

Chapter 5

Construction of Selves Through Written Stories



Although oral storytelling has been investigated in many research areas beyond psychology (e.g., oral history in historical research, the Labovian approach in linguistics), the means for presenting our experiences necessarily include another medium: i.e., written language. Writing one's experiences also involves microgenesis of meaning that is achieved through signs being brought into the writing process. In comparison with what we examined in the analysis of mother-child conversations, the writing process is slower and requires planning. To put it simply, writing is the construction of lines and points in front of us that do not exist in conversation. They are both the traces of the meaning construction for writers and the starting point of meaning construction for readers. Given these characteristics, I consider writing the act of dialogue through a medium that acquires physical form and can be preserved after the dialogue is over.

When young children begin to *write* something by themselves, we often ask what they have drawn or written, connecting each act of drawing or writing with what is signified. Even when they are unclear scribbles, children answer what they mean (Ferreiro, 1985). Thus, from the beginning of our literacy, what we have written works and has meaning in our dialogical interactions, which also implies that what we write always involves a relationship with potential readers. Sometimes we write brief memos or diary entries without expecting interactions with others, but even these usually carry an intention to be read by ourselves in the future.

To extend the coverage of the theoretical framework of the presentational self, here I turn to children's meaning construction achieved through written language with a focus on the *indirect* dialogue in the writings mentioned above. Writings of one's experiences (i.e., diaries) can be a method of psychological inquiry into human development in relation to one's environment (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2012). Based on this fundamental assumption, I focus on the writings of elementary school

children (in third and fourth grade) about their experiences.¹ These writings have been practiced within Japanese school education from its very early period, involving teachers' intentions to promote the development of children's selves. In this inquiry, I will discuss the emergence of children's selves through their acts of writing that works in our social system. The discussion also includes contrasts with the mother-child conversations I discussed in previous chapters.

Children's Writings About Their Experiences in Japanese School Education

In Japanese schools, we can observe many types of children's meaning construction in interactions or activities led by teachers in charge of classes. Among these, especially in elementary schools, there are activities in which children share their experiences with their teachers and classmates. In concrete terms, these activities are called *sakubun* or *tsuzurikata*² (composition), *nikki* (diary or journal writing, Fig. 5.1), and *speech* (oral storytelling, Fig. 5.2). Some elementary school teachers set (one of) these activities as a regular task for children in their classes. Children's writings about their experiences analyzed in this chapter are also the result of this habitual task of *nikki* writing.

The word *nikki* in Japanese is often translated as *diary* in English, but the nature of the writings here are closer to the meaning of the word *journal* in some contexts. It is not a systematic report of events, and children are free to write their experiences, mainly private ones, in their own ways. Concerning this orientation of Japanese teachers toward writing *freely*, Watanabe (2007) suggested that, compared with American or French school education systems, Japanese teachers place more emphasis on the unrestrained expression of children's *subjective* experiences while paying less attention to their technical writing skills (e.g., construction of paragraphs or the appeal of the story). In line with this preference, many Japanese teachers respond through personal reactions or impressions to these stories. Thus, while these are formal activities led by teachers, they are also personalized activities that do not restrict the content or style of writing.

In addition to this unrestricted nature, these activities have been carried out with the intention not only to improve children's academic skills, but also to promote children's development in a broader sense as well-rounded personalities and develop better relationships in classrooms. With this in mind, teachers read children's writ-

¹The discussion in this chapter was developed from the author's collaborative works with Chieri Konno (Komatsu and Konno 2014) and Mako Yamamoto (Yamamoto and Komatsu 2016).

²In comparison with *sakubun*, *tsuzurikata* is considered a more traditional expression for children's writings or compositions. However, these two words have been used with differing intentions in the history. With the spread of the term *sakubun* via education reform after World War II, there occurred a broad discussion concerning the differences in meaning of these two words, although no clear definitive conclusion was reached (Sugahara, 2016).

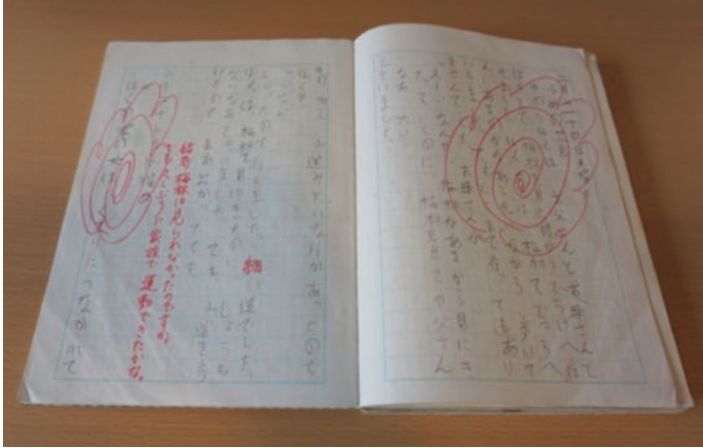


Fig. 5.1 A notebook for writing *nikki* (fourth grade)
Note: The picture was taken and used with permission



Fig. 5.2 A child gives a speech in front of classmates (fifth grade) (Komatsu, 2012, p. 367, Figure 6)
Note: The picture was taken and used with permission

ings to understand their individuality or personality. A survey by Kajii (2001) that asked elementary school teachers about their perspectives on evaluating *sakubun* by children showed that they focused not only on children's abilities to construct sentences properly and to craft correct descriptions, but also on the emergence of the unique character or personality of each child. Thus, children's writing work for teachers is a medium for understanding the unique view of each child upon his or her experiences, bearing the characteristic of *non-evaluative* communication in formal school education.

Given these broad but ambiguous objectives, writing *nikki* is *not* clearly indicated in the official guidelines for the elementary school curriculum issued by MEXT (Ministry of Education, Culture, Sports, Science and Technology), though learning proper compositional writing skills and storytelling are mentioned as goals for children to accomplish through elementary school education. This also means that children engage in these activities not in one standardized fashion but differently depending on each teacher's policy. For example, the frequency of writing personal stories varies depending on the teacher. While writing *nikki* is usually considered a part of homework for children, some teachers let children write about their private experiences in the classroom. Some teachers will often set a theme for writings but others ask children to choose the topic. Thus, teachers let children write or talk about their experiences depending on their own approaches to children and their objectives. This is what teachers have explored throughout the history of education in Japan.

The Historical Background of Children's Writings About Their Experiences

Although *sakubun*, *tsuzurikata*, and *nikki* indicate different genres of writing in Japan, *nikki* stories written in elementary school education share many characteristics with *sakubun* or *tsuzurikata*. Everyday experiences are the major subject in all these writings and sometimes *sakubun* or *tsuzurikata* also includes writings in a daily *nikki* style. For this reason, here I cover the historical background and the characteristics of *sakubun* and *tsuzurikata* education to better understand the relationship between children's writings and their selves as discussed by school teachers.

