



Journal of Liberal Arts and Humanities (JLAH)
Issue: Vol. 1; No. 4; April 2020 pp. 1-17
ISSN 2690-070X (Print) 2690-0718 (Online)
Website: www.jlahnet.com
E-mail: editor@jlahnet.com

Retrospective Study On Reading-To-Write Teaching Experience To Chinese College Students

Randy Jones

Fort Hays State University
United States

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to carry out a reflection on the source-based, reading-to-write teaching experience that I had teaching academic writing for an American University that has a cooperative educational agreement with a Chinese University. In the study, I will present a literature review addressing rhetorical issues involved in teaching academic writing to the Chinese college learner. Attention will be given to metacognition in integrated writing assignments to present a model that summarizes thought processes involved in integrated writing assignments. I also aim to present a research model that aims to accurately present the thought processes learners go through while they are organizing, drafting, and revising their writing assignments. Refinements will be made to this model taking into account Chinese Learners and how they write. With a focus on metacognition, I will present findings on how Chinese college learners craft and revise their essays. I will then provide reflections on reading-to-write task assignments and to offer best practices teaching this curriculum to Chinese college students.

Literature review

My career as an academic English writing instructor who taught rhetoric and academic writing for more than 10 years in mainland China has bolstered a personal interest in finding ways to enable learners to meet their learning outcomes in academic writing. Ultimately, I wanted to address the issue of how learners learn how to write. What's more, I am interested in knowing how Chinese college students at two second-tier universities in mainland China learn how to compose academic essays in College English writing courses, and what strategies they use to succeed in L2 academic writing.

Academic English writing has several exigencies that are not required in L1 academic writing, and I have been interested in seeing how these learners navigate through the process of composing English academic writing. This, in turn, has caused me to focus on the topic of metacognition. Flavell (1979) defined metacognition as the ability to "understand, control, and manipulate [one's] own cognitive processes to maximize learning" (as cited in Zhang & Wu, 2009, p. 38). In other words, it refers to the learners self-awareness of what they learn and how they learn.

Learning in a foreign language creates many challenges in terms of organizing thoughts in writing and of knowing how to sate audience expectations. Oftentimes, writing in L2 is at cross-purposes with L1 academic writing, and a learner has to become aware of these rhetorical differences and of how to navigate these differences during essay composition.

At a rhetorical level, there are important differences which distinguish L1 Chinese academic writing from L2 English academic writing. Kaplan (1966) posited that rhetoric is derived from one's culture. Viewed in this light, rhetoric cannot be considered to be universal. Given that the ways of convincing an audience of one's viewpoint differ from learning culture to learning culture, it is very likely that learners shall face difficulties in formulating logic and in organizing ideas in writing as they aim to convince their target audience of their opinions and they will also face difficulties in making a point to their audience.

John Hinds (1987) described some important differences between Asian rhetoric and English rhetoric. He described Asian rhetoric as being reader-responsible while English rhetoric which is writer-responsible, wherein it is the writer's responsibility to convey arguments and opinions clearly to their audience to satisfy their expectations for specific information.

At a fundamental level, English rhetoric and Chinese rhetoric are contrasted by the patterns of the organization of ideas in these separate writing traditions. Xing, Wang, and Spencer (2008) focused on contrastive rhetoric between Chinese writing and English writing. They identified 5 dimensions in which to contrast Chinese with English writing. Xing et al. described Chinese writing as following an inductive mode, where a thesis is implied or stated near the end of the prose (p. 73). This is contrasted with English writing which follows a deductive mode, whereby a thesis is stated at the beginning of the prose and the writer clearly conveys his or her stance on the topic that he or she will elaborate on. Xing et al. posited that it was considered disrespectful or rude in Chinese rhetoric to convey one's opinion on the topic at the start of the prose. Therefore, one should hold the thesis in abeyance toward the end of an essay, or else not state it at all, and leave it up to the reader to discern the text's main point.

Xing et al. also noted that paragraphs in Chinese prose are more changeable than paragraphs in English writing. (p. 74). While each paragraph in an English essay serves a distinct purpose, there is no prescribed purpose for each paragraph in Chinese writing. While introduction paragraphs in English essays introduce a topic and presents a thesis, body paragraphs serve to elaborate the thesis and support the same, and the conclusion restates the main point and furnishes final reflective thoughts, Chinese paragraphs do not follow this form.

Ulla Connor (1996) remarked about the presence of theme-rheme connections prevalent in English writing. Namely, she addressed patterns of superordination and subordination in writing, wherein the theme referred to the main idea in a sentence, and rheme referred to the string of sentences that provided evidence to substantiate the theme. Such a feature is prevalent in body paragraphs in English essays, wherein a topic sentence conveys the major thesis of the paragraph, and rheme is characterized by evidence, facts, support, and / or citations from source materials that provides evidence that validates the topic sentence.

Xing et al. also noted that Chinese encourages the use of aphorisms in writing, while this tends to be shunned in English writing. (p. 75) English writing also availed of the use of discourse markers to present shifts in ideas from one main point to another, while this feature is absent in Chinese writing (p. 75). There is a need to be concrete and straightforward in presenting thoughts and ideas in English writing, while nuance and subtlety are preferred in Chinese rhetoric. Therefore, discourse markers will be absent from Chinese writing for it is perceived to interfere with the beauty of form in writing.

A brief review of Xing et al.'s study, then, provides some important implications in the area of contrastive rhetoric. First, ideas are organized differently in the different writing traditions because writing serves different purposes and attends to expectations of differing audiences. At the level of discourse analysis, English writing is seen as linear in form, which is contrasted with Chinese writing which is described as circular in form. Conveying ones opinion in the form of a thesis is expected when addressing in English reading audience, while this is viewed as being too straightforward and unsubtle, to the point of being seen as rude, to a Chinese reading audience. The use of discourse markers helps an English audience follow the writer's train-of-thought, while this interferes with the subtlety of form among the Chinese writers.

The writing process

In academic writing, one has to be prepared to compose prose that meets the task assignment. Such an activity entails creating and organizing ideas during the pre-writing phase, placing those ideas on paper during the process of composing the essay, and exercising mindfulness when it comes to reviewing an essay draft with the aim of revising the text to successfully meet the exigencies of the writing task.

