Two ESL Korean Children’s Narrative Writing in Relation to Genre-based Approach

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The purpose of this paper is to examine the effect of the genre-based approach on ESL children’s writing both at school and at home. Among genre writing, narrative writing was chosen for more detailed text analysis based on systemic functional grammar (SFG). Apart from their increasing control of schematic structure and other linguistic features, the ESL children expanded their range of process types so remarkably that various experiential meanings were constructed in each child’s narrative writing style. This study found that the genre-based approach helped ESL children to take their first steps into the world of narrative writing by explicitly supporting its schematic structure and other elements. The ESL children seemed to develop their own styles of narrating using the same genre-based approach at school, which proves a paradoxical truth in the sense that the genre critics often point out the lack of individual creativity due to the ‘stifled’ genre pedagogy. Creativity, particularly in the case of the two ESL children, came after jumping on the ‘springboard,’ which is a proper support system in their genre writing.

I. INTRODUCTION

It is well-known that each text type, or genre, has its own particular language features that include the overall schematic structure along with specific lexico-grammatical usages. Among a range of text types, narrative writing demonstrates a relatively clearer idea of its overall structure than other genres, as it includes an orientation, a complication and a resolution. Even though we need to accept that there can be different views on how genres (such as narrative, report or argument) should be treated and taught to children in primary school, many studies (Christie, 1992; Hammond, 1987; Hyland, 2003; 2004; Hyon, 1996; Macken-Horarik, 2002) have revealed the positive effect of explicit teaching of ‘schematic
structure’ based on the genre-based approach and pedagogy. On the other hand, genre critics often complain that the explicit teaching causes some problems, such as limiting individual creativity by dictating to students their writing choices.

The case study presented here was started in an Australian primary school in which the writing pedagogy had been altered dynamically from mainly process writing to a genre-based approach. While I was observing and participating as an assistant ESL teacher at this primary school, I realized that I was witnessing a remarkable change in the writing classes of young children: A majority of the children were able to follow their teachers’ new writing instructions and managed to write within a range of different genres, including narrative, with more confidence and within set time limits. This benefited some ESL children in the classrooms as well. I felt thrilled and empowered because here were my own children, who had struggled to write in English, other than journal entries, more than several lines at a maximum. It was this issue that inspired me to conduct the case study, which was situated in the context of an empowering experience for ESL children at an Australian primary school.

According to Tardy’s (2006) review of key findings from 60 empirical genre studies, although empirical research of genre learning has increased over the past decade, few studies have looked at a more in-depth and comprehensive synthesis of genre learning of L1 and L2 writers both in and out of the classroom instructional setting. Indeed, there have been very limited empirical studies for L2 learners in the early grades of elementary school in an instructional setting (Reppen, 1995) and only a few more studies in practice-based contexts (in natural, non-manipulated settings) (Chapman, 1994; Hicks, 1990; Kamberelis & Bovino, 1999). As Tardy (2006) indicates, future research should take advantage of more mixed-method approaches to genre studies to gain more meaningful insights into how learners develop genre knowledge over time. These approaches should include longitudinal, qualitative case studies paired with other quantitative measures.

This case study, which was conducted over a period of 5 years and 8 months in an ESL primary context, provides some valuable insights into the way two ESL Korean children developed their genre writings (particularly narrative writing in this paper) both in an Australian primary classroom setting (usually an instructional setting) and at home (usually a practice-based context, i.e., a natural setting). As such, this study endeavors to document the sociolinguistic context surrounding their genre writings as well as their text analysis.

In addition to examining the general benefits of the genre-based approach to primary ESL children’s writing, I will focus on one important finding: that the genre-based
approach to writing can develop different language features for each genre beyond schematic structure. Narrative writing was chosen for further text analysis. The specific benefit of developing a range of process types throughout the ESL children’s narrative writing will be highlighted. In the discussion, it is suggested that, even for EFL children, the genre of narrative writing should be encouraged using the appropriate methods.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

1. Genre-based Approach in Australian Context: The Issues of Explicit Teaching

Genre pedagogy in Australia has been based primarily on the development of the Australian systemic functional linguistics with the substantial influence of Halliday’s (1978; 1985) social aspects of literacy and the subsequent linguistic research in genre theory undertaken by Martin (1986; 1992) and Rothery (1986). In other words, the Australian approaches to genre have been based on the larger theory of language known as systemic functional linguistics (SFL), which emphasizes the relationship between language and its functions in social settings (Hyland, 2004). In particular, Australian genre researchers founded the Literacy and Education Research Network (LERN) in the late 1980s and developed a teaching-learning cycle for implementing a genre-based pedagogy in the classroom context. Detailed lesson plans were developed for mastering a variety of school genres such as narratives, report, procedure and argument through modeling and joint construction (Knapp & Watkins, 2005).

Using Hallidayan schemes of linguistic analysis—including both global text structure and sentence level register features associated with field, tenor and mode—Australian genre researchers have criticized the process writing approach (Graves, 1983; Walshe, 1981) that had been popular in Australia immediately before the emergence of the genre approach. Admittedly, typical process writing de-emphasizes the use of direct instruction about text form and teacher intervention in the writing process. Australian genre researchers argue that if students are left to work out for themselves how language works, especially when

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2 According to Hyon (1996), there have been three different scholarly traditions of genre theories, including the above Australian genre approach. These are: 1) English for Specific Purposes (ESP), 2) North American New Rhetoric Studies and 3) Australian Systemic Functional Linguistics (The Australian genre approach). As its name implies, ESP tends to view genre as a tool for analyzing and teaching spoken and written language; its target group has been mostly nonnative speakers in academic and professional settings. New Rhetoric Studies includes a body of North American scholars from a variety of L1 teaching disciplines, such as rhetoric, composition studies and professional writing.
the writing process is involved, a number of students are likely to struggle and fail (Hammond, 1987). In addition, they believe that solely using the process writing approach is not an effective solution to learning writing, especially for those students from minority and other non-mainstream groups (e.g., ESL students) who have been less exposed than the mainstream students to “the powerful school genres” such as narrative, report or exposition (Hyon, 1996, p. 701).

