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editor@asian-efl-journal.com

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Foreword

This special issue, *Literacy Development for Primary and Secondary English Language Learners Across the Greater China Region*, is a timely response to scholars' and practitioners' interests in English literacy development for L1-Chinese primary and secondary learners across the Greater China region. Along with the wide acceptance of the English language, education policies in the region have further increased learners' exposure to English through compulsory lessons, particularly at the primary and secondary levels. Accordingly, the introduction of literacy instruction is happening at an ever increasingly earlier age, resulting in ELT researchers and practitioners seeking routes to develop literacy for primary and secondary learners across the region. The articles and book reviews for this issue are balanced in terms of educational context with half focused on primary education and half focused on secondary education with contributions from scholars in mainland China, Hong Kong SAR, Macau SAR, and Taiwan.

The first three articles focused on primary education contexts. In the first article, *Can Raising Phonological Awareness Enhance the English Reading Comprehension of Taiwanese Primary School-aged Children?*, Ching-Wen (Felicia) Wang investigated the effect of a five-week phonological skills training program on the reading comprehension of first and second grade EFL learners in Taiwan. The results of her study found that explicit teaching of phonological awareness through the completion of phonological awareness skill exercises and the teaching of phonics rules positively affected the learners' overall phonological performance. Furthermore, she found the phonological awareness skills training facilitated the learners' English reading comprehension. In the second article, *Application of a Visual Organizer to Improve English Writing in a Taiwanese Elementary School*, Fang-Chi Chang, Shu-I Chang, and Hsiu-Fen Hsu reported on a portion of a long-term writing instruction program carried out with fourth graders in Taiwan. Recognizing a "teachable moment," they introduced a visual organizer for the students to use when creating picture books. This pioneer study showed that use of the graphic organizer resulted in a positive change: students that had previously produced isolated or fragmented sentences were able to create picture books that contained coherent paragraphs. In the third and last article that focused on a primary education context, *Formative Assessment in Primary English Writing Classes: A Case Study from Hong Kong*, Qin Xie and Yuqi Lei investigated three teachers' (novice, experienced, veteran) instructional, assessment, and feedback practices. While the teachers conducted a variety of activities to prepare students for writing in English and to clarify writing assignment criteria, this was often at the expense of time that could have been allocated for working with learners while they were writing. The teachers adopted a comprehensive error correction approach and only

the experienced teacher provided students an opportunity to revise their writing. These and other findings were used to create a checklist to assist EFL writing teachers with the integration of instructional and formative assessment strategies into their writing lessons.

The last three articles focused on secondary education contexts. In the fourth article, *Making New Books in Rural Middle Schools in China: A Preliminary Exploration of Local Realities and Community-oriented Literacy*, Shizhou Yang and Meixin Nong report a collaborative action research aimed at improving students' English writing through a community-oriented literacy project whose teaching implications were drawn from students' reflections and writing samples as well as interviews with the writing teacher. The program was evaluated through a lens of criticality by discussing how identity-forming social practice resulted in students' improved writing performance. In the fourth article, *Reader Stances and Writer Responses in L2 Peer Review: A Study of L2 Writing Literacy among Hong Kong Secondary School Students*, Amy Kong and Gavin Bui explored the potentials of peer review by analyzing the interactions between students when they discussed their English writing. Using a combination of stimulated recalls and interviews, they found the students took on the role of advisers during the peer review sessions. While some adverse effects of being too advisory can somewhat be avoided through peer review training, individual preferences may be one of the leading reasons for particular scaffolds to be applied by young L2 writers when discussing a peer's writing. In the sixth and last article that reported on research from a secondary context, *Effects of Extensive Reading on Taiwanese 11th Graders' Motivation and Grammatical Competence: A Preliminary Study*, Ying-Chun Shih reports on the results of integrating extensive reading into an English grammar class. Not only did the students that completed extensive reading outside the classroom outperform equivalent peers that did not read, but the extensive readers' motivation for both reading in English and learning English grammar increased.

We also offer to *Asian EFL Journal* readers two book reviews that cover relevant primary and secondary English literacy issues. In the first review, Jingjing Ma discusses Icy Lee's (2017) *Classroom Writing Assessment and Feedback in L2 School Contexts* (Springer). Jingjing Ma clearly outlines why Lee (2017) is a pivotal read for both L2 writing practitioners as well as researchers. In the second review, Sylvia Liu and Barry Lee Reynolds discuss Janice Bland's (2015) *Teaching English to Young Learners: Critical Issues in Language Teaching with 3-12 Year Olds* (Bloomsbury Publishing plc). Sylvia Liu and Barry Lee Reynolds provide a succinct summary of this edited volume's content while also offering up a number of critical comments. They suggest this book as a must-read for researchers and teachers looking to expand their knowledge of young learner language education.

This special issue would not have been possible without the support of a number of key individuals. Firstly, we must voice our appreciation to Paul Robertson's endorsement of the topic for the special issue and John Adamson's patience in answering questions and guiding us along the way. In addition, we thank the members of the *Asian EFL Journal* editorial board that took on the additional article review work: Leo H. Aberion, Kenan Dikilitaş, Habsah Hussin, Afia Kanwal, Hao Nguyen, Kyungsook Paik, Joshua M. Paiz, Mohammad Amini Parsani, Müfit Şenel, Watjana Suriyatham, Suthathip Thirakunkovit, Manfred Wu, and Yansyah. We also appreciate the feedback provided by Mabel Victoria on the book reviews and Jun Scott Chen Hsieh for double checking our formatting of the issue. We are sure that readers of the journal will find the contents as inspirational as we did when editing them.

Barry Lee Reynolds, University of Macau

(Mark) Feng Teng, Hong Kong Baptist University

Production and Guest Editors of the *Asian EFL Journal* September 2019 Special Edition

Can Raising Phonological Awareness Enhance the English Reading Comprehension of Taiwanese Primary School-aged Children?

Ching-Wen (Felicia) Wang*
Chaoyang University of Technology
National Taiwan Normal University

Bioprofile:

Ching-Wen (Felicia) Wang is currently a lecturer in English in the Foreign Language Teaching Group of the Language Center at Chaoyang University of Technology. Her research interests include phonological awareness and the use of new technology in foreign language teaching. She is also completing her PhD in teaching Chinese as a second language in the Department of Chinese as a Second Language at the National Taiwan Normal University. **Email:** fisemw@gmail.com

Abstract

Language learning research has recognized phonological awareness as an initiating step in reading comprehension ability. This study measures the potential effect of phonological awareness skills training on reading comprehension after a short-term learning program in phonics. This learning program lasted 5 weeks, with a total of 11 class periods consisting of metalinguistic exercises. The participants were Taiwanese primary school EFL learners with limited letter-sound knowledge. Of the 21 recruited students, 10 formed a control group while the remaining 11 were in the experimental group. The control group received training only in the phonics rules. Whereas, the experimental group also participated in phonological awareness skill exercises simultaneously and in concord with the rules of phonics. Before and after the period of

*corresponding author

Chaoyang University of Technology, Language Center,
41349 Jifeng East Road, Wufeng District, Taichung City
168, Taiwan
National Taiwan Normal University, Department of Chinese
as a Second Language, 162, Section 1, Heping E. Rd.,
Taipei City 106, Taiwan

instruction, the children completed two pretests and two posttests, one on their phonological awareness skills

and the other on their reading comprehension. Using the Mann-Whitney U test, analysis of the gain scores on these tests indicated that reading comprehension gain scores were greater for the experimental group than for the control group, which suggests that the phonological awareness skills may enhance learners' reading comprehension if the instruction period is long enough. In addition, the phonological awareness skills training may have activated the learners' lexical restructuring, thereby facilitating the development of their reading comprehension abilities.

Keywords: phonological awareness, instruction, explicit teaching, reading comprehension

Introduction

Most alphabetic languages represent sounds by using written forms that include governing rules. The word "orthography" refers to a system of grapheme-phoneme correspondences that enable alphabetic languages to use spelling-to-sound techniques, wherein the writing conventions of a language represent its pronunciations as a spoken language. English falls squarely into this category of orthographic languages. However, its phonemic rules are relatively more complicated than other such languages. For instance, the diagraph "gh" in the word "laugh" is pronounced as "f," but when placed at the start of a word, such as in "ghost", that diagraph changes to a hard "g," as in "go."

The multiple ways to spell the alphabetic phonemes in English may have been the source of the difficulties challenging the second language (L2) learners in this study. Numerous other studies (Bishop, 2003; Fälth, Gustafson, & Svensson, 2017; Joseph K. Torgesen, Wagner, Rashotte, & Herron, 2003) similarly assert that a strong awareness of how spoken language works provides a better chance for literacy achievement, especially in reading.

Human beings read for information and to gain knowledge. People utilize different techniques to enhance their reading comprehension. In addition to reading speed, enhancing the ability to recognize words adds to the successful development of reading comprehension. Reading words involves decoding their sounds by mapping phonemes onto appropriate letters and letter combinations (Jenkins & O'Connor, 2002). Some scholars (Fuchs, Fuchs, Hosp, & Jenkins, 2001; Khor, Low, & Lee, 2014; Torgesen &

Hudson, 2006) have researched the relationship between oral reading rate and reading comprehension, and discovered strong correlations, especially and specifically when the subjects were at the early stages of learning to read. The basic sub-skills of oral reading fluency include accuracy, speed, and prosody. Whereas, reading accuracy also involves recognizing the phonological representations of the written words.

In a broad sense, the concept of phonological awareness encompasses the cognizance of speech sounds on three levels—syllables, onsets and rhymes, and phonemes—making it an important predictor of reading fluency and reading skills development (Torgesen & Hudson, 2006). Learners develop phonological awareness by listening to sounds (phonemes). Phonological research usually measures reading performance according to the learner's phonemic awareness and rapid automatic naming, which are crucial to demonstrating word recognition. Rapid automatic naming refers to the ability to associate orthography with the phonological structure of words. Having deficiencies in both phonological awareness and rapid automatic naming may lead to reading difficulties (Jenkins & O'Connor, 2002) or suggest a possible reading disability (Vellutino, 1981).

Research shows explicit teaching of phonological awareness enhances learners' spelling, phonological working memory, rhyming, word and syllable manipulation, phoneme segmentation and reading acquisition (Karbalaee & Amoli, 2011; Furnes & Samuelsson, 2011; Thompson & Matt, 2005; Lundberg, Frost, & Petersen, 1988; Tangel & Blachman, 1992). Although much of the research about the relationship between phonological awareness and reading comprehension focuses on reading disabilities among native speakers, some of those studies show significant similarities to studies about the phonological training and reading comprehension instruction of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners, particularly in orthographic language countries (Furnes & Samuelsson, 2011) and Asia (Keung & Ho, 2008; Yeong & Liow, 2012; Zhao, Joshi, Dixon, & Chen, 2017).