Given that essays will need to be revised in order to meet the requirements of each respective writing assignment, it therefore becomes necessary to present a writing model that takes into account the metacognitive processes writers go through while they are composing and which also describes how competent writers make important decisions to improve their prose. Flower and Hayes (1981) presented such a model that aims to describe a writer's metacognition during the process of essay composition.

This writing process consists of three parts: planning, translating, and reviewing (Flower & Hayes, p. 369). Refer to Appendix A for a graphic representation of this writing process.

Planning refers to creating ideas in a writing assignment, organizing those ideas, and setting goals to meet the task requirements (Flower & Hayes, p. 372). In process writing assignments, this relates to the thought processes of writers engage in during the prewriting stage of essay composition.

Translating refers to transcribing the ideas which were crafted during the planning stage onto paper or onto a word processor (Flower & Hayes, p. 373). It refers to drafting during essay compositions.

Reviewing refers to rereading one's essay during and after translation, and making evaluations of one's draft with the aim of making necessary revisions in writing. (Flower & Hayes, p. 374).

The writing process also interfaces with two other important components, which are the task environment and the writer's long-term memory (Flower & Hayes, p. 369). The task environment includes the requirements for the assignment. It refers to the assignment topic and the learners' understanding of that topic. It also refers to the writer's audience and the expectations the audience has about the topic, along with the assumptions they hold and the biases they have pertinent to the topic. It also refers to the exigencies of the assignment, which means the specific assignment requirements the learner is expected to meet in his or her prose.

The second key component in this writing process, the writer's long-term memory, represents the writer's understanding about the topic, his or her own understanding of audience expectations, and the learner's recollections of strategies he or she used in the past to address assignments of a similar genre or similar nature (Flower & Hayes, p. 371). This long-term memory tends to be stable in nature, and it represents metacognitive resources the writer can tap into in order to address writing assignment requirements.

During the planning stage, organizing ideas and setting goals plays an important part in essay preparation. As writers organize their ideas, they have to provide evidence and facts that are subordinate to main points in writing. They also may need to categorize subordinate ideas under main points. Relationships of subordination and superordination are thus established during this stage in the writer's mind. Setting goals are necessary based upon the learner's understanding of the exigencies of the writing assignment.

There may be multiple goals involved in different writing assignments. For instance, in argumentation essays, learners may want to establish clear and debatable thesis statements, and also identify antitheses that attempt to rebut said thesis statements. They have to find support in the form of evidence, facts, and sound logic to buttress their claims. Learners also have to address the citation conventions that are expected by an academic audience in argumentation writing.

This is one major distinction between, for instance, persuasive writing and expository writing. The exigencies involved in persuasive writing are greater and more varied than in expository writing, and these exigencies make the task of essay composition in persuasive writing more challenging than in expository writing.

There are several implications that may be gleaned from Flower and Hayes' study and which have a bearing on second language academic writing. For one, the process of establishing goals and organizing ideas is dynamic. After a writer has begun transcribing his or her ideas onto parchment, he or she may decide to change his or her goal. If a writer chooses to change his or her thesis statement altogether, this could represent wholesale changes in essay content and organization, with the writer possibly even rewriting his or her essay anew in order to support a revised thesis. What's more, the writing process is not linear but it is recursive. Writers can formulate or reformulate goals as they undergo revisions to their essays.

A key issue is the there is mindfulness involved during this writing process in the form of a monitor that informs a writer on how well he or she is addressing the task requirements during the translating and reviewing portions of the writing process.

In light of the rhetorical problem, the writer has to be mindful of the quality of the text he/ she has produced thus far. Flower (1987) used the term noticing to refer to the writer being able to distinguish between the task representation, which represents what he or she has drafted thus far and the rhetorical problem which refers to the assignment requirements and audience expectations (p. 18). This ability to notice is critical during the writing process for it will trigger in the adept writer's mind the need to make necessary revisions or changes to his or her essay to meet the writing requirements. Furthermore, it also calls on the writer to refer to long term memory to tap into cognitive resources to make necessary changes to his her writing.(Flower, p. 19) Writers, for instance, can rely on their schema of a topic to support their ideas.

Wang and Wen (2002) presented an adaptation of the Flower and Hayes (1981) and Flower (1987) cognitive models of the writing process that takes into account the characteristics of L2 writers. They referred to the components in long-term memory that interfaced with the writing process as world knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, and linguistic knowledge (p. 242). World knowledge referred to a writer's prior knowledge, or schema, about a topic. Meanwhile, rhetorical knowledge refers to a writer's understanding of the structure, organization, and purpose of a writing assignment. Linguistic knowledge addresses the writer's knowledge of L2 grammar and sentence structure. In this particular model, world knowledge and rhetorical knowledge are conveyed in L1 in the writer's mind, while linguistic knowledge is conveyed in the L2.

Teaching academic writing in light of the features of the writing context

To engender mindfulness and critical thinking in students, it is necessary to teach academic writing as a process. It also is necessary that we as instructors utilize teaching materials and present teaching techniques that help cultivate mindfulness among students to enable them to meet their writing assignment requirements. As instructors, therefore, we are tasked with using materials in our teaching that help learners become aware of how to meet their task assignments, and we should help them tap into their domain knowledge, their linguistic knowledge, and their rhetorical knowledge to help them achieve their objectives.

There are two ways that this can be done. One is through thinkalouds, and the other is by using heuristics in writing tasks that help learners understand important concepts in reading-towrite assignments.

In academic writing assignments, learners will have to pose a clear and adequate thesis statement on their topic of discussion. When students are composing research essays, they will also need to convey a clear and focused opinion about the topic of their discussion. Hacker and Sommers (2016) define a thesis statement as a “central idea that conveys [one's] purpose [in writing] and [which] requires support” (p. 14). It is described as a statement that “should take a position that needs to be explained and supported” (Hacker & Sommers, p. 14), and it should be an “answer to a question” (Hacker & Sommers, p. 14). It also needs to be sufficiently focused for the purpose of the writing assignment at hand (Hacker & Sommers, p. 14). Thinkalouds in the classroom can help elucidate thought processes learners go through in generating adequate thesis statements for their reading assignments. Using such protocols in the classroom helps remind learners of the deductive nature of academic writing for an academic English language audience and it also hastens critical thinking as they need to produce a thesis statement that adequately addresses the rhetorical requirements of the writing task.

