that writing is an essential component of output in second language acquisition, bridging the gap between writing and output teaching in primary and junior high schools becomes a critical topic for discussion among English teachers at the junior high school level.

As previously mentioned, the combination of reading and writing demonstrates a synergistic effect in the teaching process. Both domestic and international theoretical studies have underscored the importance of integrating reading and writing instruction in specific teaching contexts. Therefore, there is a need for theoretical and practical research exploring the relationship between reading and writing across various subjects. However, a distribution chart of literature matrices obtained from the Knowledge Network reveals a relatively limited focus on disciplinary research related to reading and writing integration, with most studies concentrating on language disciplines. Specifically, there is a scarcity of articles dedicated to exploring the combination of reading and writing in English disciplines. While a small number of studies on English literacy do exist, a review of the literature on literacy and English teaching reveals a predominant emphasis on pedagogical research and teacher perspectives, with less attention given to student research. Moreover, in terms of specific discourse, the effectiveness and dimensions of reading-writing integration in teaching narrative genres have received limited validation.

To address these gaps, the author analyzed the English teaching materials of the junior high school and the English curriculum standard (2022 version) and discovered that narrative writing aligns with the level three requirements of junior high school writing. Furthermore, narrative writing is foundational to the primary learning sequence of discourse requirements, underscoring its importance and fundamental role [3]. Hence, an experimental exploration of literacy and narrative writing was initiated.

II. Literature Review

Read-write integration teaching emerged as a model of writing instruction guided by information processing theory in the 1980s. Extensive research has been conducted on the reading-writing combination teaching mode, both domestically and internationally. The following section provides a review of the literature in this field.

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2.1 Foreign Studies on Reading-Writing Integration

In terms of theoretical research, Krashen^[4] posits that the "input hypothesis" is central to foreign language learning. According to Krashen, learners acquire language when they are exposed to "comprehensible input" slightly above their current language level and when they focus their attention on understanding the meaning rather than the form of the language^[5]. Building on Krashen's "Language Input Hypothesis" and her own extensive research, Swain proposed the "Language Output Hypothesis." Swain suggests that output, which involves the creation of new linguistic forms and meanings, allows learners to discover their abilities and limitations in the target language^[6].

Regarding the relationship between reading and writing, Kucer^[7] suggests that both processes share a common cognitive base, which includes pre-existing memory structures, discourse analysis, and the acts of comprehension and composition^[8]. Stotsky found that individuals who were proficient writers often exhibited strong reading skills and that those who were weak writers tended to read less compared to their stronger counterparts.

Empirical research has also been conducted in this area. Hafz and Tudor conducted an experimental study on the relationship between reading and writing, which revealed that students in the experimental group demonstrated higher levels of reading and writing proficiency compared to the control group^[9]. Maco investigated the relationship between cognitive and metacognitive activities and students' writing proficiency among 15-year-old secondary school students.

2.2 Chinese Studies on Reading and Writing Integration

In terms of theoretical research, Wen Qiu-fang^[10] proposes the teaching theory of the "production-oriented approach" based on Native Foreign Language Learning (NFL). This approach advocates the concept of "learning and using as a whole," where output activities serve as the driving force and teaching goal, while input activities facilitate the learning process^[11].

Regarding the relationship between reading and writing, Vera Hsieh suggests that writing is a process that simulates reading, and the act of writing simulates the reader's reading process. Similarly, reading also involves simulating the act of writing. When reading, readers need to discern the author's intention. Chen Liping^[12], after reviewing theoretical and practical studies, argues that reading and writing are relatively independent but interdependent and complementary skills.

In terms of practical research, Wang Chuming^[13] advocates for the effectiveness of a reading-first approach followed by writing to enhance foreign language learning. Wang provides detailed operational steps, highlighting that the combination of reading and writing effectively integrates language input and output, promoting both language learning and usage. Zhang Lingliang conducts teaching experiments with first-year university students to test the effectiveness of the "output-oriented method." The study identifies key considerations for the successful implementation of the "output-oriented method"^[14].

Based on the relevant theories and research on reading and writing integration both domestically and internationally, it is evident that input and output are inseparable components in writing instruction. Furthermore, while numerous studies explore the relationship between reading and writing, most focus on macroscopic aspects of writing instruction, with limited research on specific discourse types. Therefore, this study aims to explore the integration of reading and writing in the teaching of narrative writing in junior high school English through experimental research.

