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Group Semantic Map-Making in Japanese Reading Classes: A Case Study



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The Five Goals of Japanese Language Instruction

- 1 To develop the ability to fully express one's thoughts and to understand others' thoughts in Japanese
- 2 To improve communication skills
- 3 To develop the ability to think and imagine
- 4 To improve a sense of language
- 5 To deepen interest in Japanese language and nurture the attitude to respect Japanese language

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The purpose of the study

Help students
who are struggling with reading and writing
to develop ability to think and imagine
by **semantic map-making**

What is Semantic Map-Making?

visualizing text information



Why Semantic Map-Making?

1

Fosters discussions: theme, setting, plot, and character.

2

Assist teachers: keeps a record of students' understanding.

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The main activities in the lesson

- 1 Read *My Old Home*.
- 2 Write essay.
- 3 Make semantic map individually.
- 4 Make semantic map in small groups.
- 5 Rewrite essay
- 6 Read *Mr. Fujino*.
- 7 Write essay.
- 8 Make a semantic map connecting two stories individually.
- 9 Make semantic map connecting two stories in small groups.
- 10 Write essay about both stories.

The goal of the lesson

- 1 Understand the underlying theme of the stories
- 2 Relate the theme to own life

Focused on group and students

Five students in focused group:

- Koda
- Hada
- Saeki
- Miyoshi
- Sato

Data collection

Three types of data:

1. Four essays

Essay about *My Old Home*.

Revised essay about *My Old Home*.

Essay about *Mr. Fujino*.

Essay about two short stories

2. Four semantic maps

Individual semantic map about *My Old Home*.

Group semantic map about *My Old Home*.

Individual semantic map for connecting two short stories

Group semantic map for connecting two short stories

3. Audio data of Sato's interaction with others

Data analysis for students' essays

Students' essays were analyzed and grouped into
four levels of thinking:

Levels of thinking	Definition
1. The factual level	A level of thinking involved with memory and recall of information from text.
2. The interpretive level	A level of thinking involved with inference and reorganization of information from text.
3. The applicative level	A level of thinking involved with integrating text with prior knowledge.
4. The transactive level	A level of thinking involved with affective response to text.

Ruddell, R. (2009, pp.127-128). *How to teach reading to elementary and middle school students: Practical ideas from highly effective teachers*. Boston, MA: Allyn and Bacon.

Data analysis for Sato's interaction

Sato's interaction with others was grouped into 11 codes in two categories:

(I) Affective conditions' assistance	
I-1. Facilitating Sato's on-task behavior —the teacher or small group members encouraged Sato to perform the tasks when he got distracted.	I-2. Praise and Rewards —The teacher or small group members praised or affirmed Sato's performance.
(II) Cognitive conditions' assistance	
II-1. Teaching individual words —Sato asked the teacher or small group members the meaning of words that were unfamiliar to him.	II-2. Setting —the teacher and small group members told Sato about time and place in which the story events occur.
II-3. Characterization —Sato discussed the characters in both short stories, such as their relationships, feelings, and appearances with the teacher or small group members.	II-4. Plot —Sato discussed the characters in both short stories, such as what happened in the story, or conversation between characters with the teacher or small group members.
II-5. Theme —Sato discussed the theme with the teacher or small group members, such as what represent "hope" or "change" in both short stories.	II-6. How to make a semantic map —the teacher and small group members told Sato the rules of semantic map-making or techniques such as using different colored pens to emphasize important things, paying attention to the same words appearing in both short stories, and using a wavy line for differentiating one's opinion from the words appearing in the texts.
II-7. How to write an essay —the teacher (not including small group members) explained specific writing techniques to Sato, such as the correct usage of quotations.	II-8. The rule of small group discussion —The teacher intervened to resolve the issue of studying in small groups by encouraging members to state their opinions when discussion was delayed.
II-9. Building a story's image —the teacher or the small group members helped Sato to visualize the atmosphere of the story world such as considering the impression from the leaden sky.	