Recently, Hyland, who had been in agreement with Bernstein’s (1990, p. 73) “visible pedagogy,” which renders what is to be learned and assessed clear to students, reaffirmed genre pedagogy as focusing on the principles of genre-based language instruction and the basic ways of its implementation and presented some broad classroom models in the contexts of ESP and SFL approaches. Emphasizing the rapidly-changing ESL classroom contexts – culturally, socially and linguistically more diverse places than ever before – he claims:

The old certainties of cognitive homogeneity which supported process writing models for so long are no longer sustainable, and there is an urgent need for more theoretically robust, linguistically informed, and research-grounded text descriptions to bridge the gap between home and school writing and prepare learners for their futures. (Hyland, 2007, p. 149)

However, Christie (2005) and Knapp and Watkins (2005) claim that, to some extent, the genre-based approach shares some features with the original ‘process’ approaches because “process and product are part of the same pedagogical phenomenon.” Christie (2005, p. 145) adds that “[i]n a Genre-based pedagogy considerable attention is devoted to fostering processes that scaffold learning, and to teaching a metalanguage for dealing with the genres.”

Even though the genre-based approach to learning writing proposes practical and accessible alternative ways of addressing the problematic areas of the ‘natural’ approach (i.e., process writing) discussed earlier, there has been some criticism of its marked features of explicit teaching and what was misleadingly seen as ‘prescriptive’ grammar. Thus, the next section addresses such criticism, particularly arguing for the importance of explicit teaching in the writing development of ESL children.

First, some scholars have criticized explicit teaching as one of the marked features of the genre approach (Fahnestock, 1993; Freedman, 1993; Krashen, 1981; Perl, 1979; Williams & Colomb, 1993). Perl’s study (1979) suggests that explicit teaching can be harmful, and Perl documents evidence of overuse or misuse of conscious learning in the writing process. Freedman (1993) particularly questions the usefulness of explicit teaching with respect to genres. She raises some questions such as whether explicit teaching helps
novice writers master a new genre of writing, and if so, to what degree; what kinds of formal features or underlying rules can be usefully explicated, how many rules can be learned at a time, and in what order.

With respect to the doubts and skepticism about explicit teaching within the genre approach, the following L2 research has demonstrated that such claims are not supported by clear evidence. First, a body of research on L2 reading points out that L2 reading comprehension can be significantly improved by explicit teaching about rhetorical structure (Carrel, 1985; Davis, Lange, & Samuels, 1988). In particular, Hewings and Henderson (1987) and Hyon (1995) indicate that students can be positively influenced by genre instruction in learning about text structure and can therefore increase their reading effectiveness. In addition to the area of L2 reading, L2 writing (Aidman, 1999; Macken-Horarik, 2005; Swales, 1990) has also been shown to benefit from genre-based scaffolding and instruction.

More criticism of explicit teaching based on the genre approach comes from certain critics who have pointed out that genre instruction inhibits writers’ self-expression and straightjackets their creativity through conformity and prescriptivism (Dixon, 1987). Obviously, such dangers can arise if genre teachers do not take variation into account and apply what Freedman (1994, p. 46) calls “a recipe theory of genre.” However, genre educators claim that explicit teaching does not mean rigid rules, or that only one way exists to write in a particular genre. Hyland (2004, p. 20) sums up his argument on this matter: “Genre pedagogies make both constraints and choices more apparent to students, giving them the opportunities to recognize and make choices, and for many learners, this awareness of regularity and structure is not only facilitating but also reassuring.”

2. The Issues of Critical Literacy in ESL Children’s Genre Writing

Along with the issue of explicit teaching, the genre-based approach has evoked another conservative question in relation to the literature of ‘critical literacy.’ Within the circle of Australian genre-based pedagogy, some scholars (Cope & Kalantzis, 1993, p. 15) have been concerned that the LERN teaching-learning cycle, with its focus on modeling and subsequent construction of mainstream texts, represents “transmission pedagogy” that presents texts such as report and exposition uncritically and excludes other, non-mainstream genres that might be culturally important in students’ lives. Cope and Kalantzis, two of the original LERN members, advocate a more critical approach to genre teaching, one that leads students to challenge the principles found in some mainstream texts. Cope and Kalantzis have proposed the need to make the learning of different genres not a matter of duplication of a standard form, but rather mastery of a tool that encourages development and change (even disruption) as opposed to simple reproduction (Cope &
Kalantzis, 1993). Using a more inclusive definition of ‘critical literacy,’ Lee (1997), Luke (1993; 1996) and Benesch (2001) have also argued that genre teaching might serve to reinforce the existing power structure in our society.

However, the concern in terms of teaching expressed by most Australian genre theorists and educators has been associated with attempts to teach ‘powerful’ school genres such as report and exposition to students from minority language backgrounds and other non-mainstream groups who have had less exposure to such texts than mainstream students have. AMEP (Adult Migrant English Program) and other workplace training programs involve students who are also from limited educational and non-English-speaking backgrounds. By teaching writing, genre educators may be accommodating such disadvantaged learners to the powerful dominant discourses in our society. It is noteworthy that most other pedagogies fail to provide students with better access to powerful genres (Hasan, 1996). In this regard, Hyland (2004) views access to dominant discourse as a foundation on which to build students’ critical literacy skills.

Kress (1993) argues that genre work in Australia has been both a pedagogical and political (ideological) project. Christie (1991, p. 83) also proposes that teaching students about genres and language in general is an ideological matter of social justice, insisting that “as long as we leave matters of language available to some and not to others, then we maintain a society which permits and perpetuates injustice of many kinds.” Therefore, they suggest a different notion of ‘critical literacy’ in which students can read and write any text more critically with logical thinking, stating that, as a result, they will be able to read the society and world in which they live. Hammond and Macken-Horarik (1999, p. 529) regard “the ability to read resistantly and write critically as central aspects of critical literacy, particularly within the context of school education.” By introducing a case study of ESL science programs in which critical literacy was implemented systematically over a sequence of lessons, they successfully exemplify and demonstrate ways to practically implement ‘critical literacy’ in the classroom. It can thus be claimed that the genre-based approach to critical literacy can empower ESL learners to become competent members of society. This competency might be the primary and final goal of the genre-based approach.