III. Research Design

3.1 Research Questions

The teaching experiment aims to address two main research questions. Firstly, it seeks to explore whether the integration of reading and writing can enhance students' performance in narrative writing. Secondly, it aims to investigate the transfer value of this teaching experiment for teaching narrative writing in Kashgar, Xinjiang. Considering the abstract and broad nature of these questions, the team discussion paper refined the first research question into three sub-questions:

- ① Does the combination of reading and writing improve students' overall writing abilities?
- ② How does the integration of literacy skills enhance students' narrative writing? In what ways does it show improvement? Conversely, in what ways does it not show improvement?
- ③ What are students' overall attitudes towards the instruction that integrates reading and writing?

3.2 Research Methods

To address the research questions, this study employs a mixed research method, which includes the following four aspects: Literature research method: Prior to the experiment, extensive literature review was conducted by reading and discussing high-quality papers, as well as master's and doctoral theses that focused on theoretical and practical explorations of narrative teaching, writing teaching, and literacy integration in junior high school. Expert theories and practices of text analysis were continuously reviewed and reflected upon during the experimental development, providing a solid theoretical foundation.

Questionnaire analysis method: A questionnaire was developed to assess the current characteristics of junior high school English teaching. The questionnaire was based on established scales used by relevant experts and scholars. Pre-testing of the questionnaire was conducted with a sample of 20 students to ensure clarity and understanding. The same questionnaire was administered after the experiment to analyze changes in the fourth dimension of the student scale, which pertains to affective attitudes towards writing.

Educational experiment method: A comparative teaching experiment was conducted with two classes, ensuring that there was no statistically significant difference in the students' writing achievement levels. Under the same conditions of teacher

expertise, teaching sessions, and learning environment, the experimental class received narrative teaching with an integrated reading-writing pedagogy, while the control class received writing teaching with the Process Writing Product (PWP) teaching mode. The experimental class focused on in-depth text analysis, including content and structural aspects of the narrative, using techniques such as mind mapping, discussion, and sharing. The data from pre-test and post-test compositions were compared after one semester, and the results were analyzed along with student interviews.

Individual interviews: At the end of the experiment, the teacher conducted individual interviews with the students in the experimental class to gather their affective attitudes towards the integration of reading and writing in narrative texts.

3.3 Participants

The participants of this study consisted of 112 first-grade students from two regular classes. There were 55 students in the experimental class and 55 students in the control class. The gender distribution was balanced in both classes, and there was an equal proportion of ethnic minority and Han Chinese students. Additionally, an independent sample t-test using SPSS 27.0.1 was conducted on the pre-test composition scores, revealing no statistically significant differences in the overall composition scores ($P = .022$) or the sub-dimensions ($P = .043$) between the two classes.

3.4 Data Sources

Pre- and post-test questionnaires: The questionnaire was developed based on the mature scale of writing in Professor Qin Xiaoqing's book "Chinese University Students' Foreign Language Learning Motivation"^[15]. It was appropriately modified and adjusted to align with the teaching experiment conducted in this study.

Pre- and post-test composition tests: The school provided unit test papers, each of which included corresponding writing exercises. The test papers were developed by a group of frontline teachers from the Xinjiang Uygur Autonomous Region, the Xinjiang Production and Construction Corps, and Urumqi City.

Interview outline: The interview outline for this study was developed based on the categorization and considerations of interviews outlined by Professor Wen Qiufang in the book "Research Methods and Case Analysis of English Teaching"^[16]. It was adapted to the characteristics of first-grade students and the research questions of this study. A semi-structured interview approach was mainly used. The interview content also drew reference from the interview conducted by Su Hongying in 2022. The general outline of the interview is as follows:

Questions & Follow-up Questions

- ① Are you afraid of writing compositions? Could you provide specific examples?
- ② Does this type of writing class help you think more clearly in your writing? How does it help?
- ③ Compared to previous writing classes, which kind do you prefer? Why?