For instance, when one is teaching a module on a thesis statement composition, and one is addressing a specific topic such as environmental pollution, one can pose a tentative thesis statement such as “Environmental pollution is bad”. While this indeed is a statement, it is not a workable opinion on the topic because a reasonable audience will not disagree with the statement! You can present an antithesis which states that “Environmental pollution is good”. This, in turn, easily refutes the effectiveness of the previous statement for no reasonable person will agree that environmental pollution is “good” at face value.

It also stands to reason that this statement is too broad and vague. English as a foreign language (EFL) learners will not be able to adequately develop such a statement for they are not able to present evidence that logically would rebut such a statement. After all, how can one logically disagree that environmental pollution can be construed as being a “good” phenomenon?

It is a good practice to have learners evaluate tentative thesis statements as they prepare to compose their research essays. For instance, it is good to have learners critically evaluate tentative thesis statements to discern whether those statements of a) have a clear opinion about a topic and taking a position on the same; b) adequately answer a question, such as a research question in a research essay; and c) are adequately focused for the assignment at hand. (Hacker & Sommers, 2016, p. 14).

In my teaching practice, after I have had learners identify two or three source materials for the research paper, and after having them summarize those articles, I have provided them with modules on thesis statement composition. I had them evaluate tentative thesis statements in class and determine whether these are adequate thesis statements using the metrics described above.

I then have these learners compose their own tentative thesis statements. I ask for learners to draft thesis statements for their research essays. Once they have drafted these statements, I have them transcribe the thesis statement on the classroom blackboard so that the instructor and students can read their text. Using thinkalouds, I asked students if the thesis statement is focused, if it has a clear and debatable opinion on the subject matter discussed, and if it is sufficiently narrow to compose a four to five-page research paper, double spaced.

For those learners with limited language proficiency, I have noted that they struggle with meeting the above criteria for a thesis statement. Many of the learners have difficulty producing debatable thesis statements, or their thesis statements may be vague.

Thesis statements are critical in reading-to write-assignments as they relate to how one will plan and organize his or her ideas in an argument. They are fundamental in terms of addressing the question of “Why am I writing about this topic and why is this topic important in the first place?”

What’s more, evaluating thesis statements can inform learners on the resources which they need to use to make their writing more effective. If the source material that they refer to in support of their arguments does not provide adequate evidence to support their points, then, evidently, they should utilize a more adequate search for content that supports their working thesis. This can be done either through mining sources for content that support their claims, or looking through a “References” list in a source article to identify other source material that potentially, provides evidence necessary to support their working thesis.

Addressing the issue of how metacognition plays a key role during the writing process is critical for we can learn how effective :L2 English writing learners marshal such resources during their drafting stage. Lo (2011) conducted a study among Taiwanese college learners where he identified reading-to-write strategies of effective writers. Information on the writing strategies that learners used was gleaned from retrospective interviews he conducted with these students. It was found that the more effective learners used more strategies for comprehending source text materials than less proficient writers during the pre-writing stages, used more reading comprehension strategies during writing, and evaluated their text with the aim of improving their essay quality after essay writing more often than did less effective writers (Lo,p. 261). In particular, the more effective writers mined source texts for information, interacted with source texts by means such as summarizing source texts and paraphrasing the same in their source texts, and they read additional texts for generating ideas. (Lo, pp. 261, 262) Such findings were consistent with other studies (Plakans, 2008; Plakans, 2009).

Lo also noted that more critical thinking skills were utilized by the more effective writers (p. 164). These more effective writers were able to identify problems more clearly than the less effective writers, they were able to provide clearer perspectives in their writing than the less effective writers, and they were adept at identifying contexts more easily than less effective writers (Lo, p. 164).

While critical thinking may be a quality that is more innate to individuals for this may be tied to “individuals’ predispositions” (Lo, p. 165), it is something that needs to be taught in the course curriculum as this is something that learners will have to master in their writing.

Tying these ideas to the notion that we as instructors need to make overt those thought process that may be covert during process-writing assignments, it is necessary to ensure that the curriculum aids and abets these thought processes.

There are other activities that I have used to ensure that these critical thinking processes are encouraged and sought out by learners. As in the case of evaluating thesis statements, I have used heuristics to engender critical thinking among students.

American Psychological Association (APA) in-text citations, in particular, represent one arena where heuristics can be employed. When a student records specific information in the form of a quote from another author’s source text, a paraphrase of an idea, or a statistic from a particular source, these notes must be cited in accordance to standardized APA citation conventions. Generally speaking, the writer has to identify the surname of the author of the note, along with the year of publication of the source, in a signal phrase that introduces the note and provides context of the subject matter to the reader.

In appendix B there is an exercise I have used with students to help them to evaluate APA in-text citations. It is adopted from a workbook that I have used before. (Hacker & Sommers, 2011, p. 55). It includes a source text which is one paragraph in length, an APA reference, and a series of citations students have to evaluate for plagiarism and/or faulty citation. In the exercises, the student reads the document and evaluates it for accuracy and for plagiarism and inaccurate citation. If the text is fine, they are to write “OK” next to the text.

I hand out the reproducible text for the students to read in class. After reading the text, they are to evaluate ten citations for accuracy. If the source is accurately documented, they are to write “OK” next to the citation. If it is inaccurately documented, they need to revise the citation to ensure it accurately conforms to APA citation conventions.

Mindfulness is engendered by having learners read the source material and comprehend the gist of the written text. Based on this, they need to compare the notes with the source material for accuracy. If there is a portion of the note that was transcribed from the source text, then the text needs to be enclosed in quotation marks. What’s more, the student needs to document the author’s surname, along with the year of publication of the note, in a signal phrase that introduces the note, and that provides adequate context of the note to his or her audience. At the end of the note the writer has to place a page number in parentheses at the end of the note.