These activities in which children present their experiences in the school context, in oral or written form, have existed in Japanese elementary schools since the Meiji era (1868–1912), when the modern school system was introduced in Japan. In the first phase of their development, the goal of these activities was not the presentation of personal experiences but rather children clearly describing their thinking or opinions, using classical styles of writing (Namekawa, 1977). However, in the middle of the Meiji era, around 1900, the word *jiko* (meaning “self”) appears in relation to the goals of these activities. For example, Namekawa (1977) introduces a discussion in a guide for teachers published in 1891 that insists the main purpose of *sakubun* writing lies in clear descriptions of one's own thinking, and this discussion already mentions the word *jiko*. This is surprising because during the Meiji era, ordinary Japanese people had not fully accepted the notion of self as imported from the European tradition. Nevertheless, from the very early period of their development, the premise of these activities was that the self is not a given but instead becomes clearer through work or writing.

In the Taisho era (1912–1926), some teachers began to encourage children to write their personal experiences in colloquial style, following the change of perspectives on children and education known as *jido chushin shugi* (the child-centric education). With this background, a magazine for children was first published in this era (titled *Akai-tori*, in literal translation, Red Bird), and it included a contest of children's writing submitted to the magazine. For the contest, editors stressed the importance of children's expression of the beauties of nature and daily life situations (Hiraoka, 2011). Although the number of teachers and children interested in such a contest and *tszurikata* itself were relatively small (Namekawa, 1978), many teachers studied these writings as a method of education and the effectiveness of such writings began to spread in the liberal atmosphere of those times.

Following this orientation to pursue children's writings that describe their experiences vividly, *tszurikata* or *seikatsu-tsurikata* (*seikatsu* means ordinary life) underwent a boom in the early Showa era (1926–1989), prior to World War II. Given this movement, there was much expansion of *tszurikata* education. Some teachers explored the possibilities of this activity to include other subjects of school education, such as social studies. Other teachers who taught children in economically disadvantaged areas, both in big cities and rural communities, focused on *tszurikata* as a method to allow children to reflect, express, and better understand their lives despite difficulty. For example, Ichitaro Kokubun, who later became one of the leaders of *seikatsu-tsurikata* education, stressed *seikatsu benkyo* (learning in everyday life) as a principle of his *seikatsu-tsurikata* education in 1935 (Funabashi, 1996).

Teachers' devotion to *tszurikata* was widely known in this period and it had an effect on Japanese society. For example, a fourth-grade child's writings about her daily life in economic difficulty, edited by her teachers (Toyoda 1937/1995), became a best seller, and the stories in the book were staged by a professional theatrical company and then cinematized in 1938 (Narita 2001). As the stories by Toyoda were also popular after World War II, children's writings about their lives were widely accepted with sympathy.

On the other hand, the act of writing about the difficulty of daily life and focusing on conflicts in society can be ideologically sensitive. There was even a time in history (1940–1944) when teachers who instructed children to write about their daily lives were arrested and detained. Although the exact number of the teachers arrested in these 5 years is unclear, many were falsely charged and more than ten teachers died due to this incarceration (Namekawa, 1983). This happened in relation to the wider crackdown on political activities of teachers with socialist leanings, and it suggests that making children more aware of their lives through writing was considered a problem by the government during World War II. In wartime, children's writing concentrated on letters for soldiers or celebrating victories (Namekawa, 1983).

Although the pressures of wartime brought about a drastic reduction of *tszurikata* education, teachers restarted it during reconstruction efforts after the war. Teachers and researchers formed societies that offered regular meetings for sharing and discussing children's writings. The number of teachers active in such societies is lower nowadays, but regular writing of *nikki* stories is still practiced in many

classrooms at Japanese elementary schools. These facts represent the uniqueness of these activities in the history of education in Japan, and the teachers' belief in the effectiveness and potential of children writing their experiences.

Children's Writings and Our Understanding of Children's Selves

As mentioned in the previous section, children's writing (or telling) of their experiences was considered to have a relationship with their *selves* from the very early period of modern school education in Japan. We can find many discussions by schoolteachers who worked hard on *tsuzurikata* or *seikatsu-tsuzurikata* that referred to the *jiko* (self) of children as a vital element in their writings, and these discussions were also considered by researchers of education in Japan. For example, Iida (2013) discusses how leading figures in *seikatsu-tsuzurikata* education in the Taisho and early Showa era debated the understanding of the self in children's writings. Although the nature of the self supposed by these debates varied, many teachers considered children's selves the origin of the unique perspective that enabled their writings. As Iida (2013) also pointed out, the focus on the self in children's writings had an effect, even if indirectly, on the basic policies of *Nihon sakubun no kai*, a major society of teachers and researchers engaged in *sakubun* education after World War II.

Researchers of the history of education in Japan also interpret these educational practices in relation to the clarification of the self in meaning construction. In the discussion concerning the educational activities by Ichitaro Kokubun, Funabashi (1996) describes Kokubun's orientation toward *tsuzurikata* as "Every child constructed meaning concerning the actuality, "*I live*," that is unique to him/her, in relation to trivial events, interactions with others or objects, and troubles" (p. 93, translation by author). Funabashi also suggests that Kokubun's activities enabled the approval of children's meaning construction (i.e., their writings) to support and facilitate their lives in struggling agricultural communities, even if their expressions were sometimes naïve or vulgar.

These frameworks that emphasized children's selves in relation to their writings about their experiences do not elaborate how we can find the self in concrete terms, but instead share a fundamental perspective with my discussion developed in former chapters. Specifically, they emphasized the need for teachers to *find out* children's unique perspectives or personalities that appear in their active writings about their environments and meaning constructions. In other words, the self is considered to be what emerges during the process of children's meaning construction as I discussed in the former chapters, *not* the static representation *inside themselves*.

In addition, children's writings about their experiences are based on the children's everyday transitions between home and school, just as was the mother-child conversation I analyzed. Children clarify what they have experienced at home through the work required by teachers in the institutional environment, and this can

be considered the opposite of what occurs in the conversation about children's experiences at *yochien* or *hoikuen*. Although the process and the media of meaning construction are different from conversations, this backdrop of children's writings suggests the resemblance in the occurrence of meaning construction in children's lives, as I further elaborate in Chap. 6.

The resemblance of mother-child conversation and children's writings is also evidenced in the difficulty of applying existing methods of psychology to them. As early as 1935, elementary school teachers and researchers explored the possibility of analyzing children's writings from psychological perspectives in relation to their personality, and several presentations concerning *tsuzurikata* were made at annual conference meetings of the Japanese Psychological Society (Namekawa, 1978).³ However, psychological inquiries into children's writings in relation to children's development in society did not develop afterwards except for a few explorative studies. Among these rare studies, Moriya, Mori, Hirasaki, and Sakanoe (1972) analyzed stories by 11 children with longitudinally collected data and showed developmental changes in how children describe themselves (e.g., from descriptions of observable characteristics to their own internal status) based on the categorization of writings. However, the absence of research after Moriya, Mori, Hirasaki, and Sakanoe (1972) indicates the difficulty of understanding children's selves from their writings by objective categorization of fragmented pieces of these, just as with the analysis of natural conversation.

From this affinity between children's writings and their selves and the difficulty of applying existing frameworks of psychology to the clarification of the self through writing, I attempt an application of the theoretical framework elaborated in Chap. 4 to the personal stories children write as their work assigned by teachers. Through this analysis, I show the emergence of children's presentational selves in meaning construction based on the written language, which requires different types of dialogical relationships with others.