3.5 Procedures for Integrating Reading and Writing Instruction

The two natural classes of students participating in the teaching experiment were assigned as the experimental class and the control class, respectively. Firstly, for the control class, the traditional writing teaching method was employed, primarily using the Process Writing Product (PWP) teaching mode. The teaching process was divided into three stages: pre-writing, writing, and post-writing. Before writing, the teacher guided the students to recall the narrative texts they had learned and summarized their characteristics. During the writing stage, the teacher facilitated brainstorming and discussions to generate ideas. After writing, the teacher guided the students in peer correction.

Secondly, for the experimental group, in addition to the PWP teaching mode similar to the control class, the teacher conducted a detailed analysis of the discourse content, discourse structure, and discourse language of the instructional text before writing. The students were then guided to create a mind map summarizing the key words related to the content and structure of the text. This summary was shared orally. The teaching process drew inspiration from the Pre-reading, Reading-Information Processing-Discussion-Writing (PRIDW) model proposed by Zhou Li^[17], with no other differences in the writing teaching between the two classes.

The instructional text used was Section B of "How Was Your School Trip" in Unit 11 of the second book of the first grade of the Renjiao edition of the junior high school English textbook. This text was of moderate length and facilitated reading and writing interactions among students^[18]. The author modified the application essay into a narrative essay for teaching purposes.

3.6 Data Collection and Analysis

The research tools utilized in this experiment included pre- and post-measurement scales, essay tests, and post-experiment interviews. Firstly, both scales had the same content, and participants were given 20 minutes to complete them. Secondly, for the essay tests, both classes received the same set of questions in the same composition booklet. The questions were composed by a team of experienced teachers from the Uyghur Autonomous Region, the Corps, and Urumqi City. The essay tasks focused on narrative writing and had similar content requirements. The essays were evaluated by two experienced teachers according to the same criteria. Finally, the reliability and validity of the scales, as well as the pre- and post-test t-tests, means, and variances of the essays, were analyzed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 27.0.

IV. Data Analysis

The data were analyzed in accordance with the sub-questions of the study:

- (1) Does reading and writing integration improve students' overall writing proficiency?
- (2) Does reading and writing integration improve students' narrative writing? If so, in what ways? If not, in what ways?

(3) What are students' overall attitudes toward reading and writing integration instruction?

4.1 Reliability Test

Dimension	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of Items
Writing Emotional Attitude	0.914	6
Writing Content Extraction	0.809	3
Writing Practice Methods	0.806	3
Writing Structure and Planning	0.782	3
Overall Scale	0.941	15

The "Questionnaire on the Status of English Writing in Junior High School" was administered to a total of 112 students, with all 112 scales being validly returned. The distribution of male and female students, as well as the representation of folk and Chinese students, was evenly balanced. The difference in the number of students between the control and experimental classes was not significant, meeting the research requirements for student selection.

KMO and Bartlett's Test

KMO Measure of Sampling Adequacy		0.922
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity	Approx. Chi-Square	1151.236
	Degrees of Freedom	105
	Significance	0

Based on the statistical reliability and the KMO value, the reliability and validity of the scale used in this study are satisfactory. The overall internal consistency of the scale is good ($\alpha > 0.9$) as indicated by reliability statistics. Furthermore, the α coefficients for each dimension of the scale are lower than the overall scale, indicating good internal consistency for each dimension. Therefore, the reliability of the scale at the dimension level also meets the requirements of the scale [19].

4.2 Comparison of Pre-test Scores between Experimental and Control Groups |

	Class	Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance (Two-tailed)
Total Score	Control	57	7.93	4.8893	0.97
	Experimental	55	7.964	4.5122	
Content Score	Control	57	6.667	4.1202	0.958
	Experimental	55	6.627	3.6707	
Structure Score	Control	57	1.465	1.7162	0.653
	Experimental	55	1.345	0.976	

The writing scores in this experiment were rigorously assessed following the city's midterm essay scoring rubric. Each essay was independently graded by two teachers, and the final scores were integrated. Prior to the essay correction, the scoring criteria were discussed, and re-scoring was conducted for report cards with significant discrepancies in essay scores (a difference of two points or more in the total score of the essays). To determine whether there were significant differences in writing scores between the two natural classes in the experiment, the author performed independent samples t-tests on the narrative scores of the two classes before the experiment, yielding the data presented above. Firstly, the data exhibited a normal distribution, and the class writing scores were assumed to be chi-square based on a priori testing. Secondly, based on the statistical analysis of the pre-test essays from both the experimental and control classes, no statistically significant differences were found between the two classes in terms of total writing scores and content scores ($P > 0.05$).

