Development of a Method for Teaching Media Literacy in Narrative for Beginners in Creative Writing.

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Abstract

Narrative creation is a complex process that involves obtaining and creating information from multimodal sources such as text, images, and film. Writers strategically use media literacy to engage with these media and build new knowledge for creative writing. Media literacy helps learners interpret media critically and refine their brainstorming process during creative writing. Beginners may fail to abstract knowledge owing to a lack of media literacy; consequently, they may be unable to apply their prior knowledge to creating a narrative. Screenwriting manuals provide a comprehensive introduction to storytelling knowledge and techniques, such as story structure and characters, but they do not provide the training necessary with regards to media literacy, which is necessary for creative writing. This study aims to improve learners' media literacy. We propose a narrative thinking framework for creative writing beginners and develop a method of teaching media literacy for narrative creation.

Keywords: Creative Writing, Film Education, Media Literacy, Narrative Creation, Questioning

Introduction

The issuance of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization's (UNESCO) Grunwald Declaration has done much to promote awareness of the need for and importance of media education (Buckingham, 2001). According to the National Association for Media Literacy Education (NAMLE), media literacy is the ability to access, analyze, evaluate, and create all forms of communication. Media literacy builds on traditional literacy and provides new forms of reading and writing. Media literacy empowers people to become critical thinkers and creators, effective communicators, and active citizens (NAMLE, 2022). Media literacy is a necessary skill for survival in today's advanced, media-rich information society. It is also required to develop problem-finding and problem-solving skills, logical thinking, and communication skills through cross-curricular and inquiry-based learning (The Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology, 2018).

Film education (also known as screen education) is attracting attention as an educational activity that encompasses the above concepts. Film education concerns filmmaking in the classroom context. For example, Le Cinéma, cent ans de jeunesse (CCAJ), a Europe-wide youth filmmaking workshop, offers a vision of transnational cooperation through film (Reid, 2018). The purpose of film education is not to train students to become filmmaking experts but rather to develop film literacy. The latter is defined as having attained an adequate level of understanding of film; the ability to be conscious of and curious about one's choice of films; the competence to critically watch a film and analyze its content, cinematography, and technical aspects; and the ability to manipulate language and technical resources in creative moving image production (School Education Gateway, 2017). It is a domain-specific literacy encompassed by media literacy. Film education in Japan developed as audiovisual education that involves watching

educational films, but film education as an objective remains undeveloped to this day (Wada, 2020). We conducted a questionnaire survey on media transmission experience among first-year high school students (Figure 1), and the results showed that 57.5% of the respondents had experience transmitting movies. Based on this finding, we conclude that there is a need for media literacy education with respect to visual images. The filmmaking process can be organized into five distinct phases: development, pre-production, production, post-production, and distribution (Theodosakis, 2009). In this study, we focus on narrative creation in the filmmaking phase.

Figure 1

Experience in transmitting media by high school students (N=228)
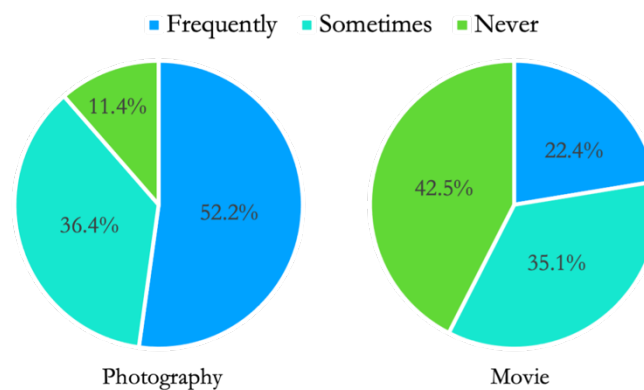
"Narrative" is defined as the representation of real or fictive events communicated by narrators to narratees (Prince, 1987). A narrative is more than a sequence of events. The person listening to a narrative must infer the causal structure of the events. Complex reasoning is necessary to understand, create, and discuss a narrative (Deane et al., 2008). Branigan (1992) proposed a narrative schema comprising eight elements: abstract, orientation, initiating event, goal, complicating action, climax and resolution, epilogue, and narration. Little research has been conducted on screenwriting pedagogy, and the screenwriting manuals currently available on the market are limited to espousing their own methods (Batty & Taylor, 2019). Mitoh (2014) teaches narrative creation as a consistent language activity in Japanese language education and has pointed out the difficulty of teaching in story-creation-instructional situations. Batty and Taylor (2019), through interviews with professionals, found that script development requires life experience, good technique, and a thorough understanding of film terminology. These scholars report that students have difficulty developing screenplays given the limitations of both their life experience and their underdeveloped ability to deftly maneuver relationships (Batty & Taylor, 2019). In the field of cognitive science, various cognitive models have been proposed (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 2013; Branigan, 1992; Kintsch, 1998).