Since Mandarin Chinese characters are morphemes, it is a morphosyllabic rather than an alphabetic language. However, when teaching Mandarin Chinese to school children in China, teachers Romanize the characters by using the alphabetic system of Hànyǔ Pīnyīn. Whereas, in Taiwan children learn Mandarin Chinese pronunciation by using the official Taiwanese transliteration system of Zhùyīn Fúhào, which derives

from the logographic or ideographic traits of ancient Chinese characters. Taiwanese children use the transliteration system of Zhùyīn Fúhào to learn Mandarin Chinese pronunciation. The learning process normally takes 10 weeks of study. Zhùyīn Fúhào derives from ancient Chinese characters and resembles Mandarin Chinese. It has no visual resemblance to the English alphabet. Students in China use Pīnyīn, which closely resembles the English alphabet. Like the International Phonetic Alphabet, Zhùyīn Fúhào serves no functional purpose in communication. However, because its characters resemble written language, they amount to a linguistic cognitive load for learners. Thus, young Taiwanese EFL students, also learning to master Zhùyīn Fúhào and traditional Chinese characters, may benefit from a different learning approach to English. In addition, when first confronting the English alphabet, Taiwanese students will respond differently from their counterparts in China because Zhùyīn Fúhào—unlike Pīnyīn—does not resemble English at all. Having no learning exposure to Pīnyīn, Taiwanese children face the unfamiliar challenge of developing a phonological awareness of the Romanized alphabet of English, not to mention the task of mapping the sounds of English onto the letters of the alphabet. This study investigates whether raising the sensitivity young Taiwanese EFL learners' phonological awareness of alphabetic English facilitates their beginner English reading comprehension performance.

Phonological Processing

Discussions of phonological processing usually focus on three aspects, including: 1. phonological awareness, 2. phonological recoding in lexical access, and 3. phonetic recoding in the working memory. Wagner and Torgesen (1987) discovered the casual role these three components play in learning to read (p. 192).

This model of phonological processing suggests that awareness is the lowest phonemic level of a language learning. An absence or low level of awareness of this level will block the learner's accessibility to higher processing, thereby hindering reading comprehension. Therefore, phonological awareness is a crucial component of language learning that precedes the development of reading comprehension.

Phonological awareness begins with listening to sounds and the neural process of cognitively mapping their correspondent as alphabetic symbols, which also involves the recognition of written text. These metalinguistic abilities facilitate the manipulation

of the sound segments that inhere within a language. Skilled readers and writers are usually profoundly adept at recognizing and manipulating sound segments.

The earliest stage of phonological awareness begins with a word or a syllable. For example, young learners can clap out the syllables of a word. Once learners are aware of spellings, they can develop a phonemic awareness of the internal structure of a word, while recognizing its rhyme or onset. All of these skills fall within the scope of phonological awareness (Tangel & Blachman, 1992; Zhao et al., 2017).

Yeong and Liow (2012) studied the development of phonological awareness among 70 ethnic Chinese kindergarten EFL learners in Singapore. They conducted several tests to measure the learners' receptive vocabulary, word reading abilities, and syllable and phoneme awareness. The results indicate that explicit teaching enhances phonological awareness and reading ability. The similarity of sounds in L1 and L2 reflected the learners' phonological decoding abilities.

Interestingly, Yeong and Liow's study also confirms that phonological awareness develops from larger units to smaller ones, such as from words to syllables to phonemes, rather than the other way around. This concept underscores Shapiro's (2000) method of teaching American English pronunciation, which implies that phonological awareness is "the body and soul of speech" (p. xvii). As such, pronunciation instruction becomes relevant, indeed, crucial to every level of English language learning.

Scholarly research describes various other aspects of phonological awareness, such as the mental operations that convert acoustic signals into a sequence of phonemes (Tunmer, 1997), or the belief that phonological awareness skill forms the foundation of reading-related abilities. Yang, Yang, and Kang (2014) looked into phonological awareness from a cognitive perspective, intending to explore the relationship between phonological awareness and executive attention among bilingual learners. To ascertain how a central executive mechanism fosters phonological processing, they gave tests of phonological awareness and executive attention to 74 ethnic Chinese kindergarteners in Singapore who were in the process of learning to read. The results suggest that Chinese-English bilingual learners are likely to benefit from executive attention as they holistically process phonological awareness. The cross-linguistic transfer of phonological awareness skill contributes to executive attention, especially when

processing onset and rhyme chunks. Thus, bilingual learners seem to benefit from executive attention when reading.

Phonological recoding refers to applying an understanding of written symbols into a sound-based representational system. Once learners understand the relationships between sounds and letters, they can use phonics to apply alphabetic principles to the words they read in a text. For example, if a learner recognizes that the letters for "it" make the key sound in the word "bit," then the learner will be able to recode other similar words, such as "pit," "lit," "sit," and "hit." During this recoding process, learners analytically decode and identify the correspondence of sounds and the letters. When children learn to read, they usually begin with these letter-sound relationships, which comprise phonics. Teachers also use phonics to train remedial learners coping with phonological deficits (Castles, Coltheart, Wilson, Valpied, & Wedgwood, 2009; McArthur et al., 2012).

Phonological awareness guides learners toward reading at an early stage, which corresponds to other abilities, including the development of their working memories. Phonological processing revolves around this latter metalinguistic mechanism. Phonetic recoding reprocesses written symbols into a sound-based representational system in the working memory, which also maintains the efficiency of the system. However, the temporary memory decays within two seconds if a learner does not retrieve or refresh the information stored there. Baddeley (2003) explains that the working memory model involves the temporary storage of information necessary for other cognitive activities and information processing. The model consists of the central executive system and the two sub-systems, the phonological loop and visual-spatial sketchpad, that work cooperatively to enhance memory storage. The phonological loop involves a subvocal rehearsal system that maintains information and enables the registering of visual information. The visual-spatial sketchpad stores information for constructing visual images and creating mental maps. Showing a subject a sequence of letters for immediate recall triggers the subvocal rehearsal system that will then base the retention of those letters on their phonological characteristics. The working memory undergoes a similar operation when introducing new words to learners. Thus, the grapheme-phoneme correspondence system of English results in learners being able to store new words according to the phonological and visual representations of words in

the working memory system. Once the retrieval of a word previously learned takes place, it gradually enters the long-term memory (Gupta & Tisdale, 2009). The interplay between the introduction and reintroduction of new words, their subvocal rehearsal, temporary storage in the working memory, subsequent retrieval, and entrance into the long-term memory represents a hermeneutic theory of language learning, at least on the levels of vocabulary building and reading comprehension.

Phonological Awareness and Reading

Research studies assert that phonological awareness is crucial for developing early literacy (Hismanoglu, 2012; Zhao et al., 2017). Poor phonological awareness accounts for reading difficulties and may exacerbate the learning disabilities caused by dyslexia (Jenkins & O'Connor, 2002). On the other hand, heightened phonological awareness helps predict learners' reading performances (Yeong & Liow, 2012).

Literacy research widely discusses the connection between phonological awareness and reading comprehension, which at first seems mysterious but eventually becomes more obvious. Reading lies in the relationship between the oral system of a language and its written form. Thus, Perfetti (2003) suggests that when early reading practice includes oral reading, children grasp meanings very well. Perfetti points out a trinal classification for writing systems: alphabetic (Korean), syllabic (Japanese) and logographic/morphosyllabic (Chinese). Alphabetic orthography diminishes reading difficulty for those EFL learners (p. 10) whose L1 languages are similarly alphabetic, such as French or Spanish. On the other hand, those EFL learners coming from another alphabet, such as Arabic, will have more difficulty. Likewise, when an EFL learner's L1 uses an altogether different writing systems, such as Chinese, in which each graph or character corresponds to a syllable and thus a specific morpheme or spoken unit of language, that compounds the difficulty. However, in both cases, the EFL learners need to acquire the smallest printed units of the language in their initial reading training.

Lee, Hung, and Tzeng (2006) give a more detailed explanation of Perfetti's suggestion. They explain that phonological awareness influences reading first through the explicitness of phonological representation and second by mapping the relation between phonology and orthography. Decomposing continuous speech signals into segments represent them as finite elements in the core processing of the first mechanism

of phonological awareness. Other tasks, such as phonemic deletion (initial phoneme, second phoneme, etc.), rhyme detection, phonemic segmentation and synthesis, and rhyme production are operational definitions associated with speech perception. People with speech impediments are inclined to fail during some or all of these tasks and have difficulties mapping the relationship between orthography and phonology (p. 582).

Lee, et al. (2006) further argue that phonological segments are not necessary phonemes. They agree with Perfetti's statement that segments should refer to functional units, which are relevant to the writing system of a spoken language. Written codes explicitly represent phonological information. After learners are able to recognize and manipulate the segments, a second mechanism starts to function that affects the process of self-teaching, which is the reason that phonological awareness plays such a crucial role in reading comprehension (p. 584). The Lee team of researchers also argue that phonological processing plays a crucial role when it comes to facilitating spoken word systems, noting that Chinese language acquisition and developing the skill of reading Chinese differ considerably from acquiring and reading an alphabetic writing system.

Since phonological awareness training engages learning both the large units (such as syllables) and the smallest units (phonemes) of a language, investigating how native Chinese learners of English process their phonological awareness skills becomes more interesting and essential to EFL teaching.

Methodology

Research design

This quasi-experimental study used a pre-post experimental instruction design involving two groups: 10 learners in a control group received regular phonics instruction, while 11 learners in an experimental group received integrated phonics instruction and phonological awareness skills training. The quasi-experimental design aimed to examine the effects of phonological training together with articulation training on phonological awareness and reading skills on primary school-aged children. The research sought to explore two intersecting questions about phonological awareness:

1. Can explicitly teaching phonological awareness positively affect young EFL learners' overall phonological performance?

2. Does phonological awareness skills training facilitate young EFL learners' reading comprehension?

Participants

The participants of the study were 21 primary-school-aged learners (8 male, 13 female), who enrolled in a short-term phonics learning program. The aim was to recruit primary school learners who had finished learning the alphabet and the concomitant pronunciation of each letter. Learners from 7 primary schools in Taichung city, Taiwan, showed interest in learning English pronunciation. The students' parents read about the purpose of the study and each signed a consent form, which completed the registration procedure. The learners took two pretests, one assessed their phonological awareness skill and the other their reading comprehension ability. The results of these pretests determined which students should be in which of the two groups. The average age of the experimental group ($n = 11$; 5 male, 6 female) was 7.5 years old. The average age of the control group ($n = 10$; 3 male, 7 female) was 7.8 years old.

Instruments

The researcher used two instruments to gather the data for this experimental study. The first was adapted from the Sutherland Phonological Awareness Test-Revised (SPAT-R), designed by Roslyn Neilson (1995). The original test was individually-administered to diagnose an overview of the phonological awareness skill involved in early literacy development. It was designed for first-to-fourth year primary school students but could be used for older children. A Cronbach's Alpha coefficient of internal consistency yielded a reliability estimate of .96 for the entire test, while the Guttman Split-half reliability coefficient was .94 for the 11 auditory subtests (44 items) (Neilson, 1998). The study reexamined the reliability for the entire test in an EFL setting and received a Cronbach's Alpha coefficient internal consistency of .91, while the Guttman Split-half reliability coefficient was .87. The internal consistency estimates indicated that the total SPAT-R scale and subset of auditory tests performed as well as the best of the tests included in Yopp's (1988) battery.

Since the original SPAT-R was designed for native English speakers, a subtest was adjusted to check the L2 participants' auditory shadowing ability. The 13-subtest phonological awareness skill test contained 6 items, each meant to detect the

participants' abilities before and after the instruction. The approximate time allotted to administer each test was approximately 20 minutes each for most of the L2 learner participants in this case. The subtests included syllable counting, rhyme detection, rhyme production, identification of onset, identification of final phoneme, segmentation 1 (single syllable), blending (VC. CV. CVC), deletion of initial phoneme, segmentation 2 (single syllable with consonant blends), CC blends: delete first phoneme, CC blends: delete second phoneme, non-word reading, and shadowing and repeating. A comparison of the total scores of the pre- and post- tests showed the degree of progress after the phonics instruction.