Along with this, learners also evaluate the accuracy of paraphrased materials from source texts. Similar to the exercise with quotations, the students have to ensure that the paraphrased material represents an original and accurate rendition of the learner’s understanding of the source content.

In this exercise, I asked for students to take 15 minutes in total to do the exercise. I ask them to take about 6 minutes to read a text, and then they take 9 or 10 minutes to review each of the passages within the source text.

I encourage students to do the activities alone, or else they can work in pairs if they have doubts on how to document a source text.

Then I review the answers of the text for 10 minutes with the learners. Students answer the questions individually. I provide feedback to learners by color coding the sections that are transcribed in a quote with the text transcribed in the note. I ask learners if the text, indeed, is enclosed in quotes, and is preceded with a proper in-text citation. I also ask learners if there is a page number at the end of the note.

I then ask for students to go to the blackboard and write down their own citations. The class, in turn, compares the students answer with their own, because they can ascertain if the student's citation is correct based on their understanding of APA conventions.

This exercise has been framed as a formative assessment for learners because this is an important skill they need to use in academic writing. Such exercises are useful in evaluating learners throughout the academic term, and I find that it helps discipline learners to acknowledge the need to thoroughly and accurately document paraphrases, quotations, and/or other ideas recorded from sources.

Another arena for engendering mindfulness is through peer review sessions. These are sessions in which learners read essay drafts from their colleagues and evaluate how well learners are able to meet the task requirements for their writing assignments.

Gillam (1990) stated that peer review had three benefits three benefits: It helps promote critical, thoughtful reading; helps students employ meta-language in assessing their peers' writing; and it helps develop learner self-confidence in learning from others and from themselves. (Gillam, 1990, as cited in Gousseva, 1998).

Indeed, these factors come into play when it comes to peer review sessions. For one, we are directly connected to the metacognitive writing process model presented earlier. Students have the opportunity to evaluate how well the learners prose in his or her draft meets the task requirements for the writing assignment. Such an activity is also highly motivating for learners because they are reading authentic text that student-peers are crafting. They read the text critically with the aim of offering advice on how well they are meeting the requirements for the writing assignment running a sign, and they provide specific suggestions on how to revise their essays.

With the Chinese learners that I teach, I find that learners are not very familiar with the purposes of peer review when they are introduced to these sessions during the two semesters of academic writing that I teach. For one, the students hail from a learning mode that is teacher centered, where information is transmitted from the teacher to the student Peer review offers a paradigm shift in that learners are asked to take on a role that instructor or a tutor has, which is to critically read another person's texts and evaluate the same for efficacy.

Therefore, some learners may take time getting used to this paradigm, but over time I find that they are more comfortable and confident with evaluating other learner's drafts.

The third attached appendix, Appendix C, represents a peer review sheet that I have learner's fill out for their research essay. Students work in groups of three students. I aim to organize the groups with mixed proficiency learners, which includes a student deemed to be of high proficiency, one of medium proficiency, and one of lower language proficiency in each group. I make these evaluations longitudinally, rating how well proficient learners have performed in my class during their previous semester of English Composition 101.

A key to evaluating the essay's effectiveness is whether or not a learner has a clear thesis to his or her essay. This is purposefully assigned here because of the need for learners have to develop their arguments and they need to have a clear opinion about the topic of choice.

Throughout this document, learners identify what are key components of the writing assignment. Along with reading and filling out their peer review sheets they didn't engage in discussions of their essay content. This provides multiple opportunities for learners to utilize metalanguage in their discussions, given that learners have to address the rhetorical components of their writing assignments.

Furthermore, they need to avoid plagiarism by ensuring that ideas, , paraphrases, and quotes used from source materials are properly documented. Given that learners are using this research essay to make necessary revisions to compose a final draft of the research essays, they are requested to fill this out. They are to fill out the peer review form thoroughly so a student has a written record of what his or her peers feel is good about his or her essay, and what needs to be further revised.

Learners then receive feedback on the 1st draft of their research essays from at least two sources: One being a graded sheet with written feedback from their teacher, and another which is the peer review sheet from their classmates. Through this, we see how the process of evaluating another learner's essay prompts the learner to make necessary revisions to meet the exigencies of the writing assignment

Best practices of teaching English process-based writing based on observations of learner writing behaviors

The learners that are enrolled in our English writing classes are studying in a second-tier Chinese university. This Chinese university has a cooperative educational agreement with an American university. The students, then, take American courses that are taught by American instructors in English.

The students are placed into the program based upon the scores they earned in the Chinese national entrance examination (*Gaokao*). Given that this exam represents a composite of performances of the learners in different academic disciplines, it does not provide an adequate assessment based on the learners' English writing proficiency.

During the Freshman year, students take academic reading and writing courses that are taught by foreign English speaking instructors, and they study listening English taught by Chinese faculty.

Once they complete these courses, they are then grafted into the course curriculum furnished by the American university, and they began learning American college academic writing in their Sophomore college year.

As is evidenced by this situation, there will be students with varying degrees of proficiency in English. There will be students with limited English writing proficiency, those with medium proficiency in writing, and there will be students with high English writing proficiency.

This presents several challenges in teaching the curriculum and the courses to such learners, Based on the review of of the rhetorical differences between Chinese and American writing presented earlier, as well as the writing process just described, I want to share what are some basic observations that I have noted in my teaching, and I intend to derive best practices in teaching Chinese learners based on these situations.

a. Learners with limited language proficiency may be unable to furnish adequately narrow and debatable thesis statements with clear, debatable opinions presented on the topic.

Learners with lower language proficiency will have difficulty producing adequate thesis statements. To them, the tentative thesis statement may present a clear opinion on the topic. However, these statements will not be able to withstand scrutiny when they are further analyzed.

In one research essay, a student with limited English proficiency (LEP) in one of my writing classes wrote this opinion about the use of coal in China's economy. He wrote: "So, in recent China, the use of coal cannot be subjected to stricter environment regulations than other fuels." While he certainly had a clear opinion about this topic, he also did not take into account that the People's Republic of China's is a signatory to international agreements which are designed to reduce carbon-based emissions, including from coal production..

The learner seemed to conflate stricter environmental regulations with political decisions that would reduce or possibly eliminate coal production in China altogether. This was not what was being asked for in the task assignment! This situation also does not necessarily mean that the country needs to to reduce coal production to meet global environmental standards.

In a situation like this, the best practice would be to give the student an opportunity to make revisions based on the instructor's feedback of the learner's draft and to make relevant revisions that logically support the thesis at hand, described above. I gave instructions to the learner to review the Paris Agreement in the Kyoto Protocol which are relevant agreements which China has signed regarding this matter.

Asencion-Delaney (2008) mentioned that reading-to-write tasks are more difficult than writing that is not derived from sources given that learners need to make "mental operations that involved making plans, inferences, generalizations, and assessments of the quality of the content and language in their essays." (p. 141) Metacognitive processes involved in this step include rereading a student's own draft with the aim of finding necessary arguments or points that may need further support or revision and also finding portions of a text where they need to mine for more information to support their arguments.

In the situation described above, this warrants having learners search for source material that provides them with adequate information to enable them to revise their thesis to make it a grounded and debatable one. Thus, an instructor should provide students with ample time on preparing their research essays and to also point learners to resources that help provide them evidence in support of their working thesis statement.

b. Learners need assistance with finding adequate source material for their research papers.

This is a common concern among Chinese learners who, in the past, have not done research from articles found in databases. These learners need assistance with finding source material, and I find it is necessary to provide learners with resources to get them started with their research.

Given the blended learning environment that I am in, I provide PDF files of scholarly articles that I have curated over the years and I post these documents on the Blackboard learning management system furnished by my university. I provide learners with articles that have an abstract, keywords of scholarly, peer reviewed articles, literature reviews of source materials that inform the researchers on their topics, along with the proposed research questions, the research methodology being carried out, research findings, and interpretations of the same. Having learners read these sources helps them build the global knowledge and domain knowledge about the research topics they will discuss in their forthcoming research papers. They also become more familiar with the format of the research articles which they are tasked to read.

In class, I demonstrate to learners how they can harvest articles by doing keyword searches and using Boolean delimiters to help identify useful source material for their research essays. I have shown learners how to do keyword searches for scholarly articles on databases. I also show them how to curate articles by scanning the "References" list of the articles and by scanning the names of particular journals that have available articles that address their topics.

Such a hands-on approach helps learners gather the resources they need during the planning stage of the research essay. I also propose that other instructors curate articles for learners to read in their research essays.

c. Have learners research topics that are of interest to themselves and that are approachable to them.

The premise that interest in a topic is a major motivator for learning is true. Therefore, learners should discuss topics that are current and relevant to themselves. I therefore require Learners to address topics that are germane to Chinese society in 2019 and 2020. Such topics include China's Two-Child Policy, China's Social Credit System, the One-Belt, One Road initiative, and Gender Issues in China.

These are topics that are discussed in the news, and that learners are familiar with to varying degrees. The fact that these topics are highlighted in the media creates the expectation that learners should be vested in knowing about such topics and should be conversant in the same.

It is my observation, however, that many students in our program are not necessarily very informed about these topics nor are they interested in the same. This can be attributed to their curriculum which is focused on learners passing exams in their academic courses and where such learning is not geared toward studying current events in their Chinese college curriculum. This lack of transference of content to some extent makes it more challenging for learners to gain the necessary background knowledge and schema development in the reading-to-write tasks to which they are assigned in their second semester of English Composition in our program.

This, in turn, relates to phase one of the writing process for the research effort: Namely, planning and organizing their research essay content. They need more time to read about these topics in order to gain the necessary schema to be conversant about these topics in their writing tasks.

d. Learners benefit from peer review sessions on authentic writing.

The peer review sessions where learners critique the drafts of their classmates' provides learners with instant, authentic audiences for their articles and it provides ample opportunities to discuss metalanguage pertinent to their task assignment. The less proficient writers, in particular, benefit from these discussions.

It is my observation that power distance issues may cause learners not to ask questions directly to the instructor on their progress in the research essays. What's more, the students at university have a very busy study schedule. The average learner spends an average of 30 hours in class studying during the week.

So, having these peer review sessions is amply beneficial to less proficient learners for they can have their writing reviewed by learners who understand the exigencies of the task assignment and can give them real time feedback in their writing.

Having less proficient learners teamed up with more expert readers is helpful in this area for the competent learner can give advice on the overall coherence and organization of the written essay.

This provides learners with automatic feedback and may provide the sense of urgency necessary for making necessary revisions to their writing.

e. Learners with limited language proficiency may not furnish adequate support for their content and may resort to plagiarism in writing.

Learners with limited language proficiency may demonstrate an inability to provide facts and evidence to support their arguments. Connor and Krammer (1995) noted that less proficient writers have great difficulty with grammar, syntax, and with reading and writing at the discourse level (as cited in Asencion, 2008, p. 142).

The author did a qualitative study with six ESL students where he catalogued the reading comprehension strategies that learners utilized during drafting (Jones, 2010). Contrasted with the more proficient students, one of the less proficient students stated that he used text translation to understand a source text. He also had a lesser repertoire of reading comprehension strategies compared with the more proficient students. While the more proficient students mentioned that they mined sources for information, asked questions about the source text and sought answers from these source texts, the less proficient student did not use any of these strategies.

Evidently, the learner's struggle with grammar and syntax made it difficult for him to focus on the more global issues such as seeking where to make adequate revisions to the essay and how to better organize the essay content to meet the task requirement.

Silva (1993) contrasted the writing processes of L1 and L2 learners. He noted that L2 learners had more difficulty organizing ideas and setting goals during the planning stage of writing. (p. 661) The process of writing was more laborious and they had to spend more time generating ideas during writing (Silva, pp. 661, 662).

What's more, these learners spent less time reading their essay drafts to make revisions and they mainly focused on surface issues such as correcting grammar and spelling mistakes during essay revision. (Silva, p. 662).

These are some of the issues that less proficient learners in my writing course face. Indeed, writing an argument is cognitively demanding, and it makes it more difficult for learners to focus on rereading their drafts with the aim of making global revisions. Thus, the intervention of more qualified students during the peer-review sessions is necessary to bring these concerns to the learners' attention. Our university also offers a writing center with tutors who can provide advice to learners on how to improve their essays. By reading their essays with an aim of making revisions, they can advise learners on how to make revisions to their essay content.

I aim to make learners responsible for their learning by evaluating their peer review content. Therefore I provide for this peer review template sheet which is delivered to my students and I evaluate them on the quality of their feedback to their peers.

Attention needs to be given on how much authentic, original content is provided by the peer reviewers as they fill out these review sheets. Some learners may not fully understand the purpose of peer review which involves critical reading of someone else's research essay draft and includes providing constructive feedback with the aim of enabling this person to make necessary revisions or improvements in his or her research essays.

It is incumbent, therefore, on the student to use critical thinking in this task assignment. If students fail to provide adequate feedback to their colleagues by not advising them what specific areas of the writing need more support, or by not providing a critical evaluation of their tentative thesis statement, I remove points from those students' essays.

My advice is to ensure that students focus on global revision strategies to enable them to produce improved final drafts on their research essays that focus on content, argumentation, and on ideas rather than on the form of the essay.

It is necessary to have this approach in order to ensure that students take responsibility for learning the curriculum.

f. Learners struggle with in-text citation and with APA formatting.

Less proficient learners struggle with the format of a quote or paraphrase from a source. This is expressed in such forms as copying a text verbatim from a source and failing to place material transcribed verbatim from a source within quotes, and by failing to identify the author and the year publication of the source article in a signal phrase introducing the note.

Learners also can engage in faulty documentation of source materials. This includes recording a quotation from a source, but failing to place quotes around the material transcribed from the source text. This leaves the impression that the learner is paraphrasing from a source, rather than quoting from the source. Indeed, this may be a formative assessment issue for learners. It also may be evidence of a lack of audience awareness. (Asencion, 2008)

Given that learners learn APA in-text citation during two semesters and I provide them with exercises on citing sources throughout both terms, I rate learners more strictly during the composition of their research essay, where they compose the first draft of the research essay on the 8th week of a 16-week English Composition 102 course. I have learners record notes, quotations, paraphrases from sources, and statistical information from the same. This provides me with an opportunity to evaluate their comprehension of their sources and I can ascertain if they can generate an adequate synthesis of their source articles to show me they can understand a source and make evaluations on claims that are presented in the source.

I present this as a reasonable expectation of the learners' audience to my students. I advised them in the classroom that I have expected them to learn what plagiarism is by the end of the semester of English Composition 101 and to refrain from plagiarizing. Hence it is necessary to grade learners more strictly on this criteria during their research essay, and I do this, both in the first draft and in the final draft of the students' research essays.

Some learners who performed poorly in their writing due to documented instances of plagiarism may contest their grades. They may say that they were unaware that they engaged in plagiarism.

To ensure that standards are met, and that students are responsible for the production of original essay content, I point out to these particular learners that their contention is based on their subjective state of mind. As an instructor I advise my students that I can only rate them on an objective basis which, evidently, is based on the writing that they presented and turned in for a grade.

Conclusion

When I reflect on learner's performances in their research essay, it is my observation that the most successful students are the ones who are able to internalize the writing process, who understand the purpose of their writing task, and who understand target audience expectations.

Flower and Hayes (1987) Writing Model certainly informs a lot on this matter. Successful writers organize their ideas during the planning phase of essay writing. They monitor the content of their essay drafts with the aim of making necessary revisions. They are resourceful in that they can both seek and find source material that can support the main points in their essay and they are enterprising in seeking these sources. They also tap into the long-term memory, recalling reading strategies used in the past to help them organize their ideas.

They are well-read and demonstrate good rhetorical knowledge and domain knowledge about their writing topics. In a way, the writing process also places in clear relief the challenges writing instructors face in teaching this learner demographic. Many of these learners did not learn how to write a formal English essay prior to joining our writing program.

Many of the students also do not have experience in writing five paragraph expository essays. They are then faced with the task of writing research essays in the second year of their course. This may be a rather daunting task, particularly for less proficient writers.

So, given these contingencies in writing, it is necessary to develop a curriculum that is based on reading comprehension of source material. Learners should read scholarly articles and should be able to comprehend source content during the first year of the course.

Learners should be evaluated on vocabulary, and knowing and understanding the keywords that they see in the articles that they read. They need to demonstrate adequate comprehension of these keywords and should build domain knowledge about the topics that they are researching.

Learners also need to learn the documentation protocol that they are expected to use in their undergraduate studies. In the case of our learners, they need to be well versed in the American Psychological Association (APA) documentation protocol, and they should be well versed in writing references and in knowing how to thoroughly and accurately document references for their sources.

While learners may have a learning curve in terms of knowing how to document sources early on to avoid plagiarism, instructors should place the onus on the learner to have learned these skills by the beginning of the second year of our program. This responsibility has to be shifted to the learner in the curriculum.

What's more, writing an adequate thesis statement is directly connected to a student's domain knowledge about a topic. Therefore, learner's need to be well read in English, and particularly well read on the topic which they are writing about.

So, instructors should also make clear to learners that reading and writing skills are co-joined. It is hoped that, by internalizing objectives of the writing process and the basic, fundamental skills needed to research any topic in L2, learners will succeed in producing logical and well grounded evidence for their arguments. Learners who are able to internalize these skills will succeed in their independent research writing tasks, notwithstanding their proficiency levels. (Asencion-Delaney, 2008)

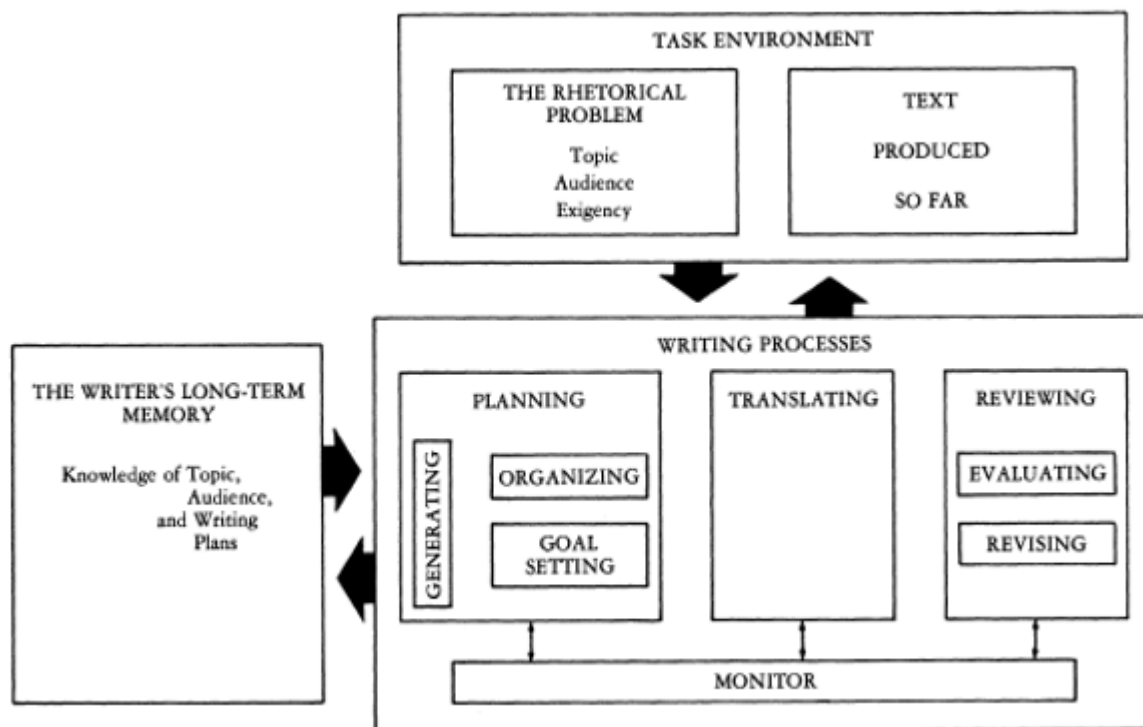
References:

- Asencion, Y. (2008). Investigating the reading-to-write construct. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, (7), 140 – 150. doi:10.1016/j.jeap.2008.04.001
- Connor, U. (1996). *Contrastive rhetoric: Cross-cultural aspects of second language writing*. Cambridge, United Kingdom: Cambridge University Press.
- Flower, L. & Hayes, J.R.. (1981, December). A cognitive process theory of writing. *College Composition and Communication*, 32(4), 365 – 387.
- Flower, L.S. (1987). The Role of Task Representation in Reading-to-Write. In L. Flower, J. Ackerman, M. Kantz., K. McCormick, W. Peck, & V. Stein (Eds.), *Reading to write: A cognitive and social process*, (pp. 1 – 41.. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Gousseva, J. (December, 1998). Literacy development through peer reviews in a freshman composition classroom. *The Internet TESL Journal*. 4 (12). Retrieved from <http://iteslj.org/Articles/Gousseva-Literacy.html>
- Hacker, D., & Sommers, N. (2011) *Rules for writers*. (7th ed.) Boston, MA. Bedford/St. Martin's
- Hacker, D., & Sommers, N. (2016) . *Rules for writers*. (8th. ed.) Boston, MA: Bedford/St. Martin's.
- Hinds, J. (1987). Reader versus writer responsibility: A new typology. In U. Connor & R.B. Kaplan (Eds.), *Writing across languages: Analysis of L2 text*. (pp. 141 – 152). Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- Jones, J.R. (2010). Fort Hays State University BBA Program Evaluation. Program evaluation, (Unpublished or master's thesis.) Shenandoah University. Winchester, VA.
- Kaplan, R.B. (1966). Cultural thought patterns in intercultural education. *Language Learning*, (2), 1-20.
- Lo, Y.F. (2011). An analysis of effective and less effective EFL writers' processes and products for a reading-to-write task. *Electronic Journal of Foreign Language Teaching*. 8(2), 154 – 169. Retrieved from <http://e-flt.nus.edu.sg>
- Plakans, L. (2008). Comparing composing processes in writing-only and reading-to-write test tasks. *Assessing Writing*, (13), 111 – 129. doi:10.1016/j.asw.2008.07.001
- Plakans, L. (2009, December). The role of reading strategies in integrated L2 writing tasks. *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*,8(4), 252 – 266. doi:10.1016/j.jeap.2009.05.001
- Silva, T. (1993, Winter). Toward an understanding of the distinct nature of L2 writing: The ESL research and its implications. *TESOL Quarterly*, 27 (4), 657 – 677. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3587400>
- Wang, W.Y. & Wen, Q.F. (2002). L1 use in the L2 composing process: An exploratory study of 16 Chinese EFL writers. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, (11), 225 – 246. Retrieved from <https://www.journals.elsevier.com/journal-of-second-language-writing>
- Xing, M., Wang, J., & Spencer, K. (2008, June). Raising students' Awareness of cross- cultural Contrastive rhetoric in English writing via an e-Learning course. *Language Learning and Technology*. 12 (2). 71 – 93. Retrieved from <https://www.lltjournal.org/>
- Zhang, L.J. & Wu, A.J. (2009, April). Chinese senior high school EFL students' metacognitive awareness and reading - strategy use. *Reading in a Foreign Language*, 21 (1), 37 – 59. Retrieved from <https://nflrc.hawaii.edu/rfl/>

About the author:

Randy Jones is an English Composition Instructor for Fort Hays State University at Shenyang Normal University--College of International Business. Randy Jones has been an EAP instructor and an English writing instructor in China for 17 years. He also taught academic English at King Saud University Preparatory School in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, from 2013 until 2014. He has an interest in learner metacognition, particularly as it relates to the writing process. He also is interested in applying appropriate techniques that help hasten critical thinking among L2 writers of varying language proficiency levels.

Appendix A:



The Writing Model, Flower and Hayes, 1981, p. 370.

Appendix B

Exercise 62-1: Please read the following passages. Then, look at in-text citations # 1 – 10. Identify if the in-text citations are cited correctly or not. If they are, write “OK” next to the number. If they are plagiarized, write “plagiarized” next to the answer.

