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THE USE OF THE OBSERVATIONAL LEARNING IN ENHANCING HONG KONG GRADE 5 STUDENTS' CHINESE ARGUMENTATIVE STRUCTURING ABILITIES

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Argumentative writing has a highly hierarchical structure, and structuring is one of the important abilities involved in the students' argumentation process. While the learning of text structure is important, few researches have paid attention to text structure in the process and products of writing. Following the Western studies which have explored the use of observational learning in writing studies in text process and writing products, the present study explored if observational learning can be used to enhance the argumentative structuring abilities in Grade 5 Chinese students in Hong Kong. The study was guided by the theoretical framework of Learning Study, a hybrid of Lesson Study and designed experiments. This study reported the second cohort of a series of Learning Studies conducted in a local primary school in Hong Kong. Student participants included 122 Grade 5 students (aged 10-12 year old) and their 2 teachers across two years. To analyze the effect of observational learning on students' learning, a total of four classes from two cohorts (Class 5A and 5B from 2009-2010, and Class 5A and 5B from 2010-2011) from the same school were selected for analysis in this study. Observational learning, which was not used in the first cohort, was incorporated into the teaching in the second cohort. Towards the end of the study in the each cycle, students produced argumentative speeches in groups. Independent sample t-test revealed that students' in the second cohort were significantly higher than the first in developing an interesting opening of the text ($t(26)=2.80, p=.01$), organization and structure of the evidence and supporting arguments ($t(26)=3.03, p<.01$) and the appropriateness of the concluding statements in the text ($t(26)=2.89, p<.01$). The lessons involved were analyzed with reference to the Variation Theory. The analysis has provided insights to our understanding of the effective use of observational learning as a pedagogy to link up reading, writing and oracies that have driven the learning in the argumentative structuring abilities in students.