A second instrument consisted of reading tests, which the participants also took before and after the period of instruction. Two reading passages with 14 questions (7 English, 7 Chinese) assessed the learners' understanding of each passage's contents after they had read it, either silently or out loud. These data collection sessions were completed in approximately 10 minutes by most of the participants after they had completed the SPAT-R. Both reading passages were tested for their readability and given separately as pre- and post- tests.

Rudolf Flesch and J. Peter Kincaid developed the Flesch-Kincaid measurement of readability (Kincaid, Fishburne, Rogers, & Chissom, 1975), widely-used in the United States to determine the reading ease and grade levels of texts. In this study, both reading passages had an average grade level of about 2, which means 7-8-year-old children should easily understand them. The Flesch-Kincaid reading ease indexes of the pretest and the posttest were at preferable scores, 101.3 and 103.3, repeatedly. The percent of complex words amounted to 1.87% and 1.82%.

Seven English multiple-choice questions were distributed first, followed by the same questions translated into Chinese to confirm the participants' comprehension of each passage. The questions were presented on a free online quiz platform with immediate feedback. Each question offered 4 choices as answers. Three choices offered single words to fill in a blank in the question, while the remaining fourth choice was a question mark. For example, Question 1 in the posttest was, "She goes to the ____." The answer choices were A) monkey B) cage C) zoo D) ?. The Chinese version of the questions had the same answer choices as the English questions. All the questions in both of the tests were assessed and modified by two content experts experienced in the

field of language teaching for children. The test takers received audio-visual (sound and picture) feedback indicating whether their answers to the reading passage questions were correct or incorrect. The 14 questions for each passage were calculated as gain scores to check the participants' understanding of the content. The split-half reliability method was applied to examine samples of posttest questions, which were randomly split into two halves. The split-half reliability coefficient reached a fair significance for the tests ($r = .75$) (Cicchetti, 1994).

Instruction

The course of pronunciation instruction designed for this study lasted approximately 5 weeks and included 11 sessions, each being 1.5-hours long, 9 sessions for instruction, plus one session for the pretest and one for the posttest. The classes met on Wednesday evenings and Saturday mornings. The focus of the Wednesday evening class sessions was on increasing the participants' word knowledge. Therefore, the class instructional materials were short stories and poems from instructional picture books with additional vocabulary activities. Both groups met at the same time. Of the two co-teachers, one was a native English speaker and the other was Taiwanese (the researcher). Both teachers were professional English teachers with postgraduate degrees and a significant number of years of experience teaching children as well as adults. The Saturday class sessions focused on phonics rules, including consonant blends, digraphs and long vowel sounds. The two groups met separately on Saturdays for 1.5 hours each with the same Taiwanese English teacher. Both groups used the same tailor-made material booklet containing pictures for the words demonstrating the phonics rules. However, the control group received only the regular phonetics rules exercises. Whereas, the experimental group received both the phonological awareness skill practice exercises and the phonics rules exercises.

Procedure

Test administration: As previously indicated, this study included pretests and posttests of both phonological awareness skills and reading comprehension. The researcher administered all of the tests according to a carefully following planned set of the test instructions. On two different prearranged dates, the participants were all individually tested on two different occasions. The first test sessions took place at the beginning of

the short-term phonics learning program in early June 2018. The second test sessions took place at the end of the program in mid July 2018. Learners in both groups answered questions in the subtests of phonological awareness and then moved on to the reading passage for the pre- and post- tests. Learners were told not to stress if they were unable to pronounce any words. As their fingers moved along the sentences, the researcher marked the words that each participant could sound out correctly and observed how they attempted to pronounce the words. After reading the passages for the pretest and posttest, the learners proceeded to answer questions about the subject contents of each text. Learners were not given an award after the pretest, but were simply reminded which class they should attend after they receive their pretest result. However, after completing the short-term phonics learning program, all the learners were given a colorful paper notepad as a gift for participating in the research.

Pronunciation instruction: Since one intention of the short-term phonics learning program was to help the learners articulate the sounds of English letters—so as to enable them eventually to read words—the instruction focused on teaching the letter sounds, the knowledge basis for which was an analysis and synthesis of those sounds. The program was conducted mostly in Chinese, since the learners had not yet acquired enough knowledge of words or sentences to communicate in English. On the other hand, both groups of learners were highly motivated to participate in the learning activities, which included opportunities for them to collect award points recorded on individual stamp sheets. The five learners who earned the highest number of points received an additional gift at the end of the research program. Each student also received a set of alphabet cards for the phonemic practice activities held during the class sessions. However, only the experimental group participated in the additional phonological awareness skill practice exercises during their instructional sessions.

Control group: The participants in the control group reviewed the sounds previously taught before learning the phonics rules for new sounds. The students then learned the phonics rules for new vocabulary, using flashcards and trying to synthesize the phonemes and letter knowledge from the words they had previously learned. The teacher used individual letters and phonics rules to induce learners' pronunciation. After the learners' attempts, she provided the correct pronunciation. Learners also guessed at the meanings of the words by looking at the corresponding pictures. After

these activities, they heard some words that contained the new rules and used the alphabet cards to compose those words.

The material booklet also contained exercises for segmental identification. For example, learners would hear words with identical consonants but which differed because the vowels were in opposing positions. The learners needed to point to the words they heard.

Experimental group: The participants in the experimental group experienced the same process of learning phonics rules. In addition, after they were able to pronounce a new word on the flashcard, the researcher as teacher signaled them to pronounce the words while subtracting or replacing the onset letters, end letters, or some medial letters. Some exercises involved the learners' alphabet cards. Listening games trained the learners' attention and auditory skills. Learners made use of the group vocabulary cards to identify rhyming words or to rearrange a word sequence. During these listening games, the learners also discovered how to recognize the number syllables in a word.

Statistical analysis

To examine the research questions, a Mann-Whitney U test was conducted to determine whether a significant difference showed in the learners' phonological performance by explicit teaching and whether the phonological awareness skills training could facilitate reading comprehension. The study compared the gain scores on their phonological awareness and the reading comprehension pre- and posttests.

Results

The following discussion considers whether the phonological awareness skills training enhanced the phonological performance and reading comprehension abilities of the young EFL children participating in the study. It includes a report on the results of the data interpretation analysis. As previously indicated, this quasi-experimental study utilized two groups of primary students, one experimental group included the phonological awareness skills training and one control group did not include the phonological awareness skills training.

Can explicitly teaching phonological awareness positively affect young EFL learners' overall phonological performance?

To answer research question one, phonological awareness improvements between the pretest and posttest (the gain scores) were subjected to the Mann-Whitney U test, a non-parametric statistical technique, with the experimental group (treatment vs. control) as the independent variable. An examination of the findings in Table 1 reveals that the results of the Mann-Whitney U test for the students in both the control and experimental groups did not show any statistical difference ($Z = -0.74$; $p = .45 > .05$). The rank average of the pretest scores of the experimental group was 10.05, while the students in the control group had a pretest score rank average of 12.05. The close rank averages of the groups' pretest scores indicate that before the experimental application, the experimental and control groups had somewhat equal phonological awareness levels.

Table 1

Group differences on phonological awareness pretest score

Group	<i>n</i>	Mean Rank	Median	Mann-Whitney U Statistics	Z Test	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Control	10	12.05	28.50	44.50	-0.74	.45	-0.16
Experimental	11	10.05	23.00				

An examination of the findings in Table 2 shows that the results of the Mann-Whitney U test applied to the posttest phonological awareness skills training scores of the students in the experimental and control groups revealed no significant difference at the level of $p > .05$ ($Z = -0.53$; $p = .59 > .05$). The rank average of the posttest scores of the experimental group students was 11.68, while the students in the control group had a posttest score rank average of 10.25. The analyses show no significant differences between the rank averages of the groups' on either the pretest or the posttest scores.

Table 2

Group differences on phonological awareness posttest score

Group	<i>n</i>	Mean Rank	Median	Mann-Whitney U Statistics	Z Test	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Control	10	10.25	32.50	47.50	-0.53	.59	-0.11
Experimental	11	11.68	35.00				

An examination of the finding in Table 3 shows no significant difference ($U = 32$, $p = .10$, $r = .35$) between the pretest and posttest improvement scores of the students in

the control group ($Mdn = 8.70$; mean rank = 12.05) and the experimental group ($Mdn = 13.09$; mean rank = 10.05). The test for each variable separately revealed that the experimental group and control group did not differ significantly on phonological awareness. The p -value ($p = .10$) was not significant.

Table 3

Group differences on phonological awareness gain score

Group	n	Mean Rank	Median	Mann-Whitney U Statistics	Z Test	p	r
Control	10	8.70	5.5				
Experimental	11	13.09	11.0	32.00	-1.624	.10	-0.35

The overall results of phonological awareness skills training with primary school students do not express a significant difference between the experimental and the control groups. However, the statistical data show that explicitly teaching phonological awareness gradually influences students' phonological performance, suggesting that a stronger outcome may appear by extending the number of training sessions over a longer period of instruction. Even though the gain scores of phonological awareness did not show a positive outcome, the experimental group did increase by 9 points whereas the control group only improved 4.9 points in their total score of the posttest in this case. Thus, the results do indicate the experimental group was trending toward improvement on phonological awareness to a degree greater than the control group after receiving phonics instruction.

Does the phonological awareness skills training facilitate young EFL learners' reading comprehension?

The purpose of the second sub-question of the study was to examine whether phonological awareness skills training facilitates reading comprehension. The researcher conducted a second Mann-Whitney U test comparing the experimental group's gain scores (posttest *minus* pretest) with those of the reading comprehension group. An examination of the findings in Table 4 reveals that the Mann-Whitney U test, when applied to compare the average pretest scores for reading comprehension in both the control and experimental groups, did not show a statistical difference ($Z = -4.64$; $p = .64 > .05$). The rank average of the pretest scores of the control group students was 11.56, while the experimental group students had a pretest score rank average of 10.41.

The close rank average of the groups' pretest scores for reading comprehension indicate that the experimental and the control groups had largely equal comprehension levels of the reading articles before the period of instruction.

Table 4

Group differences on reading comprehension pretest score

Group	<i>n</i>	Mean Rank	Median	Mann-Whitney U Statistics	Z Test	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Control	10	11.56	36.00				
Experimental	11	10.41	36.00	48.50	-4.64	.64	-1.01

The findings in Table 5 show that the results of the Mann-Whitney U test, when applied to compare the posttest average scores for reading comprehension in both the control and experimental groups, revealed an insignificant difference ($Z = -1.52$; $p = .12 > .05$). The rank average of the posttest scores of the students in the control and the experimental group were 8.85 and 12.95 respectively. While no significant difference was found between the two groups' reading comprehension abilities for the pretest, an examination of the rank average of each group's posttest scores for reading comprehension demonstrates that the students in the experimental group had higher reading comprehension levels than those in the control group.

Table 5

Group differences on reading comprehension posttest score

Group	<i>n</i>	Mean Rank	Median	Mann-Whitney U Statistics	Z Test	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Control	10	8.85	46.00				
Experimental	11	12.95	57.00	33.50	-1.52	.12	-0.33

Descriptive statistics showed that the experimental group, which received the phonological awareness skills training, ($Mdn = 21.50$; mean rank = 13.86) scored higher on reading comprehension than the control group, which did not receive the phonological awareness skills training ($Mdn = 10.50$; mean rank = 7.85). As Table 6 shows, the Mann-Whitney U-value was statistically significant $U = 23.50$ ($Z = -2.23$), $p < .05$, with a large difference between the experimental group and the control group ($r = -.48$). The results indicate a significant improvement in reading comprehension for participants in the experimental condition, but no statistical improvement in the control condition. This interpretation of the results of the analyses suggests that the

phonological awareness skills training with the novice learners facilitated significant development of their reading comprehension ability.