In the above-mentioned academic context, the Australian genre theorists, particularly Martin and his systemic colleagues, have defined genres as “staged, goal-oriented social processes” (Martin, 1992, p. 505). This definition is elaborated as follows:

Genres are referred to as social processes because members of a culture interact with each other to achieve them; as goal oriented because they have evolved to get things done; and staged because it usually takes more than one step for the participants to achieve their goal.”(Martin, Christie, & Rothery, 1987, p. 59)
Thus, from now on, we adopt the definition of ‘genre’ from the Australian genre theories because it is appropriate in this case study when considering the whole of the teaching-learning context, the target group and instructional methodology. In this case study, the process of writing a range of genres will be claimed as a sequenced social process with the clear purpose of the student becoming a competent member of society.

III. METHOD

1. Participants and the Dual Role of Mother-Researcher

This case study, conducted over 5 years and 8 months, followed one Korean ESL boy, Jinha, from Kindergarten (age 5) through Year 5 (age 10); and followed a Korean ESL girl, Sunyoung (Jinha’s younger sister by two years), from Kindergarten (age 5) through Year 3 (age 8). During the case study, due to their father’s PhD study, they were attending an English mainstream public school, Cook Primary in Canberra, Australia. Further details on the participants and their school context will be presented in the section concerning descriptive data analysis.

The present study was conducted by the mother of the two ESL Korean children. Thus, the issue of the dual role of the mother-researcher might question the research validity. To date, almost all well-known case studies of language and literacy learning have been carried out by a parent (Aidman, 1999; Bissex, 1980; Halliday, 1975; Oldenberg, 1987; Painter, 1984, 1993; Saunders, 1988). Bissex (1980) highlights the possible strengths and weakness of a study conducted by a parent, noting there can be advantages and disadvantages in a parent-researcher conducting a case study. The level of parent intervention in the process of writing and the subjectivity in data analysis and findings are recognized as disadvantages of a parent-researcher undertaking a case study. However, conducting a longitudinal and comprehensive case study related to children’s language development in both the natural contexts of classroom and home has been considered a special type of research that is quite challenging and perhaps too demanding for researchers who are not parent-researchers (Saunders, 1988).

3 The original data for this narrative writing was the part of the researcher’s PhD study. The longitudinal case study was conducted in Canberra, Australia with two Korean ESL children, Jinha and Sunyoung (brother and sister), over 5 years and 8 months. The primary purpose of the case study was to find out how the two bilingual children would develop their biliteracy, particularly in writing, in ESL contexts in an English-speaking country such as Australia. In addition, the case study sought to establish whether the genre-based approach applied in the given ESL contexts would be effective and beneficial to children learning to write a range of texts in both languages.
2. Data Collection

All the narrative texts written by the two ESL children both in the classroom and at home were collected and field notes were written to record the writing contexts. The other related materials, including writing notes, worksheets, memos and presentation charts were kept as original documents and were photocopied for sorting chronologically and by each writing activity.\(^4\)

To understand the classroom contexts of the writing activities, the researcher made classroom observations on a regular basis during the research period. During the early period, mostly as a parent helper, the researcher participated in the reading sessions of the first child, Jinha, who went through Kindergarten and Year 1. When Jinha turned to Year 2, the genre-based approach was actively adopted in the school, and the researcher became involved in the second child’s (Sunyoung’s) Kindergarten and Year 1 classrooms as a teacher’s assistant, helping children in both reading and writing sessions. In Sunyoung’s Year 1 classroom, the researcher assisted more intensively by leading reading and writing sessions every day of the school week (from 9 am to 1 pm) for six months. During the last year and a half, the researcher carried out classroom observations on a weekly basis. The energy, time and effort invested in the classroom observations and participation as a parent helper or teacher’s assistant allowed the researcher to understand the classroom contexts and gain insights into the possible effects of the genre-based approach on the children’s writing. This kind of fieldwork is necessary for researchers conducting similar case studies.

Throughout the period of classroom observation and participation, the researcher performed several interviews with the class teachers related to the children’s writing proficiency and behavior as well as the issue of effective writing contexts. Also, during the writing sessions, the researcher tried to take down field notes whenever practicable. The ESL children’s literacy-related activities were also observed closely by the researcher in the home, and a video tape recording (covering the whole research period) of the family home was also maintained to capture writing contexts in their natural setting. To sum up data were collected through participant observation in classroom, video recording at home and by collecting and analyzing written text products; by these means, the researcher attempted to reinforce the research evidence for this longitudinal case study over 5 years and 8 months.

\(^4\) Because for a longitudinal case study this kind of data collection needed to continue over six years, adopting thorough record-keeping was an essential task for the researcher. Keeping the original notebooks including a range of writing activities seemed to be useful as a means of understanding the classroom curriculum and the sequence of writing activities as well as the more extended writing contexts and writing behavior of the participants in the classroom.
3. Research Questions

Along with data collection, the two ESL children’s narrative writing products in English were selected for further text analysis and discussion to address the following research questions:

1. Did the genre-based approach at school and home help the ESL children to develop narrative writing effectively during their primary years?
2. Beyond the schematic organization of narrative writing, what kinds of lexico-grammatical features in particular did the ESL children develop through this narrative writing?

4. Text Analysis: Using Systemic Functional Grammar (SFG)–Transitivity System

To discover how the ESL children developed their narrative writing based on the genre approach, SFG (Systemic Functional Grammar) was used as a tool for text analysis, following other prominent researchers in the area of children’s writing development. The genre theorists (Christie 1985, 1989; Derewianka 1995; Martin & Rothery, 1984) have claimed that text analysis based on SFG is capable of offering a finer degree of delicacy, specificity and detail of analysis compared to just descriptive and comprehensive accounts found in many other case studies in applied linguistics. Aidman (1999, p. 83) also indicates that “the systemic analysis enable[s] the researcher to penetrate, discuss, and, hopefully, explain how language is used to construct meaning in either of the child’s written language, and how the linguistic choices [the child] makes change developmentally over time.” By using the SFG analysis, the specific linguistic features developed in narrative genre can be captured and reflected upon in the whole case study.

In the SFG text analysis in this paper, the researcher will highlight how the children developed their linguistic choices of process types. This analysis examines the clause in its experiential function as a way of representing patterns of experience. The experiential meaning includes making sense of what is going on around us not only in our outer world but also inside our minds. According to Halliday, “the clause plays a central role, because it embodies a general principle for modeling experience – namely, the principle that reality is made up of PROCESSES” (1994, p. 106). In other words, the wide range of the world of experiences (including happening, doing, sensing, meaning and being and becoming) can be represented as “a manageable set of PROCESS TYPES” with the relevant grammatical systems called ‘Transitivity’ (Halliday, 1994, p. 106). In principle, a process is basically composed of three core components presented as follows (Halliday, 1994, p. 107):
1. the process itself;
2. participants in the process;
3. circumstances associated with the process.