Approaching Children's Personal Stories in Nikki

To discuss the emergence of children's selves in the meaning construction, here I develop my discussion from the examples of children's writings analyzed in two papers (Komatsu & Konno, 2014; Yamamoto & Komatsu, 2016). In these studies, we collected and analyzed children's writings by copying the notebooks they used. In concrete terms, Komatsu and Konno (2014) discussed the application of the framework of the presentational self using 12 stories from *nikki* by four children.

³In the 1930s, researchers of psychology in Japan began to attempt explorations of children's minds through their expressions. Although there was no study of children's writings published in journals of psychology in that time, we can find some published papers concerning children's drawings. For example, Hatano (1932) explored children's experiences of their dreams during sleep through their drawings.

They were extracted from 632 stories written by 26 children in a third-grade class at an elementary school located in the greater Osaka area. The exploration by Yamamoto and Komatsu (2016) compared 14 stories written by three children in the fourth grade at an elementary school located in central Osaka. Each of these three children wrote around 180 such stories in a single academic year (Yamamoto & Komatsu, 2016). All of these stories were used for studies with the consent of parents.

As described in the previous section, the way that children engage in *nikki* writing varies depending on each teacher's preference. In the examples of Komatsu and Konno (2014), writing personal stories was not obligatory for children. However, most children wrote a story and brought their *nikki* notebook to the teacher once a week, according to the schedule the teacher set for inspection and response. Conversely, writing a story was an everyday activity for the children appearing in Yamamoto and Komatsu (2016), and they were able to write either at their home or at school. In both classes, teachers added their comments to what children had written, including the teachers' impressions of the children's experiences and some advice for the children.

The number of stories appearing in these two studies is small and the ways that children wrote and teachers responded vary in their details. However, their analyses showed the resembling characteristics in children's writings. In the following section, I will first discuss the basic style of meaning construction that appears frequently in children's writings, using the theoretical framework of the presentational self. Second, I will inquire into further clarification of the self as observed in these writings in relation to dialogical dynamics and the role of others in these processes.

A Fundamental Process of Meaning Construction in *Nikki* Writing: Describing Events in Time

When we read Japanese children's writings translated into English, we must be aware of differences between the languages reading explicitness of the subject. Specifically, pronouns such as "I," "my," "we," and "our" have been added to the English translations of many sentences shown in the excerpts below, as already indicated in the conversation transcripts. Omitting these pronouns is very ordinary and natural in Japanese language,⁴ as described by Hinds (1986), especially in the informal interactions that I analyze in this book. Although this linguistic characteristic bears some relation to how we find the self in meaning construction, the

⁴For example, the grammatically correct sentence in Japanese *kyou concert ni itta* can be translated as "I went to a concert today." However, the original does not include any words directly corresponding to "I" or "a" in the translation. In a similar way, *kyou otouto ga concert ni itta* can be translated as "My brother went to a concert today," but again, the expression in Japanese does not include any words for "my" or "a."

framework of the presentational self lets us focus on the *process* of writing, refusing a simple inter-cultural comparison.

Concerning this question, both Komatsu and Konno (2014) and Yamamoto and Komatsu (2016) pointed out children's strong tendency to write their experiences in enumerative style and to follow the flow of time. Excerpts 5.1 and 5.2 are examples typical of the nikki writing of children in the third or fourth grade. Although the topics vary, the children listed what happened and the descriptions follow a time series. Enumerations also appear here: the child who wrote Excerpt 5.1 included what she ate in the first half of the episode, and Excerpt 5.2 begins with the enumeration of tasks that the child performed.

Excerpt 5.1 (From nikki of child A, third grade, June 28) (Komatsu & Konno, 2014, p. 331, Table 4)

Title: A whole day in Shopping mall

Today, [we] visited an Italian restaurant with a buffet at the mall. [The dishes] were very delicious. First, [I] ate some spaghetti and a hamburger steak. Next, [I] ate spaghetti and more hamburger and then roast chicken too. For dessert, [I] ate a pudding, about 10 cream puffs, and then more pudding. [They] were awesome. And then, after some shopping with mom, [we] went to the bookstore. [We] read books for a long time there. And [we] watched a movie. [It] was really fun. Mom, my sister, and I enjoyed it. At the end, they got married and [the woman] got pregnant. Because there were sudden interruptions in the sound twice, [they] gave [us] free tickets for some juice [as compensation for the accident]. [We] did some other shopping and returned home. Because [it] was raining when [we] went home, dad came [to help us]. [It] was a very long day today.

Excerpt 5.2 (From nikki of child B, fourth grade, March 9) (Yamamoto & Komatsu, 2016, p. 80, Table 2)

Yesterday, [I] went to [my] lessons [at a *juku*, or private tutoring school in Japan]. Sheets [I did] were two sheets of [doing] written calculation of decimals and four sheets of English. [I] made one or two mistakes in the sheets concerning decimals and calculating decimals. [I] got "100 [perfect score], very good" in all four sheets of English. When [I] came home, [I] finished the homework from school. After that, [I] went to [another] *juku*. [I] did mathematics because [it] was Thursday. First, [we] did a confirmation test. [I] got 16 points in common questions and 0 point in "S-questions." The task in the lesson was thinking of a number to fit the blank space. [It] was difficult. But [it] became little easier because [our] teacher gave [us] some instruction how [to do it]. [I] returned home at six forty-five when *juku* was over.

Notes: Excerpts appearing in this chapter were originally shown in Komatsu and Konno (2014) and Yamamoto and Komatsu (2016), and were translated from Japanese by the author. Small revisions were made from the original. All the names are pseudonyms. Words in brackets show contextual and additional information included for clarification. Omitted subjects and other pronouns are also shown with brackets. The academic year in Japan begins in April and ends in March.

This characteristic is widely observable and consistent with Japan's national education guidelines. For example, this style of writing is already pointed out in

Moriya et al. (1972). National guidelines for education also stipulate that children should learn to describe their experiences sequentially when they are in the first grade and second grade at elementary school. For the third grade and fourth grade, the national guidelines recommend teaching children how to focus on what they intend to write and express, including planning what to write in each paragraph in advance. These academic and institutional guidelines imply that such expressions are based on the repertoire of expressions that children in third grade and fourth grade are capable of handling (Komatsu & Konno, 2014).

This fundamental characteristic is a way of externalizing from the stream of consciousness by selective reduction in writing (Zittoun & Gillespie, 2012): that is, microgenesis of meaning. In other words, the writings by children are objective traces of meaning construction that were made from their unique perspectives that reflect the existence of their selves. To elaborate this process further, in the next section I turn to the semiotic processes and the dialogical structure at work in writing.

The Self in the Construction of Ordered Configurations of Events

As I pointed out in Chap. 3, enumeration based on a variety of frames (e.g., enumeration of friends in relation to their roles in a theater performance) serves to clarify children's selves as Gestalt quality. Through the meaning construction, it works to construct a configuration in which a child is positioned.⁵ If I apply this framework to the meaning construction in the excerpts above, the configuration of the events may work to make the presentational self emerge.