In everyday situations, behavior is determined by the combination of internal knowledge and external information and constraints. People routinely capitalize on this fact. They can minimize the amount of material they must learn or the completeness, precision, accuracy, or depth of the learning. People can deliberately organize the environment to support their behavior. Some people with brain damage can function so well that even their co-workers may not be aware of their handicap. Nonreaders have been known to fool others, even in situations where their job presumably requires reading skills. They know what is expected of them, follow the behavior of their co-workers, and set up situations so that they do not need to read or so that their co-workers do the reading for them.

From Norman, D.A. (1988). *The psychology of everyday things*. New York, N: Basic Books. [The source is from page 55].

1. According to Norman (1988) in everyday situations, behavior is determined by the combination of internal knowledge and external information and constraints (p. 55). 2. Norman has observed that “behavior is determined by the combination of internal knowledge and external information and constraints “ (p. 55). 3. Norman (1988) has pointed out that people routinely minimize the amount of material they have to learn or they minimize the completeness, precision, accuracy, or depth of the learning (p. 55) . 4. Norman (1988) has pointed out that people try to reduce the amount of work they have to do to learn new information. To expend less effort, they may learn as little as they need to do the task at hand or absorb information incompletely or imprecisely (p. 55). 5. “People can deliberately organize the environment to support their behavior,” noted Norman (1988). “Some people with brain damage can function so well that even their co-workers may not be aware of their handicap” (p. 55) 6. At work, people can organize the environment to support the way they behave, according to Norman (1988). People with brain damage sometimes function so well that co-workers may not know of their handicap, and people who cannot read have been known to fool others even when their job apparently requires reading skills (p. 5). 7. According to Norman (1988), some workers who are brain-damaged or illiterate nevertheless manage to perform tasks well enough to keep their co-workers from knowing about their disabilities (p. 55). 8. Norman (1988) explained that some people who are brain-damaged or illiterate still manage to perform tasks well enough to keep their co-workers from knowing about their disabilities (p. 55) 9. Some people with brain damage can function so well that even their co-workers may not be aware of their handicap, and nonreaders have been known to fool others, even in situations where their job presumably requires reading skills (Norman, 1988, p. 55). 10. People who can’t read have been known to dupe co-workers, noted Norman (1988), even when their job supposedly requires reading skills (p. 55). (Adapted from Hacker and Sommers, (2011), 7th. Ed., p. 55.)

Appendix C

Name of writer: _____

Name of reviewer: _____

English Composition 102, Section VH__
May___, 2019
Research Paper
Peer Review Sheet

Date:

1st Draft,

Peer review sheet

Directions: Use your critical thinking skills and your understanding of English writing and answer following questions AS FULLY AS POSSIBLE. The purpose of this assignment is to ensure that a) you understand the purpose of the research paper, and b) to assess how well your classmates have met the writing task requirements. Thus, you are going to apply your understanding of the writing assignment in evaluating your peers' essays.

You will work in groups of three students. If necessary, some groups will be organized in four students in order to meet the total number of students in your classroom.

1st task: Read through the research paper once, and then answer the questions beneath. Make comments on the writer's research paper as well. Do not focus on grammar during this task!! Rather, focus on answering the questions that are listed underneath.

Introduction:

1) Does the writer have an effective method of getting the reader's attention in the introduction to his/her research paper? Circle the answer (Yes/No). Explain why he/she does/does not have an effective introduction method.

2) Does the writer present a research question that is clearly written, and that is also narrow, effective, and grounded? [Rules for writers, 53a, pp. 422, 423] Circle the answer (Yes/ No). If the writer does not have a research question that meets this criterion, what kinds of suggestions would you give him/her in order to improve his/her research question?

3) Hypothesis: a) Does the writer present a thesis statement that is clearly written, and that provides an answer to the research question? b) Does he/she express a clearly stated opinion about his topic that represents the main idea of his/her hypothesis? (answer a):

a): _____

b): _____

Research Paper discussion:

1) Organization: Does the writer present topic sentences that present the main ideas of his/her body paragraphs, and that directly support his thesis statement?

2) When the writer uses support from his sources, does he/she follow APA rules in citing quotations, summaries, or paraphrases of ideas from the authors of the articles that he cited? [Rules, 62a, "Cite quotations", pp. 540, 541; Rules, 62b, "Enclose borrowed language", pp. 540, 541; Rules, 62c, "Put summaries and paraphrases in your own words", pp. 542, 543.

3) _____

a) Does the writer have in-text citations from at least six different sources? Circle the answer (Yes/ No). b) Does the writer have in-text citations from at least five scholarly sources? ["Determining if a source is scholarly", p. 441, Rules for writers] Circle the answer (Yes/ No).

c) Does the writer have in-text citations from at least one substantive source? [English language newspapers, magazines, or popular journals.] Circle the answer (Yes/ No).

4) Does the writer avoid plagiarism by accurately identifying the authors of ideas learned in their texts, and also by recording the year of publication of his/her notes, according to APA rules? [63b-Use signal phrases to integrate sources", Rules for writers, p. 546] Circle the answer (Yes/ No). If you see a problem with your classmates, what suggestions would you give for him/her to improve their notes?

5) _____

Organization: Does the writer provide clear examples from his/her source articles, and also provides logical support and examples from day-to-day life, to support his thesis? _____

6) _____

Does he/she attempt to present antithetical statements, evidence, or facts opposed to his/her thesis, and does he/she attempt to rebut those statements?

7) Does the writer use transition words to connect ideas between and within the paragraphs, in order to make the essay easier to read and to follow? Circle the answer (Yes/ No).

Conclusion:

1) Does the writer explain what were some of the main ideas that he/she learned by researching his or her topic, and by attempting to answer his/her research question?

_____ 2) Does the writer produce inferences, or conclusions about the topic, that he/she gathered by researching the topic of interest?

References:

1) Are the references thoroughly and accurately cited? Does the writer include all of the necessary citation information for his/her references, or is key information missing?

_____ 2) Are references organized in alphabetical order according to the author's surname? Circle the answer (Yes/ No).

General comments: Please comment on the overall quality of this research paper. If there are revisions that the learner needs to make for the final draft of his/her research paper, please write those here. (4 – 5 sentences): Write these in an A4 sheet of paper. Attach the A4 sheet of paper to your partner's peer review sheet!!