The principal process types recognized in functional grammar are: material (expressing actions); relational (expressing ‘being’); verbal (expressing speech); behavioral (expressing behaviors); mental (expressing thinking feeling, sensing); and existential.5

IV. DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

1. Descriptive Analysis of The ESL Children’s Classroom and Home Contexts in Relation to Narrative Writing

1) Jinha’s Narrative Writing: Classroom and Home Contexts

Jinha’s narrative writing during his early and mid-primary years (Year 1–Year 5) developed mainly through his school curriculum and reading experiences both at school and at home. Before his first attempt at narrative writing, he had been exposed to the experience of story reading (both shared reading and independent reading) in Korean first (regularly, from age 3 to age 5) and subsequently in English (from age 5) with the supportive guidance of the researcher in the home environment. The experience of reading and discussing storybooks with a parent seemed to be enjoyable to him, and he showed strong enthusiasm for the whole process of story reading and oral discussion. Although Jinha enjoyed reading and discussing stories, he did not show interest in narrative writing. Thus, during his first two years in school (Kindergarten and Year 1), Jinha would only attempt narrative writing if instructed to do so by his class teachers. During that period, Jinha’s writing at school was restricted mostly to Journal writing (diary entry) without the teachers’ active involvement. However, with the introduction of the genre approach at his school in his Year 2, Jinha’s narrative writing was more guided in terms of structure, as there was explicit teaching on the schematic structure of narrative writing through the use of worksheets, shared reading sessions and writing modeled by his class teachers on the whiteboard.

Typical lessons for narrative writing in Jinha’s classrooms were as follows. The class

5 For a more comprehensive but simpler explanation, please see Chapter 2 of Christie, F. (2005). Language Education in the Primary Years, Sydney, NSW: University of New South Wales Press Ltd.
teacher handed out worksheets outlining the narrative plan prior to the students’ starting to write (see the worksheet sample in Appendix 3). The worksheets were mainly designed for students to fill in some notes in the various sections such as Title, Orientation, Initiating Event, Complication, Resolution and Coda/Moral/Concluding Statement. Sometimes the class teacher constructed the opening sentence in a narrative and students were required to continue the text. There were some opportunities for students to write different endings after an independent reading session. Also, several opportunities were provided for the students to become familiar with the narrative structure as they filled in the worksheet called ‘story structure,’ which was composed of sections such as Title, Characters, Events, Settings and Favorite Parts. The use of all these classroom materials meant that, to a certain degree, Jinha was explicitly helped in constructing his awareness of the schematic structure of narrative. Even though the teacher did not seem to teach the students in detail about such linguistic features as process types, or usage of conjunctions in narrative, the students were provided with narrative sampling (during shared reading sessions), some model writing and lessons on the narrative schematic structure. One of Jinha’s ‘Learning Journal’ entries (Year 4, age 9:8) also reveals that the teacher provided Jinha with some chances to learn about the schematic structure of narrative writing in an explicit way: “…Today I learned that the orientation could include a thing called foreshadowing which means to give clues that bad things are going to happen to make the reader more exciting than just tell what the complication is…”

Jinha’s narrative writing was mostly conducted in school classrooms, particularly in the lower grades (Year 1–Year 3). However later on, in Years 4 and 5, the teachers would sometimes ask the children to finish off their narratives (which were started at school) as homework, due mainly to time constraints. In the process of doing homework, Jinha would initiate discussions with the researcher mostly about the storyline of the narrative, and whenever the researcher showed interest in his work, he seemed more confident and motivated to continue his writing. When he successfully finished his narrative texts, the researcher praised him. This kind of encouragement provided a sense of achievement that seems to have helped Jinha keep up an interest in this genre. It appeared as though he needed enthusiastic readers with whom he could share his stories. In this regard, it can be said that parents can play a valuable role in the home context, as, in most cases, classroom teachers are not able to cater to individual children’s needs such as responding to the narrative writing process in a timely manner.

Another important factor in Jinha’s learning about narrative was storybook reading to which he had been exposed from an early age in his home environment. As mentioned above, his experience of reading storybooks started with reading in his mother tongue of Korean at age 3. From age 5, when he could read storybooks in English as well, the researcher started taking the child to the community library on a regular basis to engage
him in a range of storybook reading, as well as for following up the school reading curriculum. As he grew older, Jinha was able to read longer stories, and he increased the number of books he read and the number of pages per day. He was still happy, however, to have the researcher help him select books; he liked discussing book choices before he read, and he was eager to talk about the chosen texts as he was reading them. The researcher would at times encourage Jinha to complete the book he had started to read. His mother showing interest seemed to motivate the child to continue reading the book. The researcher would also organize a comfortable reading environment and make sure that he had time for reading.

From Year 3, Jinha’s storybook reading (mostly chapter books) entered a new phase of more challenging texts. From this period he started reading the Harry Potter series and books by other favorite authors such as Paul Jennings, Emily Rodda, and Eoin Colfer. It seems that Jinha’s narrative writing (particularly in Year 4 and 5) was heavily influenced by Paul Jennings in particular, given the author’s writing style (brief, comic, and witty, plenty of imagination, the story being told from the first person perspective) and the themes of his stories.