We gather multimodal information from media. We also create stories using information obtained from critiquing and observing written and photographic media. Various knowledge sources must be tapped in the construction of situation models; it is not only general knowledge that is utilized in this process but also the reader's personal experience (Kintsch, 1998). However, although novices can "see" media, they cannot observe them. Owing to inadequate reasoning, novices are unable to integrate new information with prior knowledge, rendering them incapable of accumulating knowledge that can be used in creative writing.

During the information-gathering phase, questioning is a form of support that encourages the elaboration and systematization of knowledge. According to NAMLE (2021), media-literate people routinely ask questions in every category as they navigate the media world (Table 1). Generally, sophisticated "close reading" requires exploration of

the full range of issues covered by the ten categories (NAMLE, 2021). Expert readers use a variety of comprehension strategies while reading, such as predicting, summarizing, questioning, visualizing, and inferencing the text (Beers, 2003). In contrast, beginners cannot successfully use reading strategies. For example, many novice readers find using summarizing strategies challenging. Beers (2003) proposed the Somebody, Wanted, But, So (SWBS) strategy as a scaffolding technique for summarization. According to previous research, Beginners' activities are scaffolded in the form of questioning. Questioning is used to diagnose and extend students' ideas and scaffold students' thinking (Chin, 2007).

Purpose

To construct knowledge that is usable for narrative creation, it is necessary to organize information by carefully observing the media and relating the derived information to prior knowledge during the information-gathering phase. Autonomous narrative creation requires learners not only a working understanding of the narrative schema but also critical thinking through the questioning and observation of individual media. The purpose of this study is to develop a media literacy instructional method to support narrative creation among beginners through the embedding of questioning that encourages analogy and creation.

Table 1
Excerpt key Questions to Ask When Analyzing Media Messages (NAMLE, 2021)

Category	Sample Questions
Authorship	Who made this?
Purposes	Why was this made? Who is the target audience?
Economics	Who paid for this?
Responses	How does this make me feel? What actions might I take in response to this message?
Content	What does this want me to think?
Techniques	What techniques are used and why?
Interpretations	How might different people understand this message differently?
Context	When was this made?
Credibility	What are the sources of information, idea, or assertions?

Research Design & Methods

The following research questions are addressed in this study:

(1) What kinds of questions promote analogies for narrative knowledge construction?

(2) What kinds of analogical tasks for narrative knowledge construction contribute to the development of media literacy?

The research is conducted in the following steps:

(1) We examine questions for creation based on the key NAMLE (2021) question. The questions proposed in the context of media literacy are for critical thinking about media and to help analogize optimal solutions. We propose a thinking framework that relates to the learner's prior knowledge and facilitates the organization of knowledge.

(2) We analyze the task with respect to multimodal materials and create an analogical learning series. The questions used, the solutions obtained from the analogies, and the stories created differ for news versus advertising media. In addition, the ease of convergent and divergent thinking differs depending on the number of cues used in the

analogy. We design scaffolds that allow students to become autonomous questioners by creating a series of materials to be used for instruction.

(3)   We design workshops, which include collaborative learning with embedded media literacy materials.

(4)   We implement the practice among Japanese high school students (N = 290). This research uses an unequaled control group pre-post design with the aim of determining the effects of the proposed method of teaching media literacy.

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