To elaborate the process of meaning construction in writing and inquire into the presentational self within this, I attempt a description of the underlined passages of Excerpt 1 using the framework of meanacting introduced in Chap. 3. Although some details have been omitted, this enumerative description in time series can be illustrated as Fig. 5.3. Firstly, it begins with a meaning field concerning what the child ate at the restaurant. Mentioning several dishes (**A**) accompanies the potential field of development (**non-A**) that might possibly include other dishes, who was there, what they talked about, and so forth. From these possibilities, the child includes another dish (roast chicken) in the next sentence that can be described as **a'** in its connection with **A**. After introducing the dessert she ate (**B**), it is taken over by a new field concerning shopping (**C**) that developed in **non-B**.

In this process, construction of these fields proceeds in a more orderly fashion and includes more information when compared to the meanacting in the conversa-

⁵ Although Excerpts 5.1 and 5.2 do not include enumeration of others, children often make lists of others, especially their friends, at the beginning of their stories (see Excerpts 5.6 and 5.8 for examples).

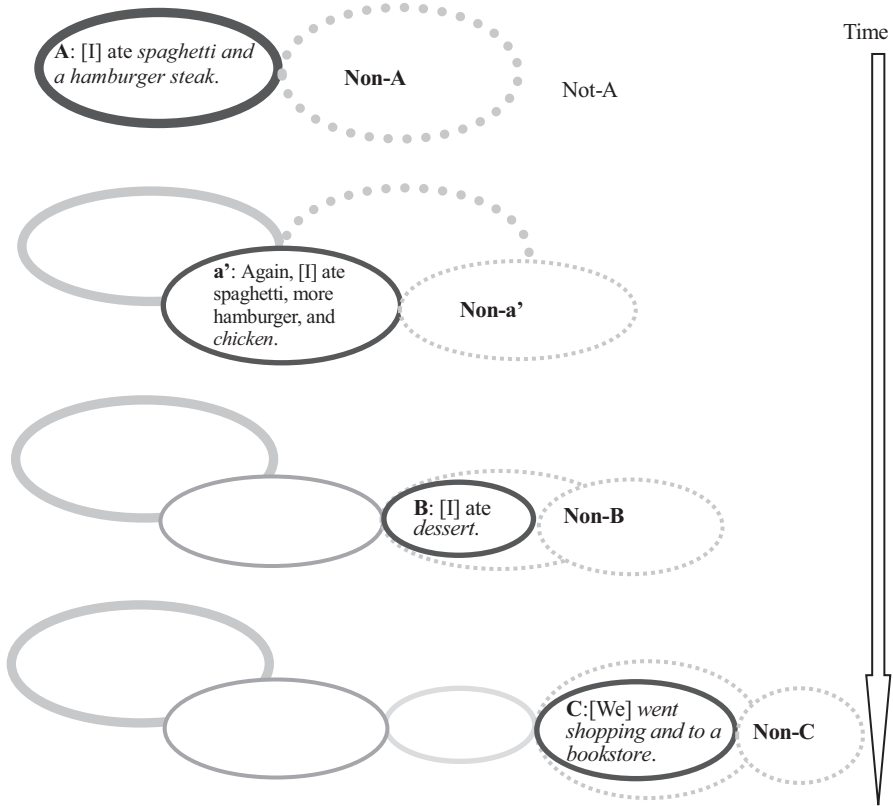


Fig. 5.3 Meaning complexes constituted in the writing of Excerpt 5.1

tion of a 5 year-old child (see Fig. 3.2 for example). In other words, what will be mentioned next in the writing—that is, how the field of possible meaning (e.g., **non-A**) works in the process—is greatly based on the perspective on *what was there* or *what happened next* (Komatsu & Konno, 2014).

The use of these frames still shows the existence of children’s unique perspectives in finding what to write. For example, the description of what a girl ate in a restaurant clarifies her interest in foods, in comparison with the title of the books in the bookstore, and the child describing his scores (Excerpt 5.2) clarifies the priority of his achievements in comparison to listing who was there. Thus, following the definition, we can find the presentational selves of the children in the configurations they construct in relation to the objects or events they describe, even when the subject “I” is not explicitly mentioned. Through the description of what dishes the girl ate at the restaurant or what scores the boy achieved at *juku* (private tutoring school), we can find their positioning of themselves in relation to the commercial products they enjoy or the value of studying they must perform.

On the other hand, these meaning constructions with an orientation toward *comprehensive* descriptions of what the children experienced in time paradoxically blur the uniqueness of each child's position in relation to the events they describe. For example, in Fig. 5.3, the development of meaning is based on the flow of time, and the tension of **A** \leftrightarrow **non-A** that is open to a variety of extension of meaning, as described in Josephs, Valsiner, and Surgan (1999), is not obvious. To understand this inertness, I will discuss another aspect of writing: the dialogical structure of meaning construction.

Absence of the Substantial Dialogical Partnership in Writing

In the framework shown in Table 4.1, the perspectives for finding out children's selves in their writings and in mother-child conversations have a similarity in their mode of understanding. Although we do not observe the process when children write, we can *trace* the course of meaning construction from their writings, and their presentational self emerges in *our* figuring out the process. In the previous section, I applied this scheme to look at the configurations children construct considering what they enumerate in their writings.

In the construction of these configurations, the dialogical structure that enables meaning construction is different for these two types of daily activities. In conversations, the meaning construction occurs through the turn-takings and continuous construction of a shared social reality (see Chap. 3). In these interactions, the emergence of meaning in the fields, both "**A**" and "**non-A**," is achieved through the dialogical dynamics of the conversation. In these dialogical relationships, the partner in the conversation works literally as the *other* that introduces the differentiation of meaning.

In this dialogical relationship, participants share the topics to develop in the interaction, but often relate differently to the possible field of meaning construction. For example, the name of a girl whom a child meets every day at hoikuen may bring up for the child the games they played together that day. However, for the child's mother, the same name may work to remind her of the lovely clothes the girl was wearing when she last saw her. Thus, from the perspective of the child, her mother can introduce new meaning in relation to what she mentioned in conversation. Although such an actualization of new meaning may not always be smooth, conversational interaction has the potential to activate the dynamics.

In contrast, writing stories is something children do by themselves. The results of a survey by Yamamoto and Komatsu (2016) in which 218 fourth grade children participated showed that over half of the children either never or very rarely showed their *nikki* notebooks to family members. This suggests it is rare for children in the third or fourth grade to write their experiences through interactions with others: that is, with help from their parents. Thus, I illustrate how children accomplish this work

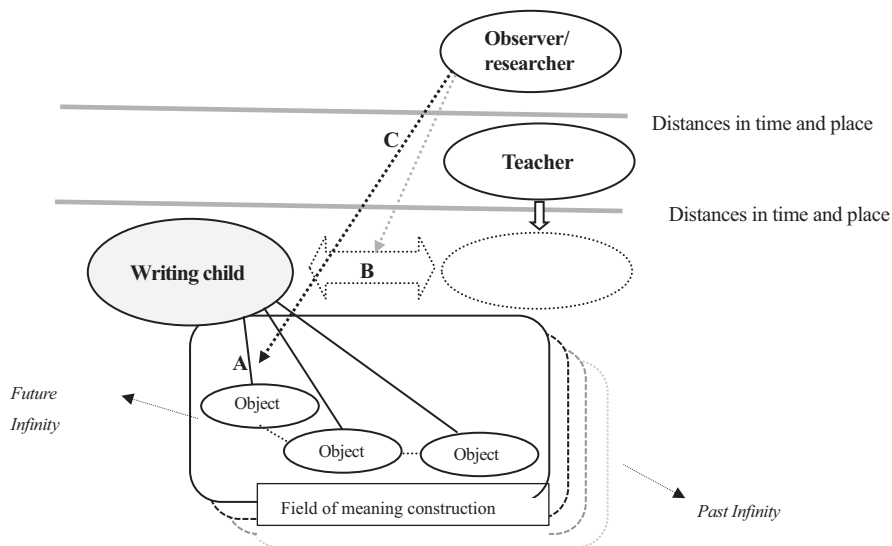


Fig. 5.4 The framework of children's writings about their experiences

and how we find their selves by modifying the basic framework of the presentational self (Fig. 4.2) as Fig. 5.4.