The influence of the school’s teaching on narrative, along with Jinha’s independent reading of a wide range of storybooks in the home context, helped Jinha develop his skills in this genre of writing. Overall, Jinha’s narrative writing has a variety of story themes ranging from science, fantasy, adventure, school life, and so on. Throughout the five-year period (Year 1 through Year 5) Jinha constructed 11 narrative texts in English, a relatively small number. This could be explained by noting his preference for writing factual rather than fictional texts. In terms of his attitude toward narrative writing, Jinha, particularly during the earlier periods (Year 1 to Year 3), did not show much interest in narrative writing at home. However, he started becoming more motivated and interested in this genre from Year 4 on. In Year 5, he showed his pleasure and sense of achievement after writing several narrative texts that were recognized as successful by his teacher and the researcher. Starting from embryonic narrative texts in Year 1 (mostly written in the school context) the overall length of Jinha’s narrative texts increased year after year. There was a particularly remarkable growth in length in Year 4 and in Year 5. Even though Jinha’s earlier narrative texts (Year 1 to 3) appear less developed in many aspects including length, his later texts (Year 4 to 5) show his increased control of the narrative genre in such important features as schematic structure (there is a more distinctive complication and resolution), a transitivity system (a range of process types including mental processes), using dialogic exchange, an increased range of thematic choices, and elaborate nominal groups and circumstantial phrases to describe participants and setting. Jinha’s class teacher’s (in Year 5) comments about his writing proficiency in relation to genre writing on his school report were as follows: “Jinha has a strong understanding of the mechanics
of various writing genres, such as reports, narratives, expositions, explanations, procedures and poetry. He organizes his thoughts in a logical order and his work is carefully and creatively displayed..."^6

2) Sunyoung’s Narrative writing: Classroom and Home Contexts

Similar to Jinha’s, most of Sunyoung’s narrative writing in English was composed in the school setting from Kindergarten to Year 3. In contrast to Jinha, however, Sunyoung wrote several narratives at home as well due to her own strong motivation and interest in story writing. During that period, Sunyoung read a great number of storybooks and novels in English at school, at home and at a community library. ^7 At school, from the very start (Kindergarten), Sunyoung was exposed to writing lessons that were based mostly on genre pedagogy (although elements of the Whole Language approach were used in teaching reading).

In particular, Sunyoung’s Year 1 class teacher prepared a range of worksheets for the students to help them understand the structure and key elements of the text. Most of the worksheets for narrative writing (used mainly as pre-writing activities) were similar to the ones used in Jinha’s classrooms, but the class teacher used more structured modeling with clear instructions. There were also some other types of worksheets such as ‘Character Grid’ and ‘Plot Profile’ that were meant to be useful for practicing each element (e.g., character, plot, resolution) of the narrative writing. In the worksheet entitled ‘narrative choices,’ for instance, the teacher could help students learn lexical items commonly used in narrative writing through the task of choosing proper words, phrases or clauses. In this case, the young learners had a chance to familiarize themselves with phrases commonly used at the start of a sentence in narrative such as ‘A long time ago,’ ‘Last week’ or ‘In the past’ for orientation starters.

Comparatively, Sunyoung appeared to have been given more structured lessons on narrative writing than Jinha. Based on the researcher’s classroom observation in Sunyoung’s Year 1 class, the teacher often used an overhead projector to demonstrate more

^6 Jinha received a Distinction Award in the Australian Schools Writing Competition (in Year 4) sponsored by the University of New South Wales and Education Testing Center (ETC). The Writing Competition was primarily based on the genre-based approach and the writing task was one of school text types such as narratives or arguments. It was a remarkable result that Jinha, being an ESL child, achieved this award in a very competitive writing contest. Only one or two out of 25 classmates received the same award.

^7 Like her brother, Sunyoung learnt basic Korean literacy from the researcher during her preschool years (from age 3 to 5) and enjoyed reading story books in Korean. Subsequently she started learning English literacy, mainly through reading books. The home environment where she spent a lot of time with her older brother Jinha seemed to have influenced her literacy development very positively by stimulating her interest in reading and writing.
effectively the content of the various worksheets, and the young writers seemed to concentrate on her teaching. At home, whenever Sunyoung wanted to write narratives, she tried to perform story-mapping activities along with some noting about characters and settings before writing up the stories. Sunyoung’s numerous worksheets seem to indicate that the schoolwork must have influenced Sunyoung’s development of awareness of the narrative structure and elements to some degree.

Initially, Sunyoung wrote stories about animals and, as time passed, her story themes spread out to ‘insects,’ ‘the universe’ and ‘family relationships,’ in accordance with the themes studied in school. Even though Sunyoung’s storylines were not as varied as Jinha’s, in general, her control of narrative writing had developed remarkably from her initial period (in Kindergarten) through the next year (in Year 1) up to Years 2 and 3. Her strong motivation led her to often practice narrative writing at school and home as well as to read a lot of picture books, story books and novels. Roald Dahl, Judy Blume and Meg Cabot were Sunyoung’s favorite authors who seem to have particularly influenced her narrative writing style for constructing dialogue and using humor. In the beginning, her narratives were often missing the complication stage, or it was not yet developed. The texts were short, consisting of 7 to 10 lines overall. However, after one year (from Year 1), her narrative writing started to demonstrate a more distinctive generic structure. At the end of the period, Sunyoung was able to construct a 10-page story that revealed advanced writing skills and expression. Sunyoung’s school report (in Year 3) acknowledges her excellence in this narrative writing as follows: “Sunyoung, although proficient at all types of writing, has shown a particular interest and flair for narratives. Her vivid imagination allows her to develop the storyline of her narratives and she shows certain attention in ensuring that she interests the reader with her stories.”

2. Comparative Text Analysis of Jinha and Sunyoung’s Narrative Writing

Throughout the text analysis (based on SFG) of Jinha and Sunyoung’s narrative writing, their developmental patterns and characteristics have been demonstrated through their control of schematic structure, transitivity and nominal groups along with a consideration

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8 During parent-teacher interviews and in school reports, Sunyoung’s class teachers (Year 1, Year 2 and Year 3) evaluated her writing skills as very high in comparison to her peers. Also, like her brother, Jinha, she got a Distinction Award in the Australian Schools Writing Competition (in Year 3) sponsored by the University of New South Wales and Education Testing Center (ETC). The Writing Competition was primarily based on the genre-based approach and the writing task was one of school text types such as narratives or arguments.
of their narrative writing contexts (both school and home). 9

1) Control of Schematic Structure

In terms of their control of the schematic structure, both Jinha and Sunyoung seemed to be more confident in writing at the stage of orientation than the complication and resolution elements. Even in their initial narrative texts, the orientation stage was, for the most part, constructed quite successfully with its semantic properties of introducing the setting, characters and initiating events. The elements of ‘foreshadowing’ also emerge in both children’s texts in an embryonic manner (explicitly rather than implicitly). Their complication and resolution stages are initially indistinctive due to the lack of a sense of crisis and problem/solution. Distinctly, both children’s early narratives reflect that they had some difficulty in developing the orientation stage up to the next stages in terms of managing the story line. Because the young writers would have been used to the conventional orientation and ending elements such as ‘once upon a time’ and ‘they lived happily ever after,’ they could start the narrative texts using such formulaic expressions. As to the complication stage, however, they seemed to need more systematic practice along with modeling and joint construction.

Both children demonstrated growth in their control of the evaluative elements that give significance to the complication and resolution stages. In realizing the evaluative elements, Jinha and Sunyoung developed their linguistic choices somewhat differently. For instance, initially Jinha used more relational or existential processes (e.g., There was one major problem. Was it evil?, Now it was pretty obvious that this creature was evil) whereas Sunyoung used more mental verbs with projection clauses (e.g., she thought that it was a stranger). Later Sunyoung expanded the ways of realizing evaluative elements by using ‘it’ or ‘that’ in thematic positions. She also used monologues (revealing the protagonist’s inner feelings or attitudes toward the significant events) as well as a range of existential and relational processes. In this way, the children’s later complication and resolution stages could allow more room for the readers to retain their curiosity or sense of crisis, not going to the last stage so abruptly. However, as mentioned above, in realizing the evaluative elements, Sunyoung attempted a greater variety of approaches than Jinha.

Another remarkable fact is that both children developed their narrative writing texts to include dialogic exchanges beginning in the middle period (Sunyoung: Year 2, Jinha: Year 4). They seemed to attempt another style of narrative texts that were different from

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9 Originally the text analysis based on SFG was extended to other aspects such as “Theme Choice” and “Mood” in the case study but in this paper the scope of analysis aspects was reduced for the purpose of this particular paper.
conventional folk tales. In so doing, their interpersonal meanings were practiced and they seemed to be successful in finding other ways of constructing narrative texts by effectively using characterization through dialogue exchanges. Particularly in Sunyoung’s case, she appeared to prefer this kind of narrative text (using conversational dialogue) to other types and extended her narrative writing to construct a novel-like narrative (e.g., entitled ‘Face to Face with a Santa Claus,’ Year 3). Her successful case of writing the 10-page narrative can be attributed to the fact that she had developed the dialogic style along with the exploration of one of her favorite topics such as friendship. Meanwhile, Jinha was also able to construct quite a successful narrative text in Year 5 (see Appendix 1), writing from the first person perspective. Sunyoung’s most successful text in Year 3 (see Appendix 2) was a third person perspective that included many dialogue exchanges whereas Jinha’s did not have much dialogic exchange (only a few clauses) with different perspective. The children appeared to have developed their own styles of narrative texts even though they have been exposed to the same genre approach at school and in the home. One of the factors influencing their writing style can be the kinds of texts to which they have been exposed in reading.

2) Transitivity

To construct experiential semantic fields in narrative writing, both Jinha and Sunyoung started to employ material processes and relational processes from early on and later came to employ a range of mental processes to depict the participants’ inner world, including their emotional conflicts and attitudes toward key events. Particularly the mental processes of perception (seeing, hearing) come to play an important role in initiating the unusual element in the orientation, along with creating some sense of tension, which might be linked successfully to the complication (e.g., ‘I heard scary noises.’ ‘when she saw a strange man’).

The children’s choices in the transitivity system are also different. Thus Sunyoung employs verbal and behavioral processes more symbolically and meaningfully in comparison with Jinha’s counterparts. For example, Sunyoung certainly extended the range of verbal processes from some representative verbal ones such as ‘say’ or ‘ask’ to a semantically wide range of different verbal ones such as ‘complain’ or ‘whisper’ (in quoting clauses). Also some verbal processes are adjoined with behavioral verbs, enhancing situational contexts (e.g., *She panicked and said*.) or are used with some circumstantial elements as in ‘I whispered under my breath’. In many cases in Sunyoung’s narrative texts, behavioral processes contribute to representing the participants’ symbolic or metaphorical actions that cannot be realized in material processes only. The significant usages of verbal and behavioral processes in Sunyoung’s narratives outnumber Jinha’s
counterparts, and it can be claimed that this sort of difference might have significantly contributed to Sunyoung’s control and development in narrative texts. In addition, she also demonstrates a range of grammatically complex verb patterns that convey subtle meanings effectively. If we think of the experiential characteristics of narrative writing in terms of lexical range and grammatical complexity, control of verbal groups appears to be one of the key factors in successful writing in this genre.

3) Nominal Groups

The development of nominal groups is also closely related to the young children’s control of the written language mode. In narrative texts, nominal groups are mostly found in the positions of participants that depict characters or key events. Therefore, the successful usage of nominal groups is directly linked to the essential transitivity system along with the role of the ‘process.’ In specific terms of nominal groups, overall, Jinha and Sunyoung’s narrative texts demonstrate a range of nominal groups with both elements of pre-modifiers and post-modifiers. Even in their early texts, both children employ an embedded clause as a qualifier in their nominal group structure. To provide additional defining or circumstantial information about the ‘thing’ (head noun), both children often use the pattern of ‘V-ing’ as a post-modifier (e.g., I saw the man hiding behind a rock).

Also, the range of epithets (adjectives) has also expanded semantically over time. Some further patterns of modification in nominal groups can be found in Sunyoung’s narrative texts. The nominal groups using infinitive verb (e.g., Sarah was the first person to put her hand up) or past participle as pre- or post-modifier (e.g., a puzzled look, a twisted, mean smile) are much more frequently found in Sunyoung’s texts. In addition, in many cases nominal groups that use prepositional phrases as post-modifier as well as ‘-of prepositional phrase’ (e.g., a man with a long beard, the wrapper of the bright red package) appear. Because Sunyoung constructed more lengthy narratives in her later periods than Jinha and Sunyoung’s total production of narrative texts also outnumbers Jinha’s, a more varied application of nominal groups might have been possible for Sunyoung’s narrative texts. However, it appears quite obvious that Sunyoung developed her lexico-grammar related to the nominal groups at a remarkable rate and at a younger age than Jinha.
V. DISCUSSION

1. Genre Approach at School Context: The Positive Effect of Explicit Teaching

Based on this case study, it can be argued that the genre-based approach to ESL children’s narrative writing does not result in texts that lack creativity, as opponents of the approach would claim. The argument that the genre approach’s explicit teaching of schematic structure and language features might limit young children’s imaginations and originality does not appear to be supported by this case study’s account of primary literacy learning. According to the researcher’s observation of Jinha and Sunyoung’s classrooms over the time of the case study, young children do not usually have sufficient time to practice and develop a range of written genres to a level that would approximate the models presented. Without the structured explicit teaching of at least the schematic structure, a majority of young writers would not progress in their narrative writing with satisfaction and a sense of achievement.

In Jinha and Sunyoung’s case, the explicit teaching of schematic structure clearly helped them to develop further awareness of the narrative features and made them feel more confident in starting and developing narrative texts within the limited time allocated for writing. Their sense of achievement in finalizing a narrative text was important. Even though Jinha was not as impressive in narrative writing during the research period when compared to Sunyoung, he commented that he would like to write more narratives after finishing one of his most successful narratives. As mentioned before, the development of narrative writing in primary-aged children involves many essential factors such as exposure to story telling and reading experience. However, to make their reading experience enhance their writing products more effectively, the explicit teaching of at least the narrative schematic structure through modeling and joint construction as well as worksheet exercises could be beneficial for those who want to write but do not know how to start.

2. Significance of Narrative Writing Development in ESL Primary Contexts

In this case study, the ESL children’s narrative writing development in genre pedagogy in a primary school context can be considered particularly significant. As shown in the analysis section, two ESL children developed their experiential metafunction mainly through the range of process types and circumstantial phrases along with nominal groups in the position of participants. Compared with other primary school text types such as factual writing – exposition, report, or argument – narrative writing surely exhibits the
genre effect which helps writers develop experiential semantic areas through expressive lexical choices and grammatical patterns (Christie, 2005). As children grow up, they need to learn other powerful school genres, but narrative writing can provide young children with an expressive and creative power that can be considered as the essence of their personal writings. When they encounter the important period of college entrance and job application in the real world, they will need to adapt to more impressive personal essays for self-introduction or college applications. For those who have developed their expressive competency through these so-called ‘elemental genres’ (Martin, 1992), narrative writing will equip them with higher lexico-grammatical competency with respect to the important writing in future academic and professional settings.

As Hyland (2007) indicates, the SFL model provides teachers with a principled way of sequencing school genres. For this reason, narrative writing can be recommended for the beginning of the primary school curriculum when young children need to develop their personal writings and their creativity through storybook reading programs. In this regard, compared to Australian primary contexts, Korean primary school settings (L1) and EFL contexts have not encouraged young Korean children to write narratives as part of the formal curriculum, even though Korean literacy classes in public schools share many features in common with the genre approach to literacy education. These common features include a focus on genres, with attention given to the textual structure and lexico-grammar of specific text types, as well as a focus on general comprehension skills. However, Korean literacy classes are lacking in subsequent writing activities such as joint text construction, modeling and independent writing based on the genre approach. Considering all the benefits provided by narrative writing in primary contexts, Korean L1 and EFL primary education should pay more attention to this important issue and put more value on narrative writing at an earlier age.

VI. CONCLUSION

In this case study, the genre-based approach in ESL primary children’s narrative writing reveals a paradoxical truth in the sense that eventually it can help ESL children to be creative in their own narrative writings by explicitly teaching formal genre knowledge and repeated practice over the research period. Particularly in the area of ESL children’s writing development, a collaborative writing process that linked writing in school and home contexts for genre pedagogy proved to be very effective and productive in this case study. The three parties, comprising the two ESL children, their school teachers and the ESL parents, played important roles in their interactive literacy process through shared reading, sample writing modeling and worksheet activities, joint construction, and
independent writing as well as scaffolding literacy through oral interaction. Throughout these repeated writing practices, each of the three parties could feel empowered by their sense of achievement in discovering how to teach effectively, how to write more easily and how to support more practically.

The researcher has been observing the two ESL children’s narrative writing development since their return to Korea, their native country, where they have had to adapt to a quite different EFL literacy context. The researcher’s findings so far indicate that their narrative writing in ESL primary context based on genre pedagogy has been so sustainable that the genre knowledge has been transferred effectively and effortlessly to L1 area (Korean narrative writing) as well as L2 (English narrative writing) in the EFL context. More importantly, their motivation to maintain and develop this narrative writing has been very strong even in a Korean literacy context in which narrative writing itself is not valued as highly as it is in the Australian ESL context. Their narrative writing development in primary period must have provided the ESL Korean children with a springboard to jump on for their further demanding academic world in a timely manner with practical safety rules.

Future studies must also explore and reveal precisely how the writers (so-called ‘returnee’ students) have transferred the genre knowledge of narrative writing in their L1 and L2 EFL context in Korea along with describing the completely different linguistic, social and academic contexts. Also, future studies might need to specify some of the dimensions of genre knowledge (e.g., formal, procedural, subject-matter knowledge) to provide more insight into the increasingly diverse genre writing contexts.

REFERENCES


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APPENDIX A
Jinha’s Narrative Writing Sample

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title: Remote Control</th>
<th>(Year 5, Age 10:3)</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Written at school (handwriting)</td>
<td></td>
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Orientation
Hi, I’m called Michael and I’m 10 years old. I love flicking the channels with our remote control. One day, when I was watching T.V and clicking from channel to channel (‘cause there was nothing to watch), I was about to turn the tele off., my dad came in with a shoebox. Inside was a brand new remote control. Dad said that it could control not only a T.V but also everything else. Just then mum came in and started a lecture about how I watched too much television and how I didn’t do any homework. For a little joke, I pointed the remote at mum and pressed the mute button. Magically and most surprisingly she started the lecture silently. So I pressed mute button again and her voice returned.

Complication
At first I thought having a remote control that could control even humans was very fascinating and so I brought it along to school. That’s when matters started to get out of hand. Firstly, I got it confiscated for fiddling with it in class. And then a boy made a smart remark about me having to bring a remote control. In class and then everybody started cracking up. When I finally got it back I slipped into the canteen to get something to eat. I purposely froze the canteen manager and unfroze her again. Then just for fun I froze another kid and nicked off with his food. After class, at lunchtime, I decided to beat up the bullies in the whole school. They were called Jack, Sharky and Jake. They were all one year older than me and they had bashed me up tones of times and I am paying back. So I called them out to the soccer field. They came and I bravely said, “come on fight me!” and they charged at me as if they were mad bulls. In the blink of an eye I whipped out my remote and pressed the pause button at them. But it didn’t work! Just then I saw that the batteries had run out. Sweat was tickling down my face. Just as they were about to charge into me….

Resolution
“Wake up! Sleepy head!” that’s when I realized I had fallen asleep on the couch clutching our old remote control. ‘Phew! It was just a dream.” I just noticed what the T.V was advertising. It was a remote control that could control everything. With this I put down the remote control and said to myself ‘I don’t need that anymore, I’ve got my hands that I can rely on’ and turned off the T.V with my own hands and gave a relieved smile.
Title: Face to Face with a Santa Claus
               (Year 3, Age 8:6)
Written at home (typed on the computer)

Orientation

   Chris was 8 years old and still believed in Santa Claus. Nothing could ever make Chris change his mind. Well, maybe. Chris’s big brother Matthew teased Chris and said, “Chris, be more adult type.” And besides, Chris’ dad was visiting France. It was that day that made Chris suspicious. In the early morning when Chris was sleeping, his mother woke him with a cup of freezing water. “Mum you always…..” and before he could say another word, she panicked and said, “Get changed! Matthew has already gone to swimming!” Chris rubbed his sleepy eyes and slowly got changed and ready to go. He went to his mother and said. “I’m all done.” His mother just told him to eat some cereal. Chris smiled and thought how the crunchy cornflakes would shimmer into his mouth and he rushed to the kitchen. The kitchen was very small but Chris didn’t mind. He thought he had the most beautiful window because he had always seen a lovely swaying of the trees and flowers. This had always been a lovely memory for Chris that he would never forget.

   As he was eating, he stared out the window half asleep and he saw a red shape sitting on the washing line with a naughty, twisted smile. He dropped his spoon and stared at the red, blurry shape. He knew that he was completely alone in the kitchen with only a spoon to fight with. Chris tried to figure out what the red blurry shape was by staring even harder than before. ‘No, it couldn’t be’, Chris had seen a strange Santa Claus staring at him face to face. Chris faced the other way and then turned and looked at the Santa Claus. He wasn’t gone but unfortunately was closer than before….

   The First Part of Complication of “Face to Face with a Santa Claus”
   (The whole complication part consists of 8 pages.)

   Chris didn’t know what to do. First he rubbed his sleepy eyes and stared again. It was still there!! He wanted to scream but nothing came out of his dried mouth. His face went white. He ran to his mother as fast as he could. “Mum, mum there is a strange ‘Santa Claus’ on our washing line!!” But his mother just slammed the door on his face and murmured, “Go do something helpful like eating your cornflakes.” Chris slowly tiptoed as if the Santa Claus might hear him. When he reached the kitchen, he took a glimpse of his food and snatched it away so he could eat somewhere else. When Chris had eaten his breakfast, he waited for his mother outside her door. Soon she came out and Chris was trying to tell her what had happened, but she didn’t believe him and told him he was saying complete nonsense. As they got in the car, Chris stayed silent with anger. ‘How could she not believe him?’ The swimming Pool came close by. His mother parked the car and Chris ran up to the entrance of the building and got changed into his swimmers.

   He waited for his mother to come and then jumped into the freezing water. All he could think of was that nasty Santa Claus. Chris usually took his swimming lessons seriously but not today. He was caught from the swim club teacher for listening inappropriately. Chris’ mother gave him a hard stare. Then Chris noticed something strange. A red blurry shape sitting on the lane ropes. Santa Claus had followed him! A shiver went up Chris’ spine. Was this rotten old Santa going to follow him everywhere?

   Swimming lessons had finished. Chris’ mother was going to give him an unpleasant lecture. Matthew was already waiting for Chris with his mother. It seemed as if Matthew was ready to tease the Santa lover. Chris explained to his mother in the car. “There really was a mean Santa Claus sitting on the washing line!” He shouted. His mother told him that he was daydreaming too much. Chris
looked down to his feet. Then he looked towards Matthew. He was making a sour face trying hard not to laugh. So was his mum. Chris made up his mind. He wasn’t going to put up with his family’s disgusting behavior. He was going to show them that rotten Santa Claus face to face. For once and for all!!! Chris’s car arrived at his house...

[Image]

Resolution

Chris began to act very rude to Santa Claus. He just stared at Chris strangely. All of a sudden, Santa Claus disappeared and came back with a piece of paper and a pen. “That’s strange?” thought Chris. Santa Claus started to write down a peculiar sign with the pen. Chris had no idea what the sign was and what it meant. Santa Claus finally placed the pen down and moved aside for Chris to look at it. On the paper was a messy word saying ‘sorry.’ Chris stared at the word for a couple of minutes and then back at Santa Claus. Chris half believed Santa Claus. Santa Claus sighed and then suddenly started to murmur, “You see, Santa Claus all have different personalities. Other Santas say that I am annoying and clumsy so I have no friends. I was tired of hearing those words so I tried to prove that I was nice and actually wanted a friend. And then I met you. But I just couldn’t help myself from acting differently from my mind. It’s just my undesirable habit. But at least you seemed to understand me, and so I have to say that I want to be friends with you.” Chris was flabbergasted to hear Santa’s confession. And then he began thinking of the way he had been feeling lonely and left out recently after Santa Claus came. So far Chris had not experienced such a difficult time with no friends and no people believing him. And in that way, Chris began to feel as if he was a strange person compared with all the other people around him. He then realized it was just the same for Santa Claus as well. “It’s okay.” Chris replied, “I think I understand your feelings. Thank you for letting me know how lonely you were.” Chris smiled. “Next Christmas, I will promise to deliver you a nice present!” Santa said, “So far I have been so naughty that I couldn’t get a job for delivering presents to little kids like you. But now, I am going to be nice and get that job!” “But please don’t sit on the washing line again. Just come down the chimney! That’s the traditional way.” Chris joked. Expecting the nice present for next Christmas, he was grinning from ear to ear and so was Santa Claus. Looking out the window, incredible white snow was drifting down…. 
APPENDIX C

Jinha’s Narrative Plan (Worksheet Sample)
Year 3 classroom (age 8:3)

Applicable levels: elementary, secondary
Key words: genre-based approach, ESL children, narrative writing, process types, explicit teaching

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