To further investigate and confirm the distinctions in writing details between the two classes, no significant differences were observed in class writing means and standard deviations.

4.3 Comparison of Pre- and Post-Test Scores between the Experimental and Control Classes

After administering the post-tests and conducting an independent samples t-test, statistically significant differences (two-tailed) were found in the writing assembly, writing content, and writing structure scores between the experimental and control classes ($p < 0.05$).

Comparison of Post-test Scores between Experimental and Control Groups

Measure	Class	Cases	Mean	Standard Deviation	Significance (Two-tailed)
Total Score	Control	57	8.02	4.189	.022
	Experimental	55	9.73	3.541	
Content Score	Control	57	6.732	3.4876	.043
	Experimental	55	7.991	2.9760	
Structure Score	Control	57	1.286	1.0568	.001
	Experimental	55	1.882	.7389	

Firstly, in terms of overall writing scores, the control class had an average score of 8.02, while the experimental class achieved an average score of 9.73. The difference between the two was 1.71, indicating a significant improvement in the performance of the experimental class. Secondly, regarding the content of the writing, the control class had an average score of 6.732, whereas the experimental class obtained a score of 7.991, demonstrating an improvement in the content of the writing in the experimental class. Lastly, in terms of writing structure, the control class had an average score of 1.286, while the experimental class achieved a score of 1.882. Considering the significance (two-tailed), it can be concluded that the experimental class outperformed the control class in terms of writing structure.

4.4 Pre- and Post-Test of the Experimental Class

Comparison of Writing Performance Across Dimensions for the Experimental Group (Pre-test vs. Post-test) |

		Cases	Correlation	Significance
Pair 1	Total Score 2 & Total Score 1	55	0.966	0
Pair 2	Content 2 & Content 1	55	0.906	0
Pair 3	Structure 2 - & Structure 1	55	0.725	0

Furthermore, in order to test whether there was an improvement in writing skills in the experimental class before and after the intervention, a paired-samples t-test was conducted. The data revealed a statistically significant difference ($P=0 < 0.05$) in the writing scores of the experimental class before and after the intervention.

Pairwise Sample Tests:

		Paired Difference Mean	Significance (two-tailed)
Pair 1	Total Score 2 - Total Score 1	1.7636	0
Pair 2	Content 2 - Content 1	1.3636	0
Pair 3	Structure 2 - Structure 1	0.5364	0

Pairwise Sample Statistics:

Pair	Average Value	Cases	Standard Deviation	Standard Error of the Mean
Pair 1	Total Score 2	9.73	55	3.541
	Total Score 1	7.964	55	4.5122
Pair 2	Content 2	7.991	55	2.9760
	Content 1	6.627	55	3.6707
Pair 3	Structure 2	1.882	55	0.7389
	Structure 1	1.345	55	0.9760

Moreover, the average scores indicated in the paired-samples test table showed that the scores after the intervention were higher than the scores before the intervention. (Score 2 represents the experimental class and the scores after the

intervention). Therefore, it can be concluded that the integration of reading and writing in writing instruction is associated with an improvement in students' narrative writing performance.

4.5 Interviews Conducted in the Experimental Class after the Experiment

Following the interview outline table, the author randomly selected a student for an interview every five students, in accordance with the class list. The interviews were conducted on a voluntary basis, and a total of seven students were selected, of which six students were effectively interviewed. The six students were balanced in terms of grades and had an equal distribution of males and females. Each of the high-achieving and low-achieving groups had two students. Prior to the interview, the students were informed about the recording process and gave their consent. The interview questions were based on the interview outline, with each student randomly asked 1-2 questions, followed by additional follow-up questions. After the interviews, the author obtained the following transcripts from the recordings:

Student 1: I enjoy this writing class because it helps me better understand the structure and content of essays. I feel more confident about writing narrative essays in the future.

Student 2: I liked the class because there was a lot of imitation and discussion, which allowed me to express my thoughts. However, I also think the original class was good. This composition class has its own advantages compared to the previous one. It provides more detailed guidance but can be time-consuming.

Student 3: Initially, I was not confident in writing essays because I didn't know how to approach them. But through this composition class, I have learned how to organize my essays into paragraphs and understand the requirements for each paragraph. I can now apply the phrases I have learned and feel that I can earn more points. I believe I have made progress recently, and I am confident that I will be able to write well someday.

Student 4: This type of writing class allows us to see the structural organization of essays. Previously, I used to memorize essays and then plan how to write them. Now, by creating mind maps in class, I understand the essay structure much earlier, making it easier to write when we practice and share our ideas. That's why I appreciate this type of writing class.

Student 5: I enjoy this writing class because it enables me to create mind maps and write my essays more efficiently.

Student 6: I am no longer afraid of narrative essays because I know exactly how to approach writing this type of essay. However, I still worry about other types of essays where I may lack knowledge.

The recorded texts from these six students have been selected and organized for presentation. Firstly, from the perspective of increased interest in writing, it can be observed from the responses of Student 1 and Student 2 that students enjoy this composition class and have developed a greater interest in writing. Secondly, in terms of self-confidence in writing, Students 3 and 6 have gained confidence in English writing, particularly in narrative essays, as a result of the reading and writing activities. At the very least, students are no longer afraid of narrative writing. Lastly, regarding the improvement in writing structure, Students 4 and 5 noted that mind mapping and the analysis of writing structure have been helpful in organizing paragraphs in narrative writing. This finding supports the pre- and post-test data from the experimental class, which showed an improvement in writing structure scores.

V. Research Discussion and Summary

The discussion and summary of the above data are based on the original research sub-questions.

Question 1: Does the integration of reading and writing improve students' overall writing proficiency? Firstly, to assess the achievement difference between the experimental and control classes, an independent samples t-test was conducted, revealing a significant difference ($p < 0.05$) in the overall writing achievement scores. The mean and standard deviation indicate that the experimental class achieved higher scores compared to the control class. Secondly, a paired-samples t-test was performed to analyze the difference between the pre- and post-test writing scores of the experimental class. The results showed that the pre and post scores of the experimental class were also statistically significant, with the mean of the post-test scores being higher than the mean of the pre-test scores. These findings indicate that the integration of reading and writing improves students' writing proficiency.

Question 2: Does the integration of reading and writing improve students' narrative writing? If so, in what ways? If not, in what ways? The data suggests that the integration of reading and writing enhances students' proficiency in both writing structure and writing content.

Question 3: What are students' overall attitudes toward reading and writing instruction? The interviews and scales indicate that students have a positive attitude toward this writing approach, which stimulates their enthusiasm for writing and boosts their self-confidence in the subject.

Based on the sub-questions, we can revisit the two general questions of this study. First, does exploring the integration of reading and writing improve students' performance in narrative writing? The three sub-questions provide a clear answer that the combined reading and writing model improves students' writing achievement. Second, does this teaching experiment have transfer value for teaching narrative writing in Kashgar, Xinjiang? Considering that the school under study is a mixed folk-Chinese school with a balanced distribution of students in terms of gender and ethnicity, it is representative of the situation in Kashgar. Therefore, the author believes that this teaching experiment holds transferable value for teaching English in Kashgar.

VI. Reflection and Countermeasures

The integration of reading and writing is essential in writing instruction, aligning with the current educational standards. However, successful implementation requires careful consideration and contemplation. As a new teacher, the author extensively reviewed relevant literature and consulted experienced English teachers during the experimental process. Nevertheless, upon reflecting on this teaching experiment, the study acknowledges that there is still room for improvement. Firstly, from a theoretical perspective, this study focused solely on narrative text discourse, and further exploration of different discourse types is needed to demonstrate the effectiveness of reading and writing integration. Secondly, the investigation and research period for this teaching experiment was limited to one semester, resulting in a relatively short research cycle. The allocation of time between reading and writing in the teaching experiment needs more precise data. Lastly, it was observed that one student faced greater difficulties in writing during the post-test and after-class activities. To address this, it is crucial to provide additional guidance and support to identify and address the student's specific writing challenges in a targeted manner.

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