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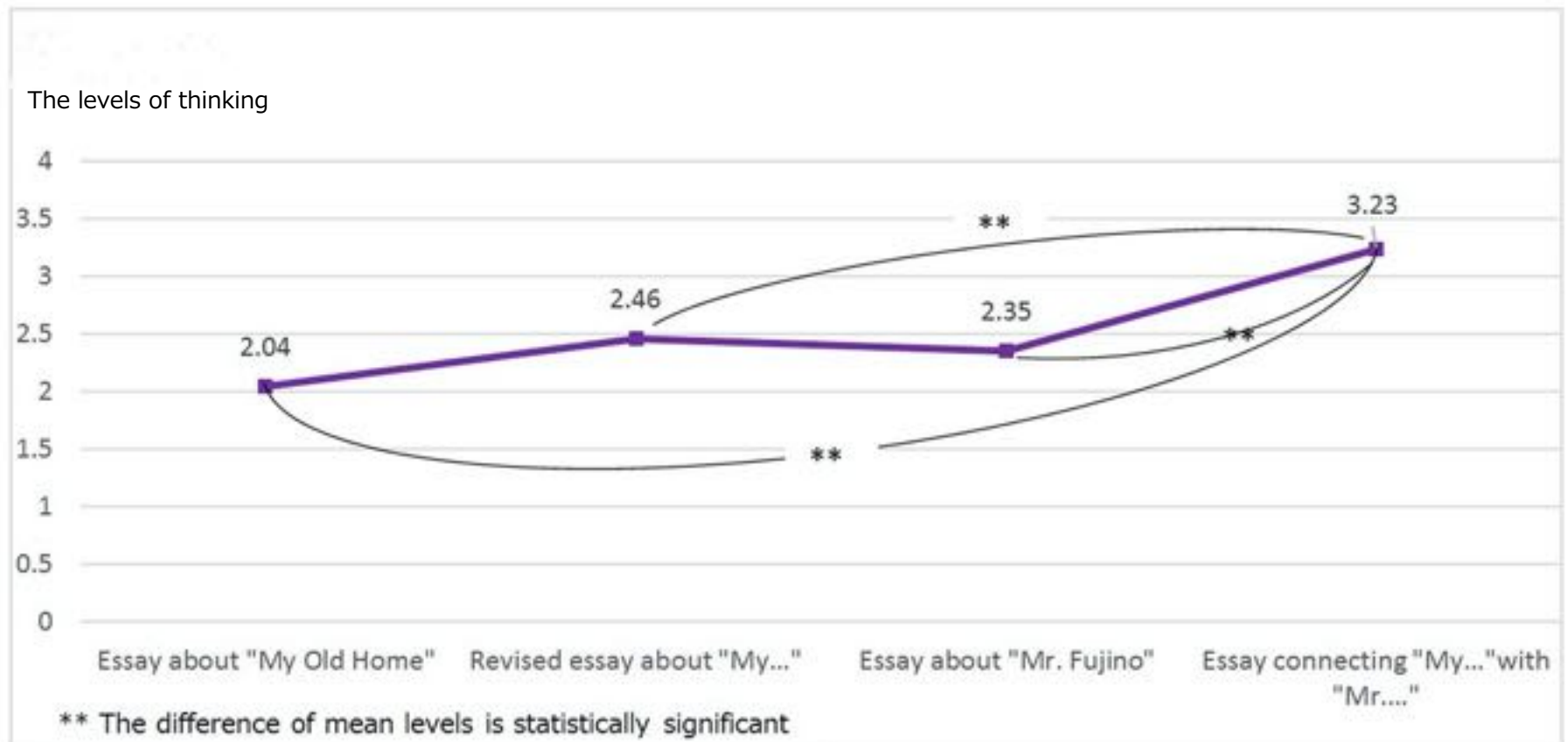