Table 6

Group differences on reading comprehension gain score

Group	<i>n</i>	Mean Rank	Median	Mann-Whitney <i>U</i> Statistics	Z Test	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>
Control	10	7.85	10.50				
Experimental	11	13.86	21.50	23.50	-2.23	.025*	-.48

* $P < .05$

Overall, the results show that in this case the answer to the second question is affirmative, the phonological awareness skills training did have a positive impact on the primary school students' reading comprehension.

Discussion

The initial questions guiding this research asked whether explicitly teaching phonological awareness would positively affect young EFL learners' phonological performance. In this study, the experimental phonics learning group was introduced to phonological skill training. The intention of the explicit teaching of phonological awareness was to guide the learners to detect word sounds from the largest to the smallest unit of new words. Through recoding and decoding features of phonological awareness training, learners are able to map phonological representation orthographically (Lee et al., 2006). The researcher's hypothesis—based upon the investigation of previous research—was that the experimental group would display a significant positive outcome. However, the gain scores revealed no significant differences. Thus, the results of this study were inconsistent with previous studies (Li & Chen, 2016; Lundberg et al., 1988; Tangel & Blachman, 1992). Insufficient exposure to phonics instruction is one possible explanation for the inconsistency of this study's results with previous studies. Unlike other research, which conducted experiments of longer durations (Li & Chen, 2016; Tangel & Blachman, 1992), this study provided only four classes of 1.5-hours each in which phonics was incorporated with phonological awareness instruction.

Furthermore, the young EFL learners in this study did not have sufficient knowledge of the alphabet, not to mention the sound of each letter. Thus, before the

phonological awareness skills training, some effort went into reviewing the alphabet. During those lessons, the learners may have been processing phonological information, mapping sounds to letters. The learners needed to process the sounds from the L2, which included searching for similar sounds in their L1. It may take more effort for them to master the matching of letters and sounds. Zao et al., (2017), found that Chinese EFL learners' spelling relies more on morphological awareness than orthographic choice, whereas native English learners spell in opaque orthographies that directly access knowledge from memory storage. Thus, the character of the languages and the differences between the EFL and native English learners in their study partly contributed to the teachers' methodologies of instruction. The results also suggest that the choice of teaching approach in an EFL setting is an important factor. In this current study, on the other hand, the experimental teaching could provide the EFL teacher with opportunities to discover the students' deficiencies in learning not only a foreign orthographical language but also their native language. The action that underscores oral language is that interlocutors both produce and hear phonological sounds. Flege's (1995) Speech Learning Model shows the benefits similar sounds have on the learnability of L2 phonetic segments. Similar sounds occurring within different languages are easier to apprehend. Mandarin Chinese and English share some of the same and similar sounds, but their written forms are vastly different. When practicing phonological awareness skills, teachers are likely if unintentionally inducing the students' L1 phoneme representations, which may also draw the learners' attentions toward the target sounds throughout the training sessions. The drill may extend to the students' further decoding abilities, helping them to achieve their self-learning goals.

The goal of language learning is to achieve full control of the L2 by being able to use every language segment with ease. In order to achieve this goal, learners need strategies for self-learning. This study supports the notion that, as Lundberg et al. (1988) suggest, a) learners need to develop phonological awareness before reading training and that b) learners can develop phonological awareness separate from reading instruction.

The second research question considered whether phonological awareness skills training facilitates reading comprehension. According to the literature, when it comes to supporting reading achievement, the more phonological awareness skills training,

the better (Cárnio, Vosgrau, & Soares, 2017; Lundberg et al., 1988; Weiner, 1994). In cognitive psychology studies (Baddeley, 2003; McLeod, 2008; Baddeley, Hitch & Allen, 2009), information processing involves receiving a sequence of stimuli engaging input, storage, and output processes and responses. Sensory registers usually recode stimuli or information phonologically through the working memory and eventually into longterm memory. “Working memory consists of a limited capacity attentional system (the central executive) that interacts with temporary stores for different kinds of information (the phonological loop and the visuo-spatial sketchpad)” (Baddeley, Hitch, & Allen, 2009, p. 439). This study taught learners to decode using the alphabetic principle; thus, the phonological working memory may have its function activated by a subvocal rehearsal mechanism.

Although the phonological awareness skills training in the present experiment showed no significant effect on learners’ metalinguistic ability, the reading comprehension gain scores did show a significant outcome. One possible explanation for this difference in outcomes may be that the reading comprehension questions in Chinese helped the students’ understanding, enabling them to choose the correct English words for their answers. In this case, the habit of using L1 worked as a stepping stone into the L2. In addition, the teacher provided the students with auditory input in parallel with visual input (phonemes of words), which activates orthographic to phonological decoding (pronunciation of words) (Vallar & Papagno, 2002).

The combination of phoneme awareness with letter sound instruction demonstrates the connections of sound segments in words corresponding to their printed symbols (Tangel & Blachman, 1992). If a word does not correspond to a sound, it becomes either a meaningless symbol or even abstract imagery to a foreign language learner. The working memory model seems to explain best the significant reading results outcome in this study, characterizing it as learners mapping the symbols (visuospatial sketch pad) to the sounds (phonological loop). This mapping produces the recognition of word meanings. A learner may continuously circularize the mapping process while reading, thereby enabling phonological decoding to determine the learner's reading ability.

Phonological awareness skills start with syllable counting, which leads learners to recognize the word as a whole. However, using the standard approach, teachers are

more likely to begin with phonemes, then syllable combinations, and gradually whole words. By providing the whole word to begin with, the learners more easily learn to detect syllables in word sounds, and thereby, phonemes in the syllables. This approach also helps learners avoid getting lost while detecting or blending sounds. In another sense, agreeing with Yeong and Liow (2012), as EFL learners advance in their studies of the L2, they confront larger phonological units, which they must then hermeneutically learn to pronounce and recognize by rehearsing their smallest elements before circling back to using them in the larger more advanced context. Naturally, the more advanced the learner, the greater will be the measure of phonological awareness significance because the larger units are much larger than the smaller units. Whereas, with beginning learners the difference between the larger and smaller units is almost insignificant, in which case, measurements of significance may be very hard to detect.

From a lexical restructuring point of view, the experiment may have been helping learners incidentally to acquire vocabulary during the process of instruction. Vocabulary growth impacts a learner's understanding of words as segmental units (Barker, Sevcik, Morris, & Ronski, 2013; Walley, Metsala, & Garlock, 2003). Thus, the exposure to vocabulary words during the storytelling and vocabulary activities during the short-term phonics learning program may have provided opportunities for the participants in both groups to enhance their reading comprehension.

To conclude, the experimental group received the direct treatment of phonological awareness training, which corresponds with the practice of other studies (Cárnio et al., 2017) that suggest phonological awareness research should focus on segmenting and blending phonemes after the early stages of language learning. As the amount of research focusing on raising phonological awareness increases, it will emerge out of the realm of cognitive linguistics into the practical teaching arena. Teachers in Taiwan may then begin more confidently to integrate English phonics rules and phonological awareness skills training in their EFL classrooms, encouraging young Mandarin Chinese speaking students to construct their L2 knowledge orthographically and phonologically. Future research may need to pin point more accurately how phonological awareness develops speech production and perception, which will eventually provide a holistic picture of teaching L2s in concord with how students learn them.

Limitations

This study has several limitations that warrant future research. First, the research only investigated the learners' pretest and posttest outcomes. It excluded the results of rapid automatic naming and other measures of phonological awareness subtests. Second, this study recruited participants who had just acquired a knowledge of the English alphabet but not necessarily the ability to recognize the letter-to-sound correspondence. In addition, due to the short session times, the researcher was unable to examine the size of each student's vocabulary. Finally, the participants voluntarily enrolled in the program, so, although the number of participants in each group differed only by one, the actual difference in ability between students was not uniform. Some were more advanced than the others, which meant that the tests results were less than ideal for statistical analysis.

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Application of a Visual Organizer to Improve English

Writing in a Taiwanese Elementary School

Fang-Chi Chang

National Chiayi University

Shu-I Chang*

National Chiayi University

Hsiu-Fen Hsu

Chiayi Putzu Primary School

Bio profile:

Fang-Chi Chang is Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages at National Chiayi University. She teaches courses related to English language teaching and learning. Her main research interest is in EFL learners' English literacy development.

Email: engivy@mail.ncyu.edu.tw

Shu-I Chang is Associate Professor in the Department of Foreign Languages at National Chiayi University. She teaches courses related to English language teaching and learning. Her main research interest is in elementary EFL learners' English literacy development. **Email:** sic@mail.ncyu.edu.tw

Hsiu-Fen Hsu was an English teacher at Chiayi Putzu Primary School. **Email:** ceritafen@gmail.com

Abstract

In this manuscript, we report on a portion of a long-term project carried out in Taiwan. The participating 138 fourth-grade students had three and a half years' experience of writing for different purposes before this study. The catalyst for this study was our observation that most of the participating students produced juxtaposing sentences without paragraph construction. Therefore, we introduced a visual organizer, coined the "three-box technique," to help the students organize their sentences into coherent

*corresponding author
Dr. Shu-I Chang, Department of Foreign Languages,
National Chiayi University, No. 85, Minxiong, Chiayi
County 62103, Taiwan

three-paragraph texts. The students' self-made picture books were

analyzed for coherence in order to determine if the visual organizer helped the students to organize their ideas. The results showed that more than half of the students accomplished writing coherent three-paragraph texts after learning about the three-box technique. Our pioneer study provides some insight into the incorporation of a writing strategy into beginning English classes in Taiwan. Our study renders pedagogical implications for elementary English teachers, particularly those who intend to teach students to write coherently.

Key words: elementary EFL students, EFL writing, paragraph construction, picture book, visual/graphic organizer, Taiwan

Introduction

In Taiwan, English was not in elementary curricula until 2000. It was a mandatory subject starting from fifth grade in 2000 and then from third grade in 2006. However, some schools started their English instruction in first grade even before 2006, as was the case for the school where the reported project took place. In 2006, the authors of this manuscript began to design an English curriculum for this elementary school. After thorough discussions, a consensus was reached and supported by related literature (Curtain & Dahlberg, 2004; Davison & Dowson, 2003; Hudelson, 1989; Linse, 2005; Paul, 2003; Reimer, 2001; Samway, 1992; Scott, 1996) to design a more balanced curriculum that includes writing in the beginner level English classes. This was a new practice at that time since the focus of English curriculum in Taiwan was on learning spoken English. We failed to find related studies carried out regarding English writing in Taiwanese elementary schools during that time.

Without any models from Taiwan to follow, we designed and carried out writing activities with the participating students. They initially wrote freely before they engaged in more structured writing. Some major findings of this long-term project were published in various Taiwanese journals (Chang, Chang, & Hsu, 2008a; Chang, Chang, & Hsu, 2008b; Chang, Chang, & Hsu, 2009; Chang, 2009; Chang, Chang, & Hsu, 2010; Chang, Chang, & Hsu, 2016). In this manuscript, we report only a portion of the long-

term project when the participating students were fourth-graders. Our focus was on the introduction of a visual/graphic (these two words are used interchangeably in this manuscript) organizer, coined the “three-box technique,” to help students organize their ideas into coherent three-paragraph texts. This intervention was introduced in the hope that these participating students’ previous writing experience in Mandarin could be transferred to English writing.