As I discussed in the foregoing sections, the configuration of a child and what he or she describes in stories (e.g., dishes at a restaurant, scores in tasks at juku), which is designated by **A** in Fig. 5.4, can be understood as similar to what we observed in the configuration of self and others constructed in mother-child conversations. In some sense, children's writings show clearer order by clarifying what existed in the site of their experiences precisely. However, the inter-individual relationship for meaning construction is qualitatively different from that of conversations. The dialogical dynamics that exist in conversation (**B** in Fig. 5.4) do not work at the inter-individual level and children must construct it within themselves—that is, they write their experiences *considering* that their teacher will read it afterwards. This type of dialogical relationship is characteristic of the writing upon which I will elaborate in the following discussion.

This absence of substantial dialogical dynamics is also related to the field of meaning construction. As children use written language, it exists objectively in front of them and the result of meaning construction is also observable for the children. However, this objective nature and the imaginary dialogue with teachers restrict the possibility of extending meaning construction further to, for example, past infinities or future infinities. In other words, it is more difficult to leap into other topics that just came up in their thinking, without any clear connection to what they have already written. Within this meaning construction in isolation, children's frequent use of enumeration and focus on the flow of the time, which are very powerful devices of meaning construction, are rational.

Construction of Relationships with Readers

Although the teacher who reads the stories in nikki journals does not exist in the site of meaning construction, children sometimes explicitly show the wish to construct a specific relationship with the reader (**B** in Fig. 5.4). For example, the child who wrote the story of Excerpt 5.3 asks if her teacher likes to look at her work. At this moment, she is attempting to construct a dialogue to show her achievements to her teacher (underlined sentences) (Komatsu & Konno, 2014). The teacher replied with his expectation that the child would finish the work soon, but did not mention if she was permitted to bring the cards to school.

Excerpt 5.3 (From nikki of child C, third grade, February 1) (Komatsu and Konno 2014, p. 332, Table 5)

Title: [I] painted (my picture cards)

[I] Go [to the activity in the community center] at the same time as always, even the first time, [and I] join in [the activity]. Today [I] wrote the title [of the story in picture cards] and painted [the cards]. A woman [I] didn't know helped [with my work]. [We] did a lot of work and were happy. [I] thought [I] would do the rest [of the work] at [my] home. [My] mom said "[You] will get further [with your work] if [you] did [it] at home." Mami [the child's name] asked another person who worked as a coach, "Can [I] paint [them] at [my] home?" And [she] said "Yes." After [I] came back [home, I] played [Nintendo] DS. [I] played two [video game] cassettes. [We] will have an exhibition and performance of storytelling with picture cards [that we made]. [I] will show you [the cards] in school after [they are] completed. [Would you] like to see [them]? [I] will bring [them] if [you] want. What would [you] like? [Today] was a very fun and happy day.

Even if not expressed explicitly, as in this example, description of one's achievements can serve as an attempt to construct a dialogue that brings children some desirable response (e.g., praise from their teacher). Yamamoto and Komatsu (2016) interpret the repeated appearance of stories very similar to Excerpt 5.2 (e.g., description of tasks and scores) in the nikki of child B as the presentation of himself as someone who steadily completes the tasks at the juku he attends.

Such a construction of quasi-dialogical relationship with the teacher is not limited to showing off achievements that could possibly lead to a teacher's interest, approval, or praise. Yamamoto and Komatsu (2016) describe a child who repeatedly claims that her life does not contain remarkable events to write about; one example is given in Excerpt 5.4. As her story is very short and she clearly declares there was nothing special (underlined sentences), this writing can be interpreted as her moderate objection to the obligatory task of writing. Although not in reply to this writing task, her teacher did encourage her to write her feelings or thoughts (Yamamoto & Komatsu, 2016). However, dynamics of positioning like we found in the mother-child conversation hardly ever occur in institutional settings, even if teachers emphasize that children can write their experiences freely.

Excerpt 5.4 (From nikki of child D, fourth grade, September 28) (Yamamoto & Komatsu, 2016, p. 82, Table 3)

I did nothing special yesterday. [I] forgot what [I] ate yesterday. [I] played tag with [my] friends during breaks at school. [I] hadn't [played tag] for quite a while. [I] sweated a lot. As [it] will get colder soon, [we] play outside a lot. [Playing tag] was really fun because [we] hadn't done it for a long time.

Different Types of Otherness in the Process of Writing

The discussion concerning the dialogical structure in children's nikki writings also suggests how otherness works in meaning construction. In the process of writing, what children wrote in their notebooks are the externalized traces of their meaning construction. Similar to the process I described in Fig. 4.4, extended from the idea of Mead (1934), they construct an immediate feedback loop to clarify "me" as the consequence of the acting "I." This also suggests that children's writings bring about not only the presentational self for observers (readers), but also the sense of self for children themselves, as Mead (1934) discussed: "(...) when taking the attitude of the other becomes an essential part in his behavior- then the individual appears in his own experience as a self" (p. 195).

Given this thinking, the dialogical interaction in Fig. 5.4 is elaborated as Fig. 5.5. The emergence of the presentational self is observable in the dialogical loops

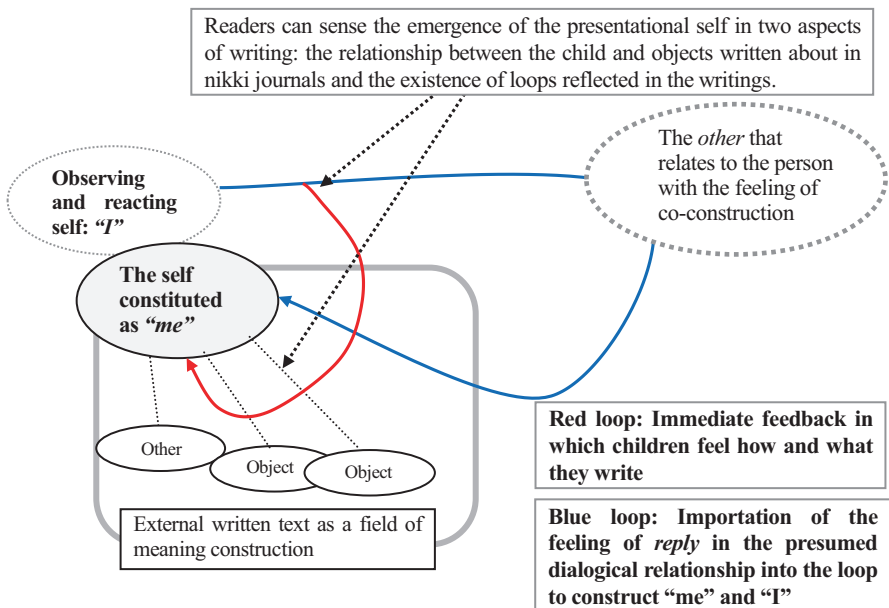


Fig. 5.5 Self-perception in the act of writing and the emergence of the presentational self

children construct and the result of meaning construction that we observers find in their writings. By describing what happened or what was there, the child is constantly relating to his or her environments. As the examples of Excerpts 5.3 and 5.4 describe, this process is sustained by the loops children rely on when they construct the field of meaning construction.

In this process, externalized writings work powerfully with *otherness*: "... the existence of something on its own account, autonomously, independently of the I's initiative, volition, consciousness, and recognition" (Petrilli, 2013, p. 10). As Petrilli (2013) has discussed in her thinking concerning the self and the sign, this otherness does not necessarily inhabit a person, but is rather "a synonym for 'materiality'" (p. 10). However, otherness working here is not limited to the materiality of what children wrote. As I described above, children presume readers or teachers who exist beyond their writings. Although nikki writing is, by consensus of pupils and teachers, non-evaluative in comparison with other tasks in school education, teachers strongly represent the value of achievements or efforts for children. In the process of writing, teachers serve as assumed others for the constitution of "me" in this process.

As I discussed in the previous section, otherness is not limited to what emerges through active and substantial interactions with others, but rather what works as a restriction upon children's actions toward their environments. Writing words in the notebook and following grammatical rules to construct a readable story leads the meaning construction along some restricted paths, and the teacher as an internalized other potentially requires stories that are worth reporting, as a child clarifies in her complaint (Excerpt 5.4).

This discussion has demonstrated two types of otherness at work in the process of writing, but this does not include how otherness *appears* in the writings. These children's writings show us that otherness not only restricts their meaning construction but also extends it. To illustrate this process, the next section will analyze several writings and discuss meaning construction beyond enumeration.

The Development of Meaning Construction beyond Enumeration

Although descriptions following the time sequence and simple enumeration are often observed in the nikki journals of third- or fourth-grade children, they sometimes show other types of meaning construction. It is very difficult to show the difference by objective categorizations and statistical comparisons, but some typical examples can illustrate the similarity and variety in meaning construction.

Excerpt 5.5 (From nikki of child A, third grade, February 25) (Komatsu & Konno, 2014, p. 331, Table 4)

Title: Mom's milk jelly.

Today, three [of my] sister's friends came over [to my house]. [We] all ate snacks. The sweets everyone [the friends] brought us, mini-donuts, potato chips, and chocolate, and juice and milk jelly that [my] mom made yesterday. I love mom's milk jelly a lot. [It] is really delicious. Yamashita [a friend]'s mom gave [us] the recipe for the jelly when I was at kindergarten. [My] mom promised [me] to show [me] how to make it when I get older. [I'm] looking forward to it.

Excerpt 5.5 was written by the child who wrote the story in Excerpt 5.1, and it is very short in comparison with the previous story. After introducing an event, she enumerates what they ate at her house. This is similar to the meaning construction in Excerpt 5.1 also described in Fig. 5.3, which relies on *what were there*. However, her perspective expands from the "milk jelly" into her personal preference for it and the close interpersonal relationships between her mother, her friend (Yamashita)'s mother, and herself (underlined sentences). This transition in meaning construction also encompasses a shift in time: this short story deals with her experiences of that day, her kindergarten days, and her future relationship with her mother. Thus, the child extends the meaning of an event and in this construction of multiple relationships with an object (i.e., milk jelly), her uniqueness in relation to others becomes clearer for the reader. Moreover, though it could be incidental, the subject "I" (ordinarily implicit in Japanese) is stated repeatedly to show the girl's subjective standpoint in this part of the story (Komatsu & Konno, 2014).

What is observed here resembles the result of a comparison between the episodes of conversation (e.g., Excerpt 1.2 in which Mina and her mother constructed a simple enumeration of Mina and her friends and Excerpt 3.2, which shows a variety of relationships between Mina and one of her friends, who was first included in the enumeration). In other words, children's meaning construction that clarifies their presentational selves is often based on simple enumeration but it occasionally becomes the starting point for further meaning constructions that position the child in a complex, tangled configuration of persons and objects. Further, the comparison of Excerpts 1.5 and 5.5 suggests that in children's writings, great length or volume does not necessarily imply complex development of meaning construction.

The presentational self emerging in the configuration of variety of episodes shows the unique perspective of the child to the observers (Fig. 5.6). That is, the extension of meaning construction in the latter half of Excerpt 5.5 shows the active functioning of the **non-A** field from which a child's unique perspective chooses one possible extension, rather than relying on a single fixed way (Komatsu & Konno, 2014). When the meaning developed from the first description (**A**: I love this milk jelly, with the implicit contrast with **non-A**: Anything that is not this kind of jelly, but has some relationship with the jelly or her mother) to the second (**a'**: It is delicious, also contrasted with possible other descriptions that have some relationship

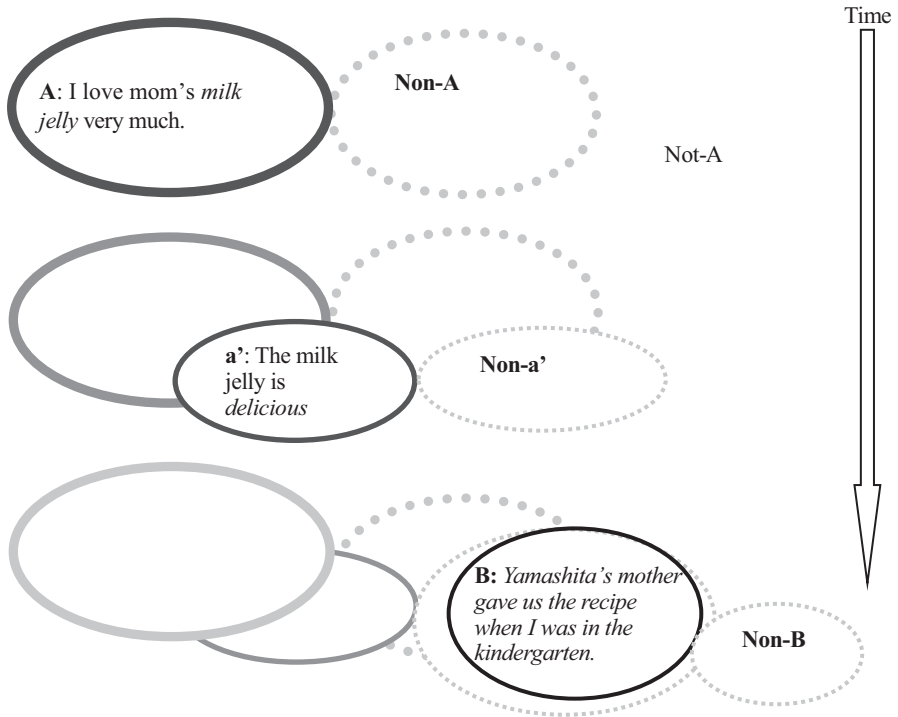


Fig. 5.6 Meaning complexes constituted in the writing of Excerpt 5.5

to the deliciousness of the jelly, **non-a**), the fields **a'** and **non-a'** carry the potential for further development of meaning. As I discussed, what was there (e.g., I also drank some delicious juice) or what happened next (e.g., Then we played a game) are frequent choices from these possibilities. However, the child introduces a totally different development at this point by bringing up an event from the far past (**B**). This leap into the past clarifies the child's own perspective and positions her in a long-lasting relationship with her friend's family. After this, she continues on to describe her relationship with her mother in the future.

The Extension of Meaning Construction into the Details of Experiences

Meaning construction beyond enumerative description is not limited to extensions into the past or future. Komatsu and Konno (2014) also showed the shifting of children's perspectives toward the details of internal or interpersonal interactions as another type of writing that clarifies the unique perspective of children (e.g., Excerpt 5.3). Excerpt 5.6 is another example that includes both interpersonal dialogue and internal utterances, written by the same child who wrote the story of Excerpt 5.4.

Excerpt 5.6 (From nikki of child D, fourth grade, May 11) (Yamamoto & Komatsu, 2016, p. 82, Table 3)

Yesterday, I played with Kana, Rika, and Misa. [We] played at Kana’s house. [We] played Jenga. Misa did not play [as she was] reading a book. Partway through, [Misa] said “[I’ll] play,” [and we] let [her] play, but Misa tried to take a block right from the middle so Rika and I said “Don’t take it.” [Misa] cried and [I] got annoyed. [I] thought to myself “Ah, [I] don’t like little sisters,” although Misa is Rika’s little sister ... [Misa] was crying until [we] finished Jenga. Rika lost [the game] in the end. Next [we] played the Tamagotchi Game of Life. I came last. Misa stopped crying when [we] played Tamagotchi and [we] enjoyed [it] together. [It] was fun enough.

The story of Excerpt 5.6 begins with enumeration of the children who played together and ends with the description of what the child did in a time sequence. However, the child writing the story focuses on the younger sister of her friend (Misa), describing some conflict with her. Although her description is a simple succession of events and includes many ellipses, it develops from Misa’s sudden participation, a short exchange and Misa’s emotional outburst, and the child’s reaction to it (underlined sentences). She even includes an expression of disapproval of her friend’s younger sister, which may not be congruent with the values emphasized at the school. This suggests that this incident was the most impressive to her in the series of events in their playing together, and the detail of interaction and internal reaction clarifies her unique perspective to it (Yamamoto & Komatsu, 2016).

This shift of children’s perspective to the details is also observable in the writings of the third-grade children (Excerpts 5.7, 5.8). In the story of Excerpt 5.7, the child initially intended to describe his trip to an aquarium with his family, as the title shows. However, the detailed description of his conversation with his parents is far clearer in the story (underlined sentences), and his experiences in the aquarium are not elaborated (Komatsu & Konno, 2014). If the story is evaluated focusing on his ability to write what he initially intended, it might not be assessed as particularly excellent. However, the sudden shift of his focus onto the fine details of the conversation clarifies his *subjective* experience of anger or surprise.

Excerpt 5.7 (From nikki of child E, third grade, July) (Komatsu & Konno, 2014, p. 329, Table 2)

Title: [We] went to an aquarium.

[We] went to Kaiyu-kan [an aquarium in Osaka]. Dad said “Let’s go to an aquarium” because [we were] free. Mom said “Then why don’t [we] go to Kaiyu-kan?” [I] played [a video] game during the ride, because [I] felt bored. After [I’d] played [the game] for eleven minutes or so, Dad said “Quit the game” and [I] asked “Why?” [He] said “[We]’ve arrived” but [there was] nothing there. [I] blamed [him], saying “[You’re a liar, [I] can’t see [it].” and [my] mom said “[We] take a bus [from here]”, and [we] took a bus. [We] arrived [at the aquarium] soon. [We] walked through, looking at the fish. As [we] went down [from the top of the aquarium building] gradually, [I] found a sign saying “Jellyfish.” [I] couldn’t see [them] because [it] was very crowded. But [I] enjoyed [the aquarium], and [we] went home after eating ice cream.

The story of Excerpt 5.8 basically enumerates the child's actions in a time line. However, at some points, his own viewpoint becomes clearer when he directly describes his reactions to this experience using a dialogical or direct speech style (underlined sentences). Although this is a simple move, the shift clarifies the child's subjective position in relation to specific details of the events (Komatsu and Konno 2014).

Excerpt 5.8 (From the diary of child F, third grade, October 9) (Komatsu & Konno, 2014, p. 330, Table 3)

Today, [I] played with Matsuno. When [I] arrived at Matsuno's, his brother and [his brother's] friend were there. Matsuno's brother's friend said "Let's play Mario Cart," so [we] played it using [wireless] networking. But [I] was the worst at it. [I] wondered "Why?" Next [we] played a balloon battle. Again, [my] score was very bad. After the balloon battle, [(unclear)]. Then [I] played action figures with Matsuno. After playing with figures, [we] practiced soccer really hard. First, [we] did strong kicking. [We] did well. Then [we] had a match. Matsuno did a good kick. I also did a good one. Next, [we] tested [our] best kicks. Matsuno kicked and the ball flew high, but mine didn't. [I] wondered "Why?" It's because [I] kicked [the ball] with [my] hands in [my] pockets. After soccer, [I] played DS at Matsuno's house, then went home. [It] was a veery enjoyable day.

The examples shown in Excerpts 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 5.8 illustrate the emergence of the children's unique perspectives in relation to their experiences. The development of meaning only by enumerating what was there or what happened is smooth and offers generalized descriptions that potentially lead to further elaboration. In other words, differentiation of meanings through the child's reactions to others creates his or her uniqueness in relation to what is described.

Introducing Dialogue into the Field of Meaning Construction

The examples of Excerpts 5.6 and 5.7 that describe the detail of interaction the child experienced typically show the clarification of the uniqueness of the child in relation to his or her environments. As I discussed previously, the enumerative description of what was seen or what was done also clarifies the child's position in relation to the listed objects. In contrast to this, the detail of events appearing in these writings fixes the "I" of them that responds to the others' actions.

The process can be described as in Fig. 5.7, by superimposing another dialogical loop indicated by the green lines onto Fig. 5.5. In this process, the description of interaction is performed in the substantial field of meaning construction—i.e., the notebook for writing personal stories—and a child constitutes "*Me (in writing)*." The dialogue with the other (e.g., Misa in Excerpt 5.6) reflects "*I (in the event)*" of the child that responds to the other's action (e.g., suddenly began to cry) and constitutes "*Me (in the event)*," which both become a part of "*Me (in writing)*." Thus, inclusion

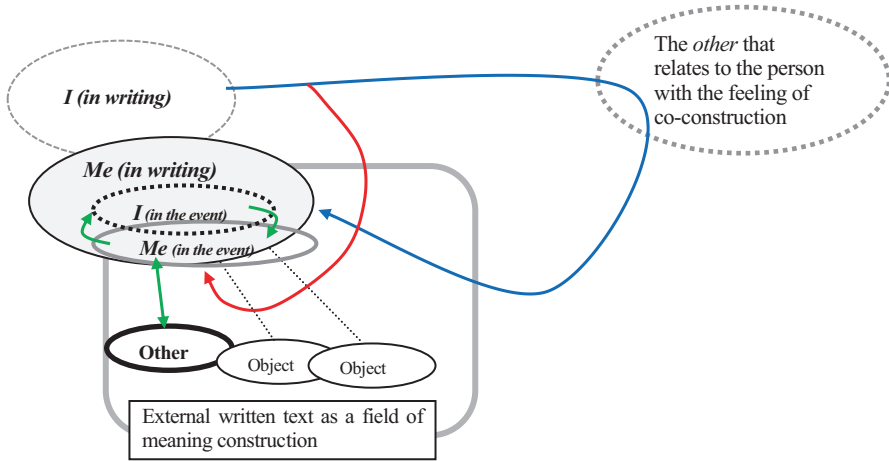


Fig. 5.7 Introduction of dialogical interaction into the field of meaning construction

of dialogue with others in writing is the elaboration of positioning in relation to others, and readers (observers) can find the child’s presentational self as more distinct and unique through the clarification of the dialogical loop that the child experienced on site.

At least in the examples above, the emotional reactions of children play an important role. Introducing conversations into writings is sometimes recommended to children by teachers to more vividly express what they have experienced,⁶ and it is plausible that children who wrote these stories had previously received such advice. However, the conversations included in Excerpts 5.6 and 5.7 are probably *not* the results of carefully planned composition intended to maximize the impact of each story, considering the numerous ellipses in Excerpt 5.6 or the gap between the title and the story in Excerpt 5.7. These are candid expressions of what was most impressive, in somewhat negative ways, of the series of events each child experienced. Children’s selves become clearer for both children and readers through this opposition. This observation is consistent with the discussion in a previous inquiry into children’s writings (Moriya et al. 1972), which insisted that children’s self-consciousness emerges in their critical recognition of others who interrupt their intentional acts or claims. This is not limited to interpersonal opposition, but also appears in the conflicts that children experience as the result of their acts. The direct description of the child’s internal utterance in Excerpt 5.8 is not the type featuring inter-individual interaction, but another type of clarification of self in children’s dialogical interaction with their environments.

⁶These instructions for including conversation into writing already appeared in a book about Japanese language education published before World War II (Namekawa, 1983).

Otherness as the Promoter of Meaning Construction

In contrast with the discussion of the previous section, the meaning construction in Excerpt 5.5, also illustrated in Fig. 5.6, does not rely on conversations with specific others and the child describes no conflict in the events. Interpersonal aspects of the self are still at work in this process, however, because the starting point of meaning construction (the milk jelly) is closely related to one of her friends and the meaning that develops from it is highly relational. Thus, the configuration in which the child is positioned includes long-lasting and emotional aspects with her neighbors and her mother. In this process, otherness is not in direct opposition with another person but rather what is at work in the child's encounter with the object that has the potential to extend the possible field of new meaning (**non-A**). As I discussed previously, the extension of meaning from this semi-open field is obvious in the conversation. In contrast, what is appearing in this writing is another way of meaning construction from an *inanimate* partner in the dialogue. In other words, the jelly works as a catalyst for constructing a new meaning.

To sum up, my discussion here has suggested several types of otherness functioning in the process of writing, in addition to the objectivity of written words and the presumption of the reader (teacher) behind these texts. In the process of meaning construction, which is primarily constructed through several stereotypical means, children sometimes focus on the details of their interactions with others that caused them to react emotionally. As relationships with others often include oppositions or conflicts, they work here with a strong sense of otherness that is independent from I's "initiative" or "volition."

Otherness working in writings is not limited to such dialogues or interactions with other person. In the examples I cited, children extended meanings from the results of their acts or the objects they encountered. As I will discuss in Chap. 6, the occurrence of such meaning construction is not predictable and it is difficult to describe a clear developmental trajectory at the ontogenetic level. However, in comparison with natural conversation, children's repeated writings of their experiences may help them perform a variety of meaning construction on the basis of the diverse otherness they can find in their environments.

Conclusion: The Presentational Self from Multiple Dialogues in Writings

The discussion in this chapter showed the applicability of the presentational self into the writings of children. In common with what was found in the recordings of mother-child conversations, children's writings construct configurations of what they recognized in the environments in which they are positioned. In the

analysis of conversation, I concentrated on the appearance of others as that which achieves contrast with the child. As an extension of this discussion, I explored the emergence of presentational selves in relation to what is described (e.g., dishes in a restaurant, scores in an academic task) that reflects their perspective on their environments.

Similarly to the emergence of the presentational self through conversation, it is what we find in the process of microgenesis that is figured out as the differentiation of the field of meaning with the dialectic tension of **A** <> **non-A**. However, the important difference between conversations and written stories lies in the role of other(s) at work in the process. In contrast with dynamic and temporary processes of mother-child conversations, in which the partner in conversation serves as a powerful agent for extending meaning, children must engage in writing by themselves. In this non-interactive way of meaning construction, children's writings often rely on simple methods of extension, such as "what was there" and "what happened next."

In relation to this non-existence of the partner in meaning construction, I showed several types of otherness at work in this process, drawing examples from children's writings. First, writing constructs the substantial, external traces of the work: that is, written sentences which both guide *and* restrict further extension of meaning. At the same time, the potential reader of the story, i.e., the teacher, functions internally as the assumed other who will give children responses to their writings. Thus, the fundamental structure involves two types of otherness that clarify the "me" for children themselves. Second, a dialogical structure also sometimes appears in the description of events and clarifies the self that responds to otherness. This often takes the form of direct descriptions of interaction or conversation with another person, but inanimate objects also carry the potential to promote meaning construction.

Considering these processes that clarify children's selves both for themselves and readers, schoolteachers' emphases on the development of the self in their practice of *tsuzurikata* or *seikatsu-tsuzurikata*, which appeared repeatedly in Japan's history, are quite apposite. From the discussion here, many teachers' intention to promote children's development despite economic and social difficulties using *seikatsu-tsuzurikata* was their attempt to construct "I" and "me" for children who react to a range of uncomfortable experiences in their lives. Although children's writings do not immediately bring about change in their thinking, teachers were aware of the occasional emergence of clear self in the repetition of writings.

In contrast with these patient approaches to children's selves in history, contemporary academics have come to expect the exact conditions in which elaborated writing appears. However, it is difficult to predict or describe when and how children will write stories like those cited in my discussion. For example, the writings of the child who wrote the stories from Excerpts 5.1 and 5.5 do not

show any clear trends in an academic year. Children's stories reflect a variety of elements in their lives, and a child's self becomes clearer, whimsically, in the fluctuations of repeated writings, similar to the emergence of self in daily conversations. To understand the incidental nature of the processes discussed here, I will next elaborate the structure of our lives and children's lives that requires meaning constructions and emergence of selves.

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