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TEXT COMPETENCE OF PUPILS ATTENDING THE SECOND GRADE OF THE ELEMENTARY SCHOOL

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Abstract

This study brings results of monitoring of text production process of pupils of the second grade of elementary schools. Through research survey we will observe relation between pupils' metacognition and quality of their texts. Goal of this research is presented by verification of innovative didactical conception through systematic work with experimental group of pupils attending the second grade of the elementary school, effective interconnection of research with pedagogical practice and maximalization of influence of research probe to educational process itself, monitoring of individuals during production of text and detail analysis of psycho-didactical aspects of writing process. Within the frame of the qualitative research we used following methods: General self-efficacy scale and its modified version, data content analysis. On the basis of analysis of all research data we found that there is direct relation between level of metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive skills (monitoring, self-regulation and self-evaluation) and quality of texts. Pupils with high rate of personal ability usually have higher level of metacognitive skills and at the same time they are authors of good texts.

Keywords: Productive text competence, elementary school, second grade, metacognition, analysis.

1. Introduction

Text competence that we perceive as a part of communication competence, includes individual's ability to read texts on his/her own, to understand text that is being read within the contexts of this own knowledge and to use acquired information and knowledge for further thinking, communication and behaviour. Text competence also involves ability to produce texts and to communicate own thoughts, evaluations and purposes through adequate means (Portmann-Tselikas, 2005). Text competence is therefore divided into receptive text competence and productive text competence. Both competences cannot be separated from each other – text's recipient has to know about laws of text production, about text models etc. At the same time, when producing text, we apply receptive competences within all phases of the process (work with text materials, receptive elaboration of produced text etc.).

Productive text competence involves two specific communication activities – ability to produce spoken and written communiqué. Within the frame of our study we focus on monitoring of production of written text by pupils of the second grade of elementary schools. We examine ability of pupils to create coherent text communiqués through usage of cognitive and metacognitive competence – ability of coherent and strategical thinking (Klimovič, 2011; Hausenblas, 2012; Díaz, 2017).

2. Problem Statement

Our previous research probes (Kusá, 2016; Adámková, 2018) revealed need of detailed monitoring process that will help pupils to acquire productive text competence. Such examination will help to identify causes of pupils' failures when producing text. At present we can observe problematic course of writing process and indifferent relation to it at the same time among certain group of pupils. Their texts are often very chaotic, incoherent, with shallow or too overloaded content, often we can see inaccuracy in language expression. We must see writing as multiphase process – when looking for causes of pupil's failure it would be a mistake to result from the text itself only. It is needed to monitor the whole process of writing, particularly its metacognitive level, and on the basis of these facts we can particularise further pedagogical intervention.

Notable input determinant of the writing process is self-efficacy which defines how the pupil stands towards problematic tasks. If the pupil's self-efficacy is low, the failure is more probable (Bandura, 1994; Pajares, 2003; Schunk, 2010). Pupil with lower level of self-efficacy approaches writing with different attitude than pupil with higher level – such a pupil will be more motivated, oriented towards success, he/she will more easily reduce initial stress that can be brought together with writing and such a pupil works more efficiently.

Effectiveness of the writing process is also influenced by metacognitive skills. It is needed to thoroughly observe methods that pupil uses for planning and self-regulation – it means ability to formulate a goal, see algorithm for processing the task, ability to manage own activities during individual phases and at the same time ability of continuous and final evaluation – assessment of effectiveness and meaning of all chosen procedures. Analysis of this part can reveal deficits in knowledge of text production. These can lead to mistakes in the coherence.

3. Research Questions

Within our research survey we focus on monitoring of writing process of group of pupils aged from 11 to 12. The selected group of pupils will be observed as to the influence of self-efficacy and their relation to the learning task on the course of the writing process. Furthermore, the level of metacognitive (self-regulation) skills and their influence on the quality of the text will be examined. Based on this we will formulate research question that will be further divided into partial research questions: What is the relation between metacognitive knowledge of pupils (with focus on self-efficacy and knowledge of the teaching task) and quality of their texts?

- What is relationship between self-efficacy and level of productive text competence of pupils?
- What is relationship between knowledge of the task and level of productive text competence of pupils?
- What is relationship between metacognitive skills (planning, self-regulation and self-reflection) and level of text competence of pupils?

4. Purpose of the Study

Basic purpose of this study is verification of innovative didactical conception through systematic work with experimental group of pupils attending the second grade of the elementary school. During the research survey pupils work with methods that serve for data collection and can contribute to development of their text competence (for example work with charts, method of self-reflection etc.). Aim of the research is expressed as effective interconnection of research with pedagogical practice and maximalization of influence of research probe to educational process itself.

Experimental group consists of 13 pupils. These pupils will be individually observed during the writing process to allow us identification of particular causes of possible failure. Among each pupil we will monitor influence of separate phases of the writing process on the final text. Individualized diagnostics contributes to more effective development of particular pupils. At the same time through research survey we find out which psycho-didactical factors have significant influence during the course of the writing process and its result.

5. Research Methods

To verify rate of self-efficacy, we used General self-efficacy scale (GSE). GSE is a scale assessing rate of optimistic self-evaluation of pupils, perceived ability to manage problems and rate of their own belief of their responsibility in relation to tasks (Schwarzer & Jerusalem, 1995). Within the first stage pupils reacted to the following statements through distribution of values from 1 to 4 (exactly true, moderately true, hardly true, not at all true).

GSE: 1. I can always manage to solve difficult problems if I try hard enough. 2. If someone opposes me, I can find the means and ways to get what I want. 3. It is easy for me to stick to my aims and accomplish my goals. 4. I am confident that I could deal efficiently with unexpected events. 5. Thanks to my

resourcefulness, I know how to handle unforeseen situations. 6. I can solve most problems if I invest the necessary effort. 7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties because I can rely on my coping abilities. 8. When I am confronted with a problem, I can usually find several solutions. 9. If I am in trouble, I can usually think of a solution. 10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way.

Consequently, pupils work with modified version of GSE (M-GSE). It was created in order to specify levels of self-efficacy through concretization of a task.

M-GSE: 1. I can always manage to write a difficult essay if I try hard enough when writing. 2. If something complicates my writing, I can find ways to overcome the obstacle and continue. 3. It is easy for me to write a good text. 4. I know how to write a good text thanks to my experience, possibilities and knowledge. 5. I believe in myself. I know that I can handle any unforeseen situations or complications I experience when writing a text. 6. I can write almost anything if I invest the necessary effort. 7. I can remain calm when facing difficulties during writing because I can fully rely on my coping abilities. 8. When I am confronted with a problem during writing, I can usually find several solutions how to cope with it. 9. If I am in trouble (I do not know how to continue, I need to change a part of the text, etc.), I can usually think of a solution. 10. I can usually handle whatever comes my way during writing.

Pupils consequently express feelings they had during writing of the text by five words or a short sentence.

In the second stage of the research we monitor pupils' work with charts to find out their knowledge about the task – we verify knowledge of individual stages of the text production process and ability to plan the whole process. We are not interested in the content level of charts only but also in its graphic form – it means how the pupils perceive writing process. Acquired data material will be put through content analysis.

The third stage of the research is focused on the content analysis of the particular texts. Texts itself will be subject to detailed evaluation in these areas: 1. text content; 2. creative approach to the topic elaboration; 3. communication purpose; 4. language level; 5. structure of the text, cohesion and coherence.

Within the last stage of the research pupils work with task aimed at self-reflection and evaltuion of the course of the give task. Pupils were finishing following formulations: I handled … well.; I need to improve …; I had great success with…; Next time I would use different approach when…, because….; I learned…; I will find … valuable.

6. Findings

Analysis of data acquired through GSE scale shows that pupils reach average self-efficacy. Value can vary between 10 and 40 points (the lower value, the higher self-efficacy). Observed group of pupils reach value of 17 in average, pupils of the given group varied between 23 and 13 (two pupils showed values above average, they got close to the limit value – K.Se. and Míša). The chart points at the fact that all monitored pupils show higher values for M-GSE – average value is 15 (in one case – pupil Š. Č. – was the value identical). In relation to writing the text the self-efficacy is higher. We can therefore assume that pupils consider themselves for authors of good texts, they believe in their own ability to handle the process of writing (some of the pupils get close to the limit value of 10 – K.Se., M.A. a Míša). Following the data analysis there is no disproportion between values of GSE and M-GSE (it means higher value for one factor and significantly lower value for another and otherwise).

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Within the first research stage we also monitored emotions (psychical mindset) that pupils have before the writing itself (pupils expressed their emotions by five words or short sentences). Among most of the pupils we recorded mixed feelings, generally initially dislike, nervousness or fear that consequently transformed into positive feelings (in connection with successive mastering of the given task). Pupils of the group are not primarily oriented on the feeling of helplessness but at the beginning they admit certain concerns about writing. Purely negative ("I am afraid of not making it on time or forgetting. I was not very much into it. – K.B.") and positive feelings were less often among the given group ("fun, happiness, concentration, creativity" – Míša).

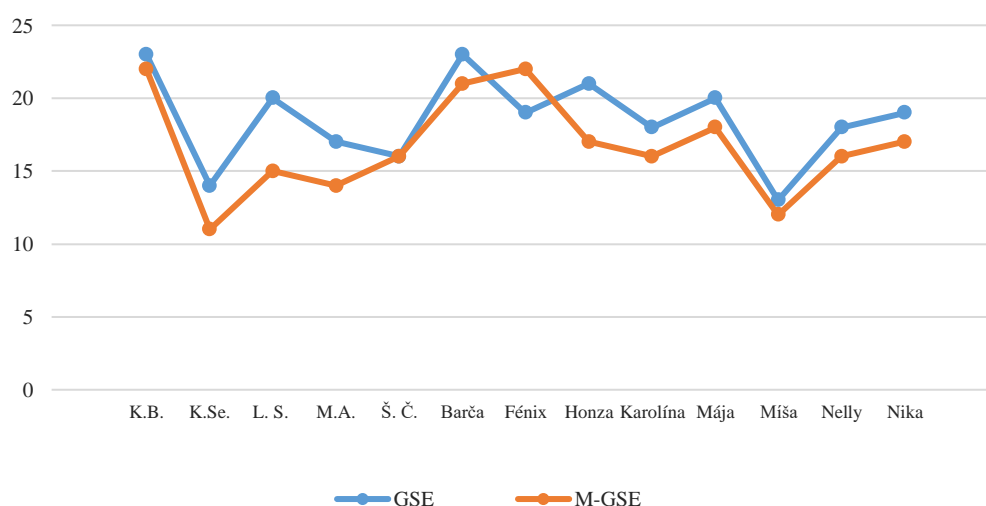Values of GSE and M-GSE

Figure 01. Values of GSE and M-GSE

In the second research stage we observed how pupils perceive process of writing itself. Pupils were creating charts where they caught individual phases of the writing process (pre-writing, writing, post-writing). Among pupils of the give group were noticed no deficits – all pupils were able to verbalize the algorithm that is repeatedly applied during writing the text. The charts were also created in a graphic form. Such a graphic expression proved that pupils see writing as multistage process. They perceive the process of writing most often as journey from the start to the end (journey by road, journey between particular checkpoints, cruise with diving – in the phase of looking for the ideas, thoughts). There were also other graphic illustrations (for example puzzle – text is made when the single pieces fall into the right places).

In the third research stage we individually evaluated pupils' texts (pupils wrote text on "Why did this happen to me and not to someone else?"). The analysis gave teacher valuable information used for dynamic evaluation (it means evaluation of the whole process). We evaluated texts in the five areas with grades A, B, C (in descending order), for the purposes of chart we transferred evaluation to numerical score – A=10, B=20, C=30. Among the given group we can see that pupils with lower value of self-efficacy represent authors of more quality texts, average self-efficacy refers to average texts. Line chart below shows

values of M-GSE and the point score in the close area. Self-efficacy can be therefore considered as factor that influences quality of texts and corresponds to it.
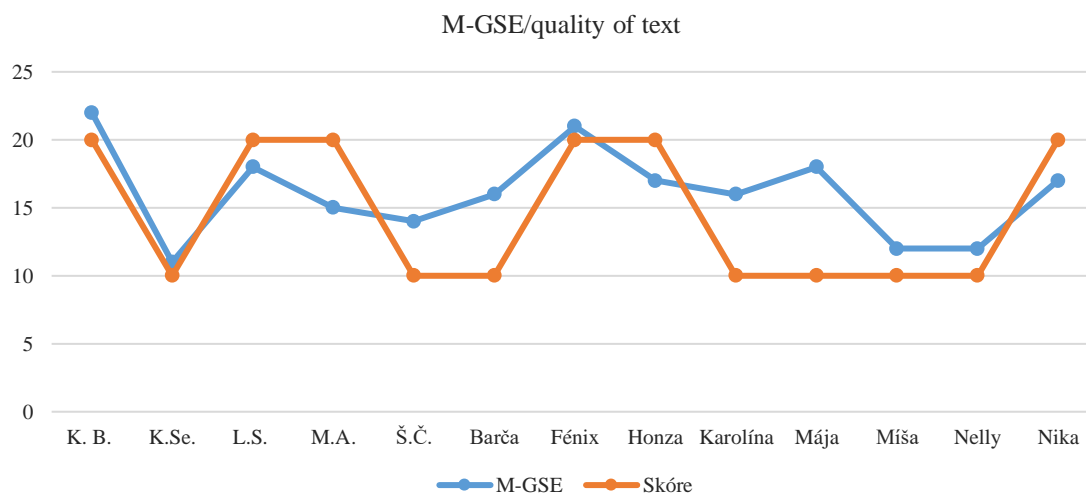

Figure 02. M-GSE/quality of text

In the last stage we focused on pupils' self-reflection. This analysis of unfinished sentences brought valuable data to both the research team and the teacher. We monitored these three areas (we state the most frequent answers of pupils of experimental group):

- perceived success: ability to think out the story and be able to tell it, ability to think about the topic, ability to create meaningful sentences, ability to work with outline;
- perceived deficits: spelling and grammar, creation of too complicated sentences, text organization, not managed part text – introduction/conclusion, not well-considered content;
- transfer: ability of story-telling, ability to create coherent text, new vocabulary, fixation of grammatical phenomena.

Pupils' answers show that pupils are able of deeper self-reflection. They know what they are good at and at the same time they are aware of their deficits (which corresponds to imperfections that were revealed by individualized text analysis).

7. Conclusion

On the basis of analysis of all research data we found that there is direct relation between level of metacognitive knowledge and metacognitive skills (monitoring, self-regulation and self-evaluation) and quality of texts. Pupils with high rate of personal ability usually have higher level of metacognitive skills and at the same time they are authors of good texts. Research probe indicated to the following hypothesis: if the input factors (self-efficacy, monitoring) are at high level, the process of writing is less problematic and final text is at a good level (pupils of the experimental group had average or above-average values of self-efficacy and they were able to verbalize writing algorithm – appearance of below-average texts was zero, pupils of the experimental group were either average or good authors of texts). Research probe

allowed researchers the experimental work with group of pupils and systematic observation of individuals during the production of text. Researchers also observe positive influence of research probe to educational process. On the basis of the data analysis we identified psycho-didactical factors that contribute in high rate to proceeding of writing process and its results. At the same time research probe confirmed need of continuous activation of pupils' metacognitive knowledge and skills through targeted and individualized pedagogical intervention.

Acknowledgments

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