On the whole, we intend to present a relatively new intellectual frontier in Taiwanese elementary EFL education. Without existing modeling blueprints, we initiated a somewhat balanced curriculum based on related literature in the Western context to have beginning EFL learners write in English. Our pioneering work was needed and is valuable according to Paul’s (2003) argument that it is a “serious misperception” for Asian English educators and government officials to “focus on listening and speaking skills more than reading and writing” (p. 83). When we celebrated the participating students’ accomplishment of producing sentences to express meanings, a specific problem emerged, that is, most participating students could only juxtapose sentences without paragraph construction. This problem required a solution—we needed to bring the students up to the next level in writing. In this manuscript, our attempt to solve the problem is illustrated. To familiarize the readers with the background of the study, we will first briefly introduce the five-year writing project.

The five-year writing project

The English writing practice was carried out for five consecutive years at a public elementary school. In the first year, approximately 100 first-grade students participated. The students began with free writing and then moved on to guided writing supported by various techniques as needed, such as brainstorming idea activities (Chang, Chang, & Hsu, 2008a), spelling-line strategy (Chang, Chang, & Hsu, 2008b), along with self- and peer-proofreading practices (Chang, Chang, & Hsu, 2009). Generally, the students

were given a lot of freedom to explore writing at their own pace with the focus on meaning-making. They were allowed to draw, write letters, or use inventive spelling to express meanings. Their work was not scored because grading might cause unnecessary pressure. Instead, the students' works were publicly shared in hopes of encouraging them to value their work and learn from their peers.

A detected phenomenon in picture-book texts

In grades three and four, the participating students were expected to create stories with pictures, which are referred to as "picture books" in this manuscript. The students created group picture books in grade three. Each student was responsible for generating one to two pages of text and pictures so no one was a "free rider." In grade four, each student was expected to create an individual picture book.

In one of our meetings, these participating students' English teacher brought up a concern in regards to students' using chunks of words without any structure. After reading the students' books, we noticed the phenomenon that all picture-book texts were composed of juxtaposing simple sentences with no paragraph/text construction. Below are two examples:

Text 1¹ on Moon Festival

In the moon festival, we have lots of tsiug to do. I go to the big park. The BBQ is very yummg. I like to eat BBQ. I see a yellow moon. The moon cakes are very good. Bye! Bye! I'm happy.

Text 2 on Gifts

I like the green dog. I like toys. I like my cool yo-yo. I like my cool cat. I like my cool dog. I have many toys.

These two texts are comprehensible, as students expressed an experience on the Moon Festival and a fondness of toys. Despite finding the texts were comprehensible,

¹All the draft sentences and most completed texts were written in pencil. The readability of the scanned written sheets is low. Therefore, all the examples given here and later in this manuscript are presented as typed texts. All the writers' errors in the original works are truthfully kept.

the presentation of the texts were chunky. Since these participating students had already experienced free style writing for three and a half years and due to concerns of their English teacher, we decided to seize the opportunity by introducing students to text structure: texts have a beginning, a middle, and an ending. As we were aware that these students had learned how to construct three-paragraph compositions in their Mandarin class during the previous year, we were surprised to see that this knowledge was not observed in their English writing. Button, Johnson, and Furgerson (1996) and Callella and Jordano (2002) noted that when a phenomenon is detected, whether it presents a problem or is simply a good movement, teachers should consider if it is a “teachable moment” for teacher intervention to either solve the problem, facilitate the good movement, or provide comprehensible input to make learning take place. We, therefore, considered this phenomenon a teachable moment for guiding these students to apply prior knowledge or skills to a new task, regarded as positive transfer (Brown, 2001). Based on the concept and format of three-paragraph construction instructed in the Mandarin textbook, we brainstormed and created a visual organizer, coined the “three-box technique,” hoping that this concrete graphic might help children visualize the task, thereby easing task requirements (Bromley, Irwin-De & Modlo, 1995; Hyerle, 1993, 2004; Mitchell & Hutchinson, 2003). The three-box technique was then used with a narrative genre—the genre the learners were most familiar with—to teach that texts had three parts: beginning, middle, and ending.

In the following sections, EFL writing literature is first reviewed, followed by a theoretical framework for our writing practice and teacher intervention. Next, the methodology is described, including the context of the study, the procedure to implement the three-box technique, and data collection and analysis. Finally, the findings and discussion of the students’ writing performance after learning the technique are provided, followed by the conclusion and future research directions.

Literature Review

Teaching writing in Taiwanese elementary EFL settings

Compared with other language skills, writing is a skill that comes secondary in elementary EFL education in Taiwan. It is clearly stated in the General Guidelines for Grades 1-9 Curriculum for Elementary and Junior High School Education issued by the Taiwanese Ministry of Education (General Guidelines, 2006) that the primary focus at the elementary level is spoken language, while written language takes a supporting role. We failed to find research done in Taiwan regarding English writing in elementary school settings when we started our five-year project. However, in recent years, there have been an increasing number of studies carried out in this yet uncharted field, particularly in unpublished theses or dissertations. Many of these studies focus on the connection between reading and writing. There are also some studies focusing on teaching students to use graphic organizers in the process of writing. Below are a few studies in which graphic organizers or thinking maps were used for writing instruction.

In Chiu's (2010) dissertation, 65 sixth-graders were put in two groups to see if the instruction of Thinking Maps would affect their writing performance in three genres over the course of 34 weeks. Generally, the findings indicated that the students taught to use Thinking Maps to write three genres did not outperform the students taught in the traditional way. The students who learned to use Thinking Maps performed better only on letter writing, one of the three genres. In addition, these students had better compositions pretest than posttest.

In Chuang's (2005) thesis, 50 fifth-grade, low-achieving students participated in an 8-week study. The study intended to uncover the effects of a mapping strategy on students' ability to write sentences. The major findings were that students in the experimental group made significant improvements in sentence writing, particularly in the number of words, the number of sentences, capitalization of the first letter of sentences, subject/verb agreement, and punctuation marks.

In Lin's (2010) thesis, 112 fifth-grade students were involved in a 16-week study. Students were placed in one control group and two experimental groups, namely

the cooperative concept mapping group and individual concept mapping group. It was found that concept mapping was effective in helping students generate and organize ideas into written works. Compared with the control group, students in the concept-mapping group wrote better-quality works, particularly with supporting and concluding sentences.

Su (2017) conducted a 12-week study to investigate the effect of instructing 50 fourth graders to read and write with graphic organizers at an international school. The students were taught to use various graphic organizers to analyze five articles and write five compositions. Su was more interested in how gender differences affected their reading and writing performance, reading preference, and preference for different graphic organizers. The most important finding related to our study is that Su found graphic organizers assisted the students' English writing performance.

In summary, educators in Taiwan are becoming interested in English writing in elementary school settings. However, most studies were done for a relatively short period of time. Many did find the effectiveness of using graphic organizers in teaching English writing, which supports our practice in this study. However, no studies have yet been found conducted in a context similar to our long-term project, which was intended to establish a more balanced elementary English curriculum, which signifies the uniqueness and importance of our study.

The “what-next” strategy applied by inexperienced writers

Inexperienced writers, who fail to think globally, tend to rely on writing “one idea to trigger another” (Frater, 2004, p. 79), resulting in making a list of juxtaposing simple sentences without appropriate conjunctions which was the phenomenon observed in our participating students' works. Sharples (1999) termed this “one idea to trigger another” strategy as a “what-next” strategy. Relying on such a strategy, inexperienced writers do not plan for their writing, nor reflect during the writing process, which makes their writing closely resemble informal talk. Sharples regarded the what-next strategy

as a trap within which many learners are confined and cannot manage to get past, which in turn hinders writing development.

To break through the what-next stage, in addition to learning about genres, writers need, according to Frater (2004), to “think globally about an evolving text...” (p. 79). Based on research evidence, Frater suggested that teacher interventions would help writers get through the what-next stage. Examples of interventions include teaching modeling, staged drafting, guided drafting, sharing and discussing examples of good writing, revising buddies, and displaying written works.

Writing development and teacher interventions

Teacher interventions help writing development at any stage (Tompkins, 2008; McCarries, Pinnell & Fountas, 2000). The awareness of writing development contributes to proper intervention arrangement. DeFord (1980), for example, identified 10 developmental writing stages, including scribbling, differentiating between drawing and writing, handling writing mechanics, and becoming aware of the discourse form. A learner’s language use should move from *interpersonal language* for informal talks to *ideational language* for formal writing (Halliday, 1973). However, as Frater noted, not all writers manage to go beyond the stage of using the what-next strategy.

According to Dorn and Soffos (2001), children exhibit some specific benchmark behaviors along a continuum of writing control. They suggest that teachers recognize these behaviors and design writing programs accordingly to move these young writers’ writing forward. This teaching practice corresponds to Vygotsky’s concept of Zone of Proximal Development (1978), that is, learners first accomplish tasks with guidance and gradually develop abilities to accomplish unaided tasks. Dorn and Soffos, in their book (p. 5-6), list beginning writers’ benchmark behaviors at four stages (i.e., emergent writers, beginning early writers, late early writers, and transitional writers) on three aspects (i.e., Composing [Writing Fluency], Transcribing [Encoding], and Editing & Revising). Only the benchmark behaviors for late early writers and

transitional writers will be reviewed below since they are more related to the participating students in this study.

The late early writer:

Creates an opening sentence or phrase that leads into the writing

Develops and maintains the idea throughout the piece

Begins to experiment with using descriptive words, strong nouns, and muscular verbs

Begins to develop an awareness of writer's voice

Ends with a closing statement

Begins to develop an awareness for publishing criteria

The transitional writer:

Uses good leads that grab the attention of the reader

Uses strong nouns and muscular verbs

Uses descriptive language to create mind pictures

Uses transitional words and phrases for time flow

Recognizes and applies writer's voice

Ties text together with interesting or creative ending

Understands and applies publishing criteria in preparing a piece of an audience

(Dorn & Soffos, 2001, pp. 5-6)

The participating students had been learning to write since grade one and had mixed writing performances. Most of them could write simple sentences with invented spellings (DeFord's Stage 7) and handle writing mechanics (DeFord's Stage 9), while some could combine two or more sentences to express complete thoughts (DeFord's Stage 8).

Over the years, we incorporated most of the interventions reported by Frater (2004), McCarrier, Pinnell, and Fountas (2000), and Tompkins (2008). The participating students' performances proved that teacher interventions were feasible and beneficial as the participating students moved gradually from beginning writers to developing writers. In this study, the participating students were instructed on how to use a visual organizer as an intervention to assist them in progressing to DeFord's Stage 10. This allowed the participating students to become aware of the narrative genre in English writing. In addition, it was hoped that the intervention might assist the students

in becoming late early writers (Dorn & Soffos, 2001) who were able to create an opening sentence in the opening paragraph, develop and maintain the ideas in the middle paragraph, and end with a closing statement in the ending paragraph. The tool, a graphic organizer, used in the intervention is now reviewed in the following section.

Graphic organizer

Bromley, Irwin-De Vitis, and Modlo (1995) regard graphic organizers as visual aids which present knowledge with labels to facilitate understanding. Graphic organizers, by their purposes, can be concept maps, mind-maps, story maps, brainstorming organizers, thinking process organizers, and task-specific organizers (Hyerle, 1993; Bromley, et al., 1995).