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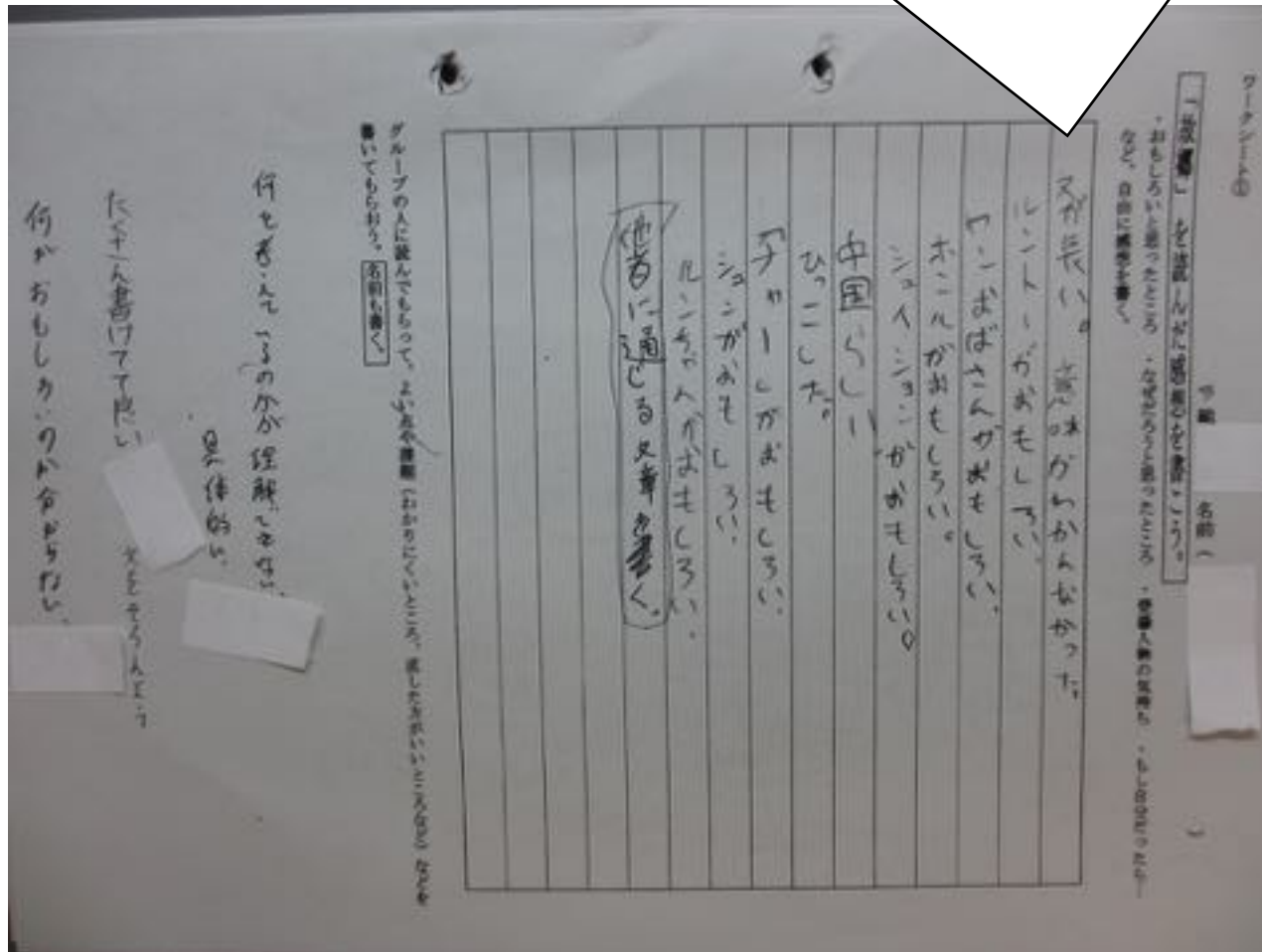
The results of essay analysis

Deepening of understanding :



Sato's first writing

The sentences are too long. I don't understand the meaning of the text.



Sato and teacher's interaction

I -1. Facilitating Sato's on-task behavior

Teacher: Sato, don't give up! I believe you can do it. Think about what you don't understand.

Sato: All of it.

Teacher: Don't say "all of it". All of it?

Sato: Uh-huh.

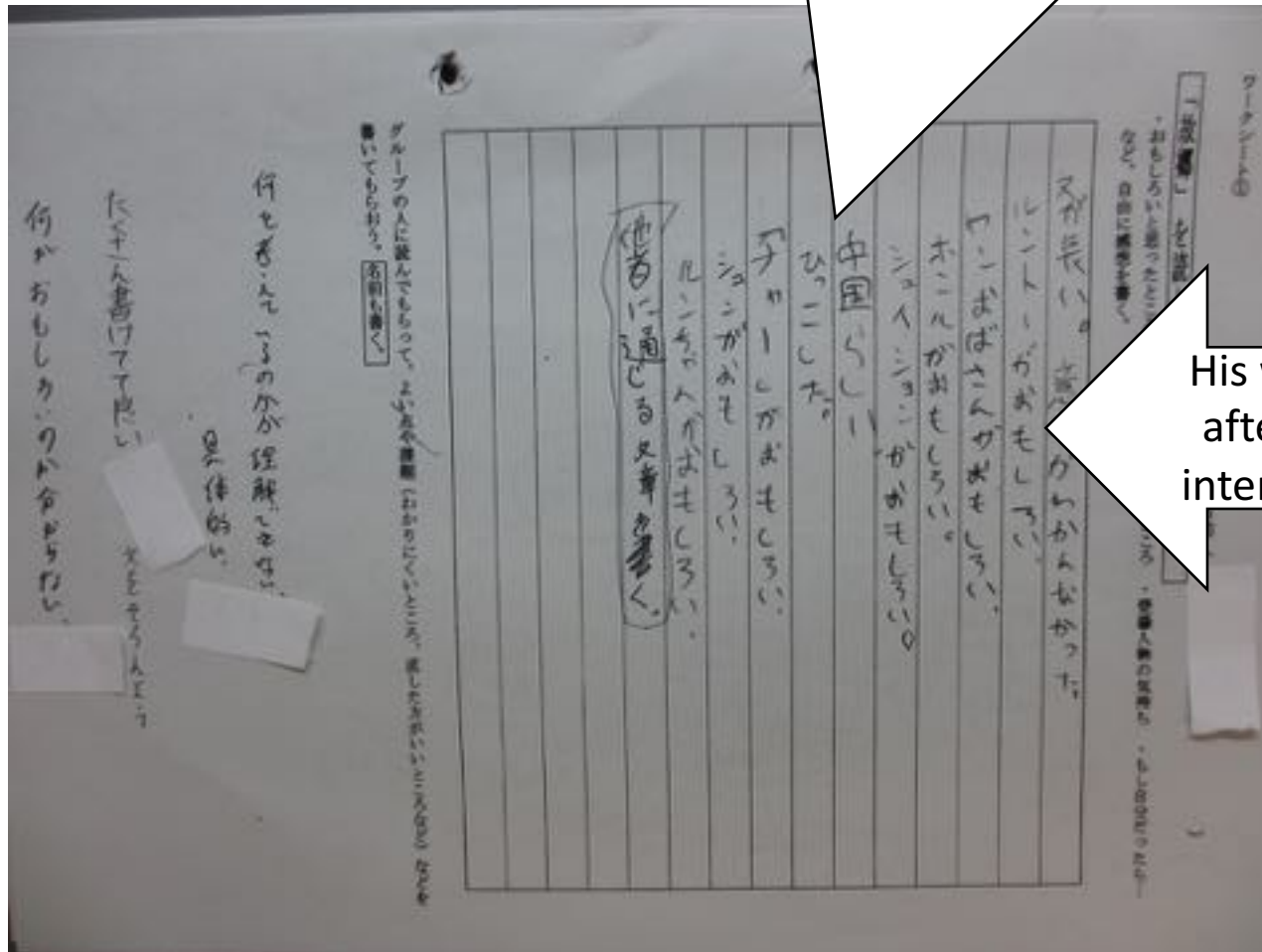
Teacher: Really?

Sato: Really. Ask the others. Ask Hiroyuki. He said he doesn't understand any of it. Maybe

Toshi too. (The other student agrees with Sato) See? Ms. Maejima, he said he doesn't understand any of it.

Sato's first writing

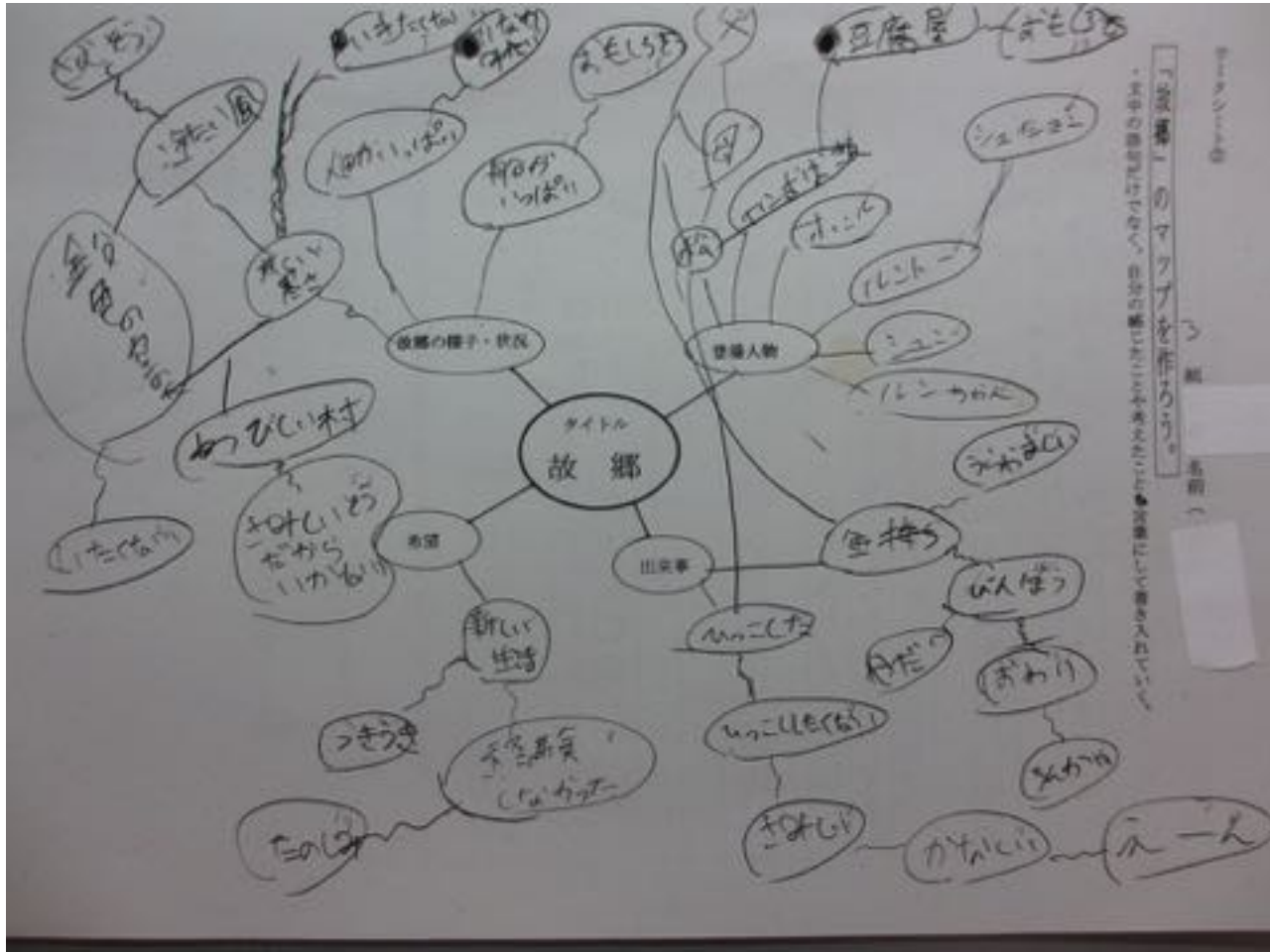
I think the story took place in China. They moved.



His writing
after the
interaction

Sato's semantic map-making

Sato was motivated to make a semantic map.



Sato's writing after semantic map

The interpretive level of thinking

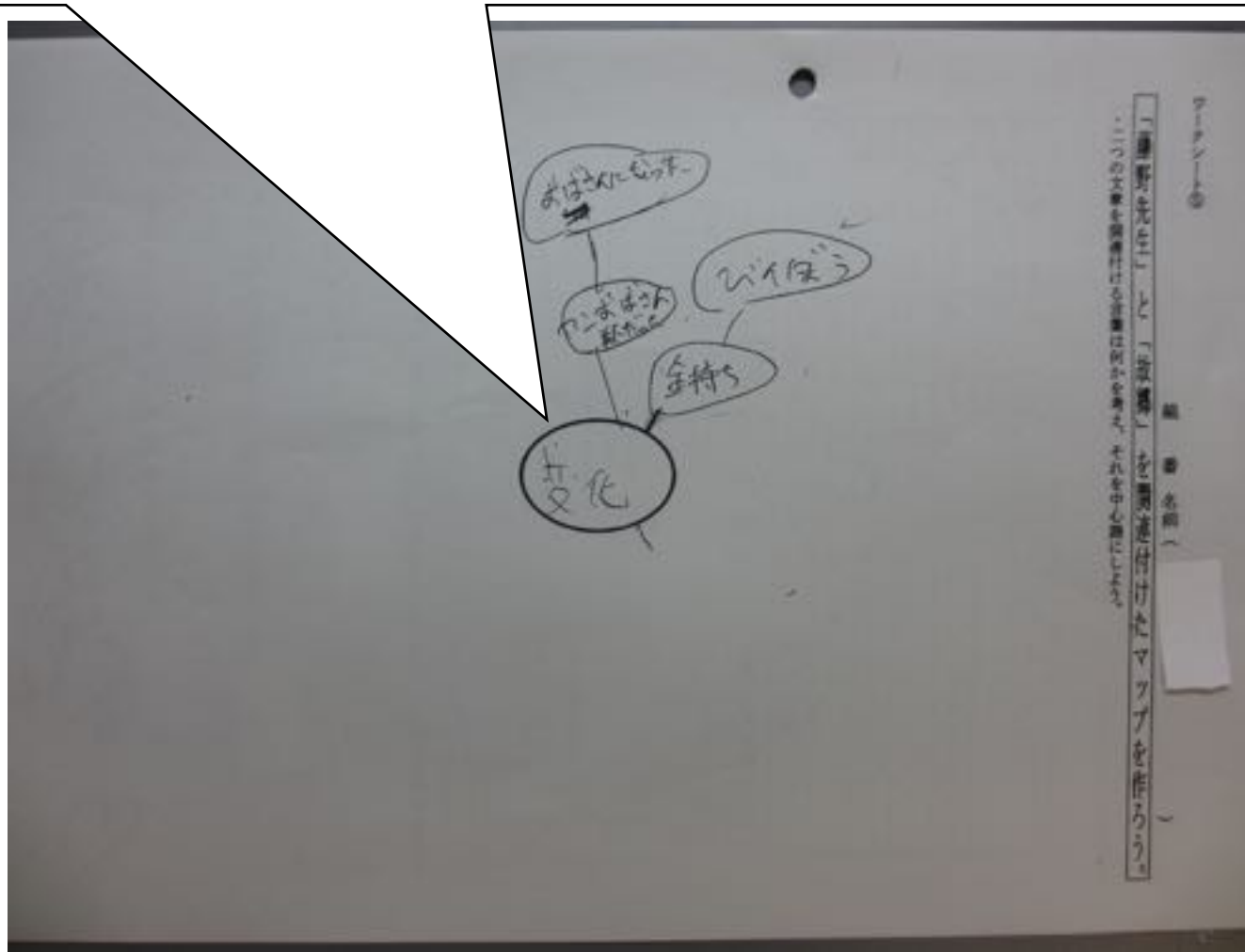
"The narrator and his mother felt lonely when they moved because they didn't want to leave their old home. I think that cold weather and the leaden sky represented the narrator's depression. "

The applicative level of thinking

"I think 'hope is just like a path', so we have to make one for ourselves."

Sato's choice for the center word

Sato could not choose the word for connecting two stories before the interaction with the teacher.



II -5. Theme

Teacher: Did she say such things at the beginning? Do you remember how she used to be?

... (omission)

Sato: She got old.

Teacher: She got old. It is one possible reason. But there are other reasons.

Sato: Compass?

Teacher: Her legs look like compass and she demanded the protagonist to give her things in his home. In other words, she...

Sato: She changed.

Teacher: She changed.

Sato: So, I will choose *change* as a center word.

Sato and Koda's interaction

Sato considering the meaning of hope and change and its relationship.

Koda: I think hope is best as the center word.

... (omission)

Koda: Hope.

Sato: Hope? (To Hada) He said hope.

Koda: We can extend change from hope.

Sato (To Hada) What did he say?

Hada: Can we extend change from hope?

Sato: Do you think we can do that? Isn't it XXX? (inaudible)

Koda: No.

Sato: Does it make any difference?

Hada: No it doesn't.

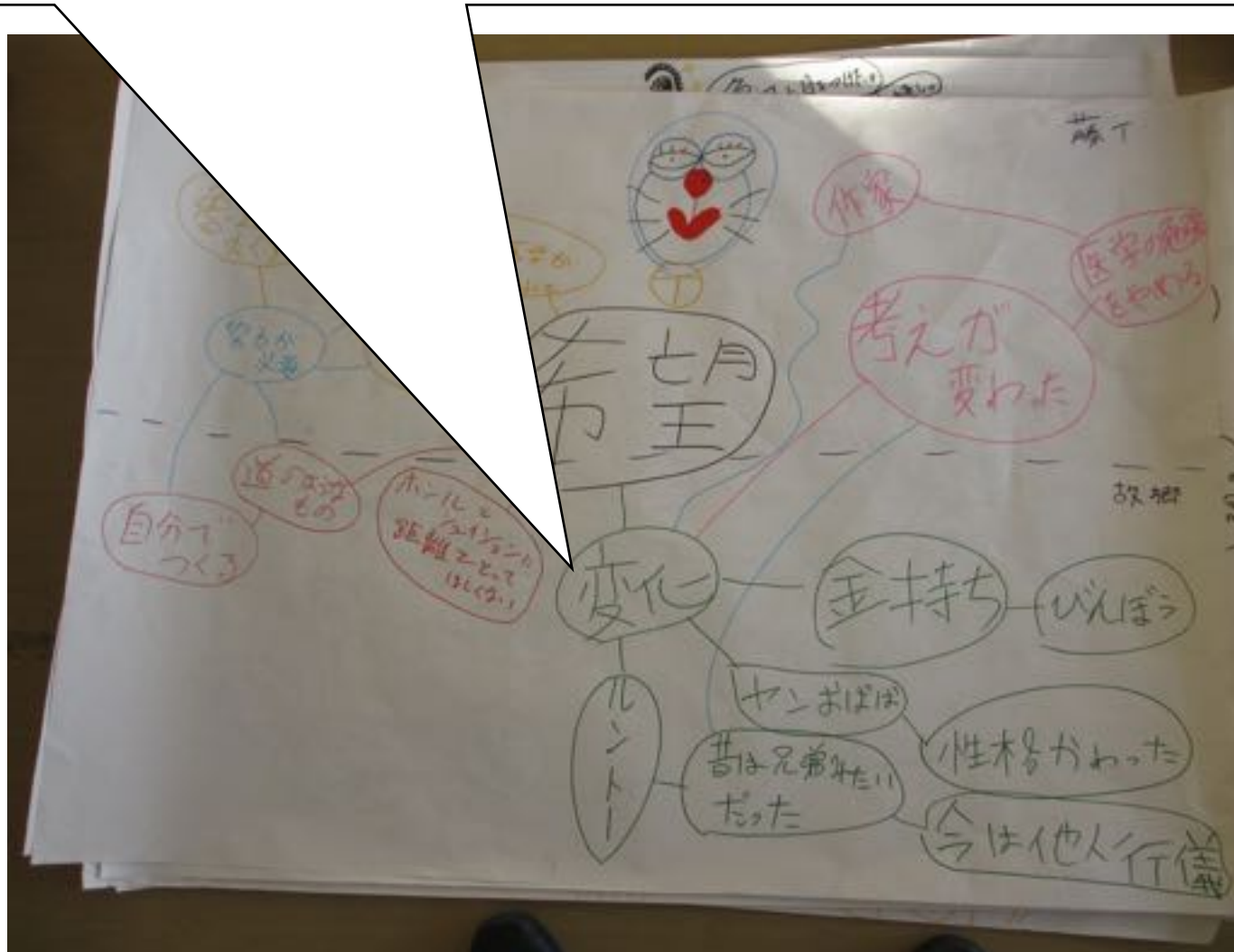
Sato: Then, isn't it better to extend hope from change? Or hope from Lu Xun?

Hada: It seems strange to extend change from hope.

Sato: Hope and change. Hope means having a dream. So it's not change.

Group semantic map for connecting two stories in Sato's group

Although hope is chosen as a center word, change was also used as a keyword for both stories because it has 6 links.



Sato's essay about two stories

The interpretive level of thinking

"The narrator and his mother were rich in their old home town, but they became poor after moving away, so I think they changed."

The applicative level of thinking

"Mr. Fujino hopes for modern medical science to take root in China. I think this requires an effort. "

The transactive level of thinking

"I think hope is just like a path. We make one for ourselves and this requires effort. It takes effort to be smart so I'll try my best. We can do anything if we try hard so I'll try my best."

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The benefit of semantic map-making

For students

Simple and interesting.

enable students to think more deeply.

Could have deeper understanding.

For teacher

Understand and see students' struggles.