Graphic organizers are powerful tools used in different fields and even across fields. In learning settings, they are powerful pedagogical tools to visibly express the relationships of sequence, contrast, differences and/or similarities to learners, which facilitates the development of cognitive skills used to think, read, learn, remember, pay attention, and so on (Mitchell & Hutchinson, 2003). For example, graphic organizers assist readers in logically arranging the information taken from the text (Moorf & Readence, 1984) which then in turn supports their written ability to transfer their ideas, generated from experiences or reading, first to visible records and then into a written text (Griffin, Malone, & Kameenui, 1995).

Many Taiwanese research studies examine the use of graphic organizers at different grade and collegiate levels to facilitate students' learning in different content areas, such as Mandarin, social studies, and science. Graphic organizers are also used to assist students' English reading comprehension and writing in some Taiwanese studies, especially in secondary schools and colleges. However, only a limited number of studies were found that use graphic organizers to teach students English writing in elementary school settings (Chuang, 2005; Lin, 2010; Su, 2017). None of the reviewed literature shares the same focus as our study.

In other international educational settings, graphic organizers are also commonly used to assist with various aspects of students' learning. However, only limited numbers of studies were found in which graphic organizers were used to teach EFL students in various parts of the world to write in English. The three studies reviewed below were conducted in an elementary, a junior high, and a high school in countries where English is a foreign language.

Mora-González, Anderson, and Cuesta-Medina (2018) used a graphic organizer to help 20 sixth graders at a private school in Columbia develop argumentative skills in English writing. A webbing organizer for problem-solving tasks was introduced to the students. The findings indicate that the students' argumentative writing skills were positively affected by the use of the graphic organizer.

Nurhajati (2016) incorporated the use of a graphic organizer in project-based learning to help 28 Indonesian seventh-grade students improve writing. The students used the graphic organizer to generate ideas in groups. The findings indicated that the students were able to develop their ideas into good sentences in descriptive texts.

Ibnian (2010) conducted a study in Jordan to investigate whether a story-mapping technique, a type of graphic organizer, would affect tenth-grade students' short story writing. Eighty-four male students in four classes, two in the experimental group and the other in the control group, participated in the study, which lasted for four months. The findings revealed that the story-mapping technique helped the students improve their short story writing skills.

In conclusion, graphic organizers have been widely applied in a variety of learning settings for different purposes, including English teaching and learning. However, the use of a visual organizer like ours to teach elementary students English writing is a rare occurrence in either Taiwanese or international. Only a handful of studies conducted in EFL elementary school settings were found, which signals the lack of research in this domain.

In our study, a simple three-box flow map was introduced to the participants. This graphic served as a visible reminder to use their earlier-obtained knowledge of three-paragraph construction as they composed a three-paragraph text. Since the construction of a three-paragraph text was the focal task in this study, the construction of paragraphs is reviewed.

Mechanics of writing

In their book, *Write Source*, Kemper, Reigel and Sebranek (2007) explained that a paragraph is composed of several sentences regarding the same topic. They also explained that a paragraph ought to have a beginning, middle, and ending sentence(s). In the beginning sentence, the main idea is stated; in the middle sentences, more statements are provided to support the main idea; the ending sentence is to conclude with some additional thought. In Ruetten's (1997) words, these are "a topic sentence, support, and a conclusion" (p. 5). According to Ruetten, the topic sentence of a paragraph tells the topic (what the paragraph is about) and the controlling idea (the writer's attitude or idea about the topic), the support explains or develops the topic sentence, and the conclusion summarizes or comments on the main idea. In addition to the global element (i.e., the construction of text and paragraph), some local elements should be considered as well. For a text or paragraph to have coherence, "it needs to have some kind of internal logic which the reader can follow with or without the use of prominent cohesive devices" (Harmer, 2004, p. 24).

Text or paragraph writing is explained in the textbooks of Mandarin language arts used in Taiwanese elementary schools. For example, in Book 5 *Kuo Ming Hsiao Hsueh Kuo Yu* (Chen, 2008), used in the second semester of third grade, students learned that a text usually consists of three paragraphs (an opening, a body, and an ending). The opening paragraph presents the focus of the text, the middle paragraph (which might be divided into several smaller parts) presents the ideas, and the ending paragraph emphasizes the focus of the text. They also learned to indent the first line to

indicate the beginning of a new paragraph. Therefore, armed with this knowledge, they were expected to be able to write three-paragraph texts in English.

Methodology

In this section, information is presented on the context of the study including the elementary school and participating students. Then the procedure used to introduce the three-box technique is illustrated. Finally, the method of data collection and data analysis is presented.

Context of study

At the school, English instruction was provided to students for three 40-minute periods each week. One special feature of English instruction was the incorporation of writing into the English curriculum, which was extremely rare and is still not a common practice in Taiwan. In total, 138 fourth-graders participated in this study. Among them, 93 students had been writing in English since grade one and the others were transfer students. More than half of them had experience learning English in kindergarten. Even though some students were attending cram schools, they were not receiving instruction on English writing the way it was carried out at this school.

Two primary teaching objectives were set. The first objective was for the students to be able to write three paragraphs. The second objective was for them to produce a coherent text with a proper opening sentence, some middle sentences to maintain the idea, and a proper closure. The beliefs supporting the teacher's instruction lay in 1) Frater's "think globally about an evolving text" to break through the "what-next" stage, 2) the importance of scaffolding (Vygotsky, 1978; Grabe & Kaplan, 1996; Sharples, 1999; Dorn & Soffos, 2001; Frater, 2004; Tompkins, 2008), and 3) the notion of the positive transfer effect (Odlin, 1989; Gass & Selinker, 2001; Doughty & Long, 2003; Brown, 2001, 2007).

Procedure for introducing the three-box technique

The three-box technique was taught to the students when they were assigned to independently create two picture books. A seven-week cycle, one period (40 minutes) per week, was scheduled to make one picture book. In total, there were two cycles in this study. The material used to create a picture book was an A4 sheet of paper folded into four equal-sized smaller pages on which the students wrote text and drew illustrations.

Below are the weekly activities for one seven-week cycle. The activities involved much of Frater's (2004) teacher intervention, for example, guided reading, staged drafting, guided drafting, teacher modeling, revising, proofreading, and displaying for sharing and discussion.

- | | |
|--------|---|
| Week 1 | The students read materials related to the written topic under the teacher's guidance to help them recall their previous experience or to provide secondary experience to prepare them for the topic. |
| Week 2 | In groups, the students brainstormed ideas to be put in a webbing map on an A4 sheet of paper. |
| Week 3 | The teacher reviewed three-paragraph writing in Mandarin and then taught the three-box technique. Each student then wrote sentences on a draft sheet (see details below) based on their webbing map. |
| Week 4 | The students self-proofread and gave titles to their stories. |
| Week 5 | The teacher reviewed the three-box technique. The students peer-proofread first, followed by self-proofreading. Then, each student numbered and chose the draft sentences and put the numbers in the three boxes which can be seen as three paragraphs for use as picture-book texts. |
| Week 6 | Each student copied the sentences they chose onto a folded blank sheet of A4 paper and then produced illustrations to make it a picture book. |
| Week 7 | The class shared the finished picture books. |

The preparation of a draft sheet is explained below. First, the teacher photocopied all the group webbing maps when they were done on blank A4 paper sheets in week 2. Then, the above copies were copied onto partially-lined A4 paper sheets with three

boxes at the bottom immediately underneath the webbing map. Above the three boxes, there is space for a title (see Appendix A as an example).

The three-box technique was explained based on the students' understanding of paragraph construction already taught in Mandarin language arts class in the previous year. Then the teacher told the students to 1) number their sentences on the draft sheet, 2) write the picture-book title by the word *Topic* above the three boxes, 3) choose and put the numbers of the sentences in the three boxes for three paragraphs, and 4) copy the sentences in the three boxes on the folded blank A4 sheet of paper with illustrations to make a picture book. The students were also told that the sentences they chose to put into paragraphs could be revised if necessary, and they should indent the first line of each paragraph or separate paragraphs with an extra line space¹.

Data collection and analysis

Among 138 fourth-graders who made two picture books independently, only 93 students' books were examined, since they started first grade at this school and the others were transfer students. The texts were examined by four people, including the three authors of this manuscript and a lecturer teaching college English composition. A text was deemed coherent or incoherent when three or more of these people reached a consensus.

To analyze the texts, the first step was to examine if the story titles met the two themes, *Food* and *Monster* respectively. Eighty-nine story titles met the *Food* theme and 91, the *Monster* theme. These 180 texts were further analyzed for the number of paragraphs and coherence.

There were two criteria for checking the number of paragraphs: first, if the first line was indented or second, if there was an extra line space between two paragraphs. These were the ways the students were instructed to separate paragraphs. The texts not

¹Separating paragraphs with an extra line space was not instructed in the textbook for Mandarin language arts. The teacher learned this from a different source and decided to introduce this to the students as an optional way to separate paragraphs.

meeting the above criteria were not further analyzed for coherence since the teacher's instruction was not followed. The texts meeting the above criteria were then checked for coherence, with the focus on the students' idea presentation and development. In other words, the criteria we followed were to find out if the idea presented in the first paragraph was further developed in the second paragraph and concluded in the third paragraph as well as whether the ideas presented were related to the picture-book title. The inter-rater reliability for coherence checking was high for both topics; it was .73 for *Food* and .81 for *Monster*.

Findings and Discussion

Number of paragraphs

The first teaching objective was to guide the participating students to write three paragraphs. The results show that these students produced 40 texts (44.94% of 89 texts) of three paragraphs on *Food* and 73 texts (80.21% of 91 texts) of three paragraphs on *Monster*. The students made a significant improvement in terms of producing three paragraphs when creating the second picture book. The second and third columns of Table 1 present the results.

Table 1

Texts with a Title and Three Paragraphs and Coherence

Theme	With a title	With 3 paragraphs	Coherent	Incoherent
Food	89	40 (44.94%)	17 (42.50%)	12 (30.00%)
Monster	91	73 (80.22%)	54 (73.97%)	5 (6.84%)

Coherence and idea presentation

The second objective was for the students to produce a coherent text. The 40 texts on *Food* and 73 texts on *Monster* with three paragraphs were analyzed for coherence.

As shown in the fourth and fifth columns of Table 1, out of the 40 texts on *Food*, 17 texts (42.50%) were coherent and 12 texts were incoherent. Out of the 73 texts on *Monster*, 54 texts (73.97%) were coherent and five texts were incoherent. As the semester went on, when the students created the second picture book, they made

considerable progress, creating more coherent texts (73.97%) compared with the texts in the first picture book (42.50%).

The texts on which the four readers did not reach consensus (11 on *Food* and 14 on *Monster*) are not further discussed below. However, one notable feature of these incoherent texts is that some students developed the ideas appropriately throughout the three paragraphs but failed to relate the ideas to the titles. For example, the three paragraphs under *Happy Day* read (Paragraph 1) *The monster is my pet. He is a boy, his name is Dragon.* (Paragraph 2) *Dragon has too ears and one mouth. Dragon likes to eat hard books. Dragon doesn't like to eat wet books.* (Paragraph 3) *Do you like my pet monster?* The ideas develop coherently throughout the paragraphs on a pet dragon but fail to illustrate the title *Happy Day*. This may render some implication for teachers to stress the relation between ideas and titles in future similar situations.

In addition to coherence, some features shown in the students' works demonstrated various ways to present ideas in their opening and ending paragraphs. These features are presented in the following paragraphs.

Opening paragraph. The students had either one single sentence or multiple sentences in their opening paragraphs. The opening sentence presented a scene, a rhetorical question, a response, a dialogue, a greeting, an exclamation, or simply a related statement. Examples are given below to exemplify these seven features. A scene indicates that the first sentence in a single-sentence or multi-sentence opening paragraph (an opening sentence, hereafter) presents a description of all of the following: an agent, an action (or a state), a place, and a time (e.g., Example 1). Such a "scene" opening sentence seems to "create a mind picture," which is a benchmark behavior identified by Dorn and Soffos (2001). A rhetorical question as an opening sentence presents a question which is answered in the same paragraph or the following paragraph (Example 2). A response indicates that the opening sentence responds to the picture-book topic which is a question (Example 3). A dialogue indicates that the opening sentence initiates a dialogue (Example 4). A greeting as an opening sentence greets

someone (Example 5). An exclamation as an opening sentence presents a surprised mood (Example 6). A statement presents a related declaration (Example 7) of a writer's attitude or idea about the topic (Ruetten, 1997). These openings can be seen as attention getters that catch readers' attention. The three-box technique might contribute to raising these participating students' awareness of starting with a proper lead.

Example 1 One day, a monster is in the playground. (one single-sentence opening paragraph)

Example 2 Do you like food? (one single-sentence opening paragraph)

Example 3 Yes, I like peas. (responding to the picture-book topic *Do you like food?*)

Example 4 「Sit up.」 said Mom. (followed by 「Your lunch have pizza and fish.」)

Example 5 Good morning mom! (followed by *You're just in time for breakfast.*)

Example 6 Oh no! (followed by *There is a big monster in my hamburger.*)

Example 7 I like to eat many foods. (one single-sentence opening paragraph)

The types of opening sentences are summarized in Table 2. Among the 40 *Food* texts, the types of opening sentences include seven questions, one response, one dialogue, one greeting, and 30 related statements. Among the 73 *Monster* texts, the types of opening sentences include five scenes, one dialogue, one greeting, two exclamations, and 64 related statements.

Table 2

Number of Types of Opening Sentences

Theme	Scene	Question	Response	Dialogue	Greeting	Exclamation	Statement
Food	0	7	1	1	1	0	30
Monster	5	0	0	1	1	2	64

Most of the 113 texts in Table 2 started with opening sentences or phrases followed by more details, which is one of the benchmark behaviors of late early writers (Dorn & Soffos, 2001). Moreover, there were some “good” (interesting, unexpected, unusual) leads in opening sentences or phrases that grab readers' attention (see examples below), which is one of the benchmark behaviors of transitional writers (Dorn & Soffos, 2001).

It was found that there were more good leads in the texts on *Monster*. It was not certain what the exact reasons were; however, some speculations could be made. It could be that when writing on *Monster*, the students had more writing experience or

that *Monster* was a more playful topic for the students, capturing their imaginations. Below are some examples of good opening sentences, followed by common ones.

Good leads grabbing readers' attention

On *Monster*

There is a monster in my refrigerator.

Today I was scared. (followed by *Because there is a monster under my bed.*)

Oh no! (followed by *There is a monster in my hamburger*)

There's a little monster in my bathroom. (followed by *I can not find it because it's too small.*)

Common opening sentences

On *Food*

My friend and I like food.

My family like to eat.

Today I am very hungry.

On *Monster*

This is a monster.

I have a big monster.

I like my monster.

Ending paragraphs. Similar to opening paragraphs, there were also single-sentence and multi-sentence ending paragraphs. The former closed the idea developed in the first two paragraphs while the latter provided some more information before closing. Two examples follow. In Type 1 Text, the student opened with a simple statement, which was about his family's going out to have food. The middle paragraph presented the food favored by the family. The student concluded that they all liked food, which closed the idea presented in the opening paragraph and developed throughout the text. In Type 2 Text, the student began with the introduction of his neighbor who was a monster followed by a description of this monster neighbor and his daughter. The student presented a little bit more information on the characteristics of the two monster neighbors in the ending paragraph and then ended with *We are good friends* to close the idea developed in these paragraphs. Out of the 17 coherent texts on *Food*, nine texts are of Type 1 and eight texts, Type 2. Out of the 54 coherent texts on *Monster*, 19 texts are of Type 1 and 40 texts, Type 2. Writing on *Monster*, these more experienced students demonstrated that they had more to write in an ending paragraph.

Type 1 Text Topic: Today is my happy day

Today my family and I go to eat many food. I like white bread. Mom likes white bread, too. I like yummy pizza. Dad likes yummy pizza. I don't like big fish, but my sister likes big fish. We all like food!

Type 2 Text Topic: My monster neighbor

I have a neighbor. He is a monster. He has a cool ear. And ten scary eyebrows. Only three mouths are very cute. His three mouths are small, very small. He has a cute daughter. His daughter has long and yellow hair, and big eyes. She also has a short nose. My neighbors are friendly and his daughter are kind. We xare good friends.

These participating students were able to end their story with a closing statement, a benchmark behavior of late early writers (Dorn & Soffos, 2001), and some students could even tie text together with an interesting ending, a benchmark behavior of transitional writers (Dorn & Soffos, 2001). Some interesting endings and common endings are given in the following examples. As was the case with the leads, more good endings were found in the texts on *Monster*. As speculated, the nature of the topic and the writers' increasing writing experience or ability might explain the difference.

Interesting ending paragraphs

On *Monster*

Hurray! I got rid of the monster. I winner!

Today, They see 2000 dollars on the floor. A monster say, "that's my!" But, another monster say, "that's my, not your!" So, they aren't friends anymore.

He gave me a kiss and said, "Thanks you" to me. Then he flew away. I was happy that the monster was gone.

I shoot this monster. The monster goes to a new home. I am happy. The monster, too! It's a good ending!

"Wake up! Wake up!" my mom said. Then I know it is a dream.

Common endings

On *Food*

I like food.

I am happy.

We eat a lot of food.

On *Monster*

I like my monster.

He is my good friend now.

I like the cool monster.

In conclusion, in this study, over 100 fourth graders with previous experience in writing paragraphs in Mandarin were taught to use a three-box technique to write three coherent paragraphs. The three boxes, a type of graphic organizer, served as a concrete visual tool to help the students visualize their task. It allowed the students to visibly select sentences to be put in three boxes in sequence. It is evident that such a visual organizer facilitated many participants in the production of coherent three-paragraph texts as many scholars have pointed out the positive effects of visual organizers in educational settings (Bromley, Irwin-De, & Modlo, 1995; Hyerle, 1993, 2004; Mitchell & Hutchinson, 2003). The findings are also in line with limited Taiwanese research (Chuang, 2005; Lin, 2010; Su, 2017) indicating that visual organizers help elementary students in various aspects of their English writing. In addition, our findings also align with results found by other EFL researchers (Ibnian, 2010; Nurhajati, 2016; Mora-González, Anderson, & Cuesta-Medina, 2018) that graphic organizers are a scaffolding tool to help students write in English, especially when the ideas need to be put in sequence based on their “relevance or relationships” (Mora-González, Anderson, & Cuesta-Medina, 2018, p.17).

All in all, the findings demonstrated that more than half of the participating students (58.06%) were able to write three coherent paragraphs after being taught to use the three-box technique (Tompkins, 2008; McCarries, Pinnell & Fountas, 2000). They moved from using the “what-next” strategy (Sharples, 1999) to conscientiously planning for their writing and therefore produced more organized final texts (Teng, 2016, 2019). More specifically, these students reached two teaching objectives set for this semester. The first was the ability to produce a three-paragraph picture-book text; the second was to produce three coherent paragraphs, including an opening, a middle to maintain the idea throughout the writing, and a closure. Their works demonstrated that now they know the story genre, reaching DeFord’s (2004) Stage 10 of the writing development path. Their works also exhibited some benchmark behaviors of late early writers and transitional writers defined by Dorn and Soffos (2001). Over the years, the

teacher in our project played a role as a motivator, resource, and feedback provider to support the students' writing as suggested by Harmer (2001). Other than introducing the visual organizer per se, it is likely that the teacher effectively encouraged the participating students to experiment with language as suggested by Moon (2005), enabling many of them to produce diverse ideas, as shown in the findings.

While more than half of the students moved on to plan for their writing, nearly 42% of the students were still trapped in the "what-next" stage. The reason for this cannot be explained based on the data collected, which needs further study. One speculation is that writing is indeed a highly complex skill to master (Nunan, 1999; Tillema, 2012). So, some students might just need more time or different instruction to catch up with the other students, but this could only be answered through further studies. To this date, there is still scarce research related to English writing conducted in Taiwanese elementary schools, mainly because writing is not the focus in elementary English education. Our longitudinal experience with the participating students informed us that the incorporation of writing into beginning English curriculum was feasible. However, when the writing focus was on meaning expression instead of accuracy or systematic learning of writing mechanics in our long-term project, the students needed some instruction at the right moment to move on from sentence piling to structured paragraphs. Hence, our study adds a new technique to the pool of pedagogy in teaching elementary English writing. What we carried out in this study echoed Frater's (2004) viewpoint that when students are provided with interventions, three-box technique in our case, they can develop the ability to organize ideas. Without the introduction of the visual organizer to help the participating students sort and organize ideas into three paragraphs, they might linger longer on the stage of using "what-next" strategy in writing.

Conclusion and Future Research

In this manuscript, we have reported why and how a teacher intervention, the three-box technique, was taught to over 100 fourth-grade EFL students at a Taiwanese school.

This approach was taken because their teacher was concerned that their story texts were a single structureless chunk of words and because these students learned paragraph construction in their Mandarin class in the previous year. The results show that more than half of the participating students passed from juxtaposing simple sentences to organizing their ideas into coherent three-paragraph picture-book texts.

An important limitation lies in the nature of this study which is a small part of a long-term project. The participating students' experience in English writing is rather unique, which makes it more challenging when generalizing the results to other classroom settings. Another limitation is that not enough data were collected to answer questions such as why there were still students who had learned to write three-paragraph compositions in Mandarin yet were not able to transfer such knowledge to English writing even with a visual organizer.

Based on this study, some suggestions for future research emerged. First of all, in Taiwan in particular, more studies are needed to help foster greater understanding of how writing can be incorporated into elementary English curricula. Second, in our study, nearly 42% of the students were not able to write coherent texts. Further studies are needed to explore how writing instruction can be designed and carried out to maximize students' learning. Finally, in our study, paragraph writing was introduced to fourth-graders because they had learned about paragraphs two semesters earlier in the Mandarin class. This suggests that the manner in which learning transfer from the students' mother tongue to a foreign language occurs and, in particular, to what extent it occurs, may be worth investigating.

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Appendix A Draft sheet

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Topic: I Like Eat

4 → 1, 2, 3 → 5

1 I like to eat a pizza. The pizza is big, hot and yummy. And I like to eat the chocolate, the chocolate is black and little.

3 And I like drink some juice, the juice is well yummy. They I drink the juice is orange juice, the juice is well great. They and I like to eat apple. The apple is red and hard.

4 I like to eat many food.

5 This is my favorite food.

Formative Assessment in Primary English Writing Classes:

A Case Study from Hong Kong

Qin Xie*

Education University of Hong Kong

Yuqi Lei

Education University of Hong Kong

Bioprofile:

Xie, Qin is Assistant Professor at the Educational University of Hong Kong. She has published on peer-reviewed journals focusing on washback, test preparation validation, and diagnostic language assessment. She is interested in Structural Equation Modelling, Rasch Modeling, and Cognitive Diagnostic Modeling including their applications in language education and assessment. **Email:** qxie@eduhk.hk

Lei, Yuqi is currently working in a primary school in Hong Kong as a frontline ESL teacher. She has much interaction with primary students and aims to facilitate their learning. Her research interests are language assessment and ESL teaching. **Email:** leiyuqi8@gmail.com

Abstract

Based on a well-recognized formative assessment strategy model (Leahy et al, 2005) and multiple analytical frameworks of teacher feedback, the present study investigated three teachers (a novice, an experienced, and a veteran teacher) with regard to their instructional, assessment, and feedback practices throughout the pre-, during-, and post-stages of a second language (L2) writing instruction cycle. Adopting a case study approach, multiple data were gathered from interviews, lesson observations, teaching materials, students' writing, and teacher written feedback. Cross-case comparisons were conducted to understand teachers' formative assessment strategies, feedback practices, and their difficulties. The study found that the teachers engaged primarily

*corresponding author
Dr. Qin Xie, Department of Linguistics and Modern
Language Studies, No. 10 Lo Ping Road, Tai Po, New
Territories, Hong Kong

with the pre- and post-writing
stages. In the pre-writing

stage, they conducted a variety of activities to prepare students for writing and to clarify target writing criteria. However, they tended to skip the during-writing stage. In the post-writing stage, all teachers adopted comprehensive error correction with the novice teacher giving more corrections than the other two. Only the experienced teacher required students to compose a second draft, the other two requiring only a single draft. Unlike the veteran teacher, the two younger teachers avoided writing negative comments and wrote many personalized comments probably in order to build relationships with students. In terms of feedback orientation, teachers paid more attention to what a student did and could do better in the task at hand than what a student could do in future tasks. Implications drawn from this research were presented in the form of a checklist for teachers, which integrated instructional and formative assessment strategies with the L2 writing instruction processes.

Keywords: formative assessment, L2 writing, teacher feedback, primary EFL students

Introduction

Hong Kong has been promoting formative assessment (FA) or assessment for learning (AfL) in schools for nearly two decades, yet there are still major gaps between the official vision and the actual adoption of FA by teachers in schools. Traditional summative assessment still dominates school assessment, while teachers' adoption of FA in schools remains limited, mechanical, and superficial (Berry, 2011). In both primary and secondary schools, teachers reported having difficulty in integrating FA into their professional practices (Berry & Adamson, 2012). Most existing studies, however, focus on aspects of FA and its implementation; few investigated specific areas of English literacy education, such as L2 writing, or tracked teaching and assessment practices over a complete cycle of instruction. Although there are a few empirical studies focusing on FA in second language (L2) writing in Hong Kong, most investigated secondary schools, and few looked at the primary level. Adopting a well-

recognized FA strategy model and multiple analytical frameworks of teacher feedback, the present study examined three primary teachers' adoption of formative assessment in L2 writing classes and their written feedback. Three research questions have guided the study:

1. How do primary teachers make use of FA at three stages of an L2 writing instruction cycle?
2. What are the patterns in teacher feedback in the post-writing stage?

What difficulty, if any, do teachers encounter when adopting FA in L2 writing instruction?

Literature review

Conceptual framework for formative assessment

Many researchers used the term *formative assessment* and *assessment for learning* interchangeably to stress that the focus is on the process of learning but not on the product, the latter being the target of *summative assessment* and *assessment of learning*. Black et al. (2003) made a distinction between assessment tasks which are designed with collecting information to be used as feedback as its main priority and those which are designed to serve accountability purposes. They maintained that assessment only “becomes formative when the evidence is actually used to adapt the teaching work to meet learning needs” (p. 8). In their later work, this conceptualization of formative assessment is developed into five FA strategies (see Table 1) that teachers can adopt in the classroom in different stages of the teaching and learning processes (Leahy et al, 2005). In a recent book-length publication (William & Leahy, 2015), they provided a wide range of practical classroom techniques to support the five strategies.

Table 1*Five key strategies of formative assessment*

Learning processes Agents	Where the learner is going	Where the learner is now	How to get there
Teacher	FAS1. Clarifying, sharing and understanding learning intentions and success criteria	FAS2. Engineering effective discussions, tasks and activities that elicit evidence of learning	FAS3. Providing feedback that moves learning forward
Peer		FAS4. Activating students as learning resources for one another	
Learner		FAS5. Activating students as owners of their own learning	

In this FA model, the five strategies are laid out along two dimensions of agents and learning processes. On the dimension of agents, the teacher is the primary agent or regulator of all strategies. Teachers “clarify, share and understand learning intentions and success criteria” (FAS 1), “engineer effective discussions, tasks and activities that elicit evidence of learning”(FAS 2), “provide feedback that moves learning forward” (FAS 3); as well as “activate students as learning resources for one another” (FAS 4) and “as owners of their own learning” (FAS 5). The pivotal role of teachers implicit in this model is supported by other researchers. Carless (2007), for instance, argued that effective implementation of assessment for learning depended largely on teachers’ understandings of FA, and that teachers were “a key mediator in enhancing student learning” (p. 172).

The functions of FAS in relation to the teaching and learning processes are also specified in this framework. For FAS 1, the primary function is to establish the goal or targets of learning, i.e. *where the learner is going*, whereas that of FAS 2 is to elicit evidence of learning, i.e. *where the learning is now*. With such evidence of learning, teachers can identify the gaps between the students’ current state and the learning targets and come up with next-step action plans (feedback) of *how to get there* or how to close the gaps (FAS 3). Heritage (2007) adds that feedback in the form of plans or directions for next-step moves or actions should be applied to both teaching and

learning. Once gaps in learning are identified, clearly described and understood, teachers take actions to adjust the next-step teaching as well as direct learners to their next-step learning. In both processes of identifying and understanding *where the learning is now and how to get there*, teachers can and should activate students as learning resources for each other and for the teacher, as well as owners of their own learning (FAS 5). Engaging students in collaboration with teachers in identifying, clarifying, and understanding *where they are now*, and in thinking and reacting to teacher and peer feedback on *how they can get there* would not only facilitate effective teaching but also, and perhaps more importantly, cultivate learners' self-regulation skills to learn how to learn.

When applied to analyzing L2 writing instruction, the conceptualization of FA and FAS is congruent with the process approach to L2 writing instruction, which encourages teachers to view writing as a process and to design instruction strategies to engage students in multiple cycles of pre-, during-, and post-writing activities (Graham & Sandmel, 2011).

Teacher feedback

Both in the conceptualization of FAS and process-based L2 writing instruction, the role of teacher feedback is considered central. A number of research studies have analyzed teacher feedback with different focuses and conceptualization.

Lee (2004) focused on error correction as it is a feedback strategy commonly adopted by English language teachers in Hong Kong schools. She analyzed teachers' error corrections along two dimensions, namely, direct vs. indirect correction and coded vs. uncoded correction. According to this analytical framework, direct error correction provides students with information regarding the location of error and the corrected form. For instance, *She want^{wanted} to buy a dress*. Indirect *coded* error feedback, on the other hand, provides information regarding the location and type of error as in the following example: *She want^{ten} to buy a dress*. A code *ten* was used to mark the error type, i.e. verb tense. In contrast, indirect *uncoded* error feedback only indicates the

location of error. For instance, *She want to buy a dress*; here the teacher only underlines the erroneous part of the sentence.

Ferris (2003) analyzed teachers' written comments in terms of their purposes and linguistic functions. She identified seven primary purposes of teacher feedback: 1. Asking for information; 2. Giving information to students; 3. Giving directions; 4. Giving positive comments to confirm what the writer has done well; 5. Giving negative comments to point out problems in students' writing; 6. Giving personalized comments (e.g. *I enjoyed reading your story.*); and 7. Explaining grammar or mechanics of writing.

Hill and McNamara (2011), utilizing the feedback typology of Tunstall and Gipps (1996), analyzed teacher feedback in terms of its primary reference, that is, whether it is *task-referenced* or *person-referenced*. Task referenced feedback focuses on student performance related to task requirements or target criteria, which can be *confirmatory*, *explanatory*, or *corrective*. Accordingly, error correction strategies belong to *corrective task-referenced* feedback. Moreover, six of the seven feedback purposes in Ferris (2003) can be described as task-referenced, i.e., #4 and #5 are *confirmatory*, #2 and #7 are *explanatory*, #1 and #3 push writers to write more and provide directions for further work. Only #6 is person-referenced feedback, which targets students' egos in the form of approval or disapproval, reward or punishment.

Chong (2017) coined two new terms, *feedback up* and *feedback forward*, which provides an interesting time perspective to understand teacher feedback. While feedback refers to teacher comments on "*what the student did in this task*", *feedback up* refers to "*what the student can do better in the same task*" and *feedback forward* refers to "*what the student can do better in the next task*" (p. 13). All three types are task referenced and specific, which provide a time perspective to examine teacher feedback, or *feedback orientation* in this paper. Feedback orientation aligns with the process views towards learning (and writing).

While the above conceptualization of feedback and analytical frameworks helped us to understand teacher feedback, they tend to be descriptive and are not readily

applicable to evaluating the usefulness of feedback to move learning forward, in other words, the extent to which feedback is formative. Upon this point, Lee (2017) noted that formative feedback should not only be descriptive and diagnostic, but also provide concrete guidance on how to improve. Similarly, Wiliam and Thomspon (2008) noted that “*to be formative, feedback needs to contain an implicit or explicit recipe for future action*” (p. 61). They added that telling students to work harder without guidance on how to do so is not formative.

Put under this lens, error correction provides explicit recipes for students to correct their linguistic errors, hence can be considered to be formative. On the other hand, of the seven feedback types in Ferris (2003), only giving directions (#3) seems to be the most formative. In comparison, the other five feedback types, (namely #1 asking for information, #2 giving information, #4 giving positive comments; #5 giving negative comments to point out problems, *and* #7 explaining grammar or mechanics of writing), only provide *implicit recipes* and are less formative. Finally, #6, the person-referenced feedback type, is not formative at all because a teacher feedback e.g. “*I enjoyed reading your story*” does not contain any recipe for future action.

Upon this point, it seems necessary to make a distinction between being “formative” and being “effective.” A teacher’s feedback can be effective without being formative, when it motivates learners to move forward. In this regard, personalized comments were recommended to engage students and build relationships with them, and are considered especially important for process writing when students are expected to act upon teachers’ comments in re-drafting their work (Goldstein, 2004; Hyland & Hyland, 2006b). On the other hand, teacher feedback, such as comprehensive error corrections that cover a student’s work in red ink may be formative but not effective, because it could discourage and overwhelm writers. Heritage (2011) noted that it is essential that the gaps identified for the learners are “*just right*” (p. 141) and it is important to make them feel that the targets of writing are not too large to close.

Compared with comprehensive error correction, selective feedback may be less informative but can be more effective.

Other research-based recommendations on effective feedback strategies include using indirect error feedback to engage students in problem solving and developing editing skills (Ferris, 2003), using direct error correction judiciously when the problem is beyond students' ability to correct by themselves (Ferris, 1999), providing a balanced coverage of feedback to include issues other than linguistic accuracy, such as content, organization, and style (Hyland & Hyland, 2006a), and balancing positive and negative comments.

Existing studies on formative assessment in L2 writing

Many existing studies investigating teachers' FA practices do not focus on a particular language skill (e.g., Carless & Lam, 2014). Research that investigated the application of FA strategies in L2 writing instruction remains scarce (Lee, 2017). Of the studies looking at L2 writing assessment, most focused on particular aspects of writing such as teacher feedback (e.g., Hyland & Hyland, 2006b), error correction (e.g., Lee, 2004), peer feedback (e.g., Zhu & Carless, 2018), and portfolio assessment (e.g., Lam & Lee, 2010). Only a small number of studies followed complete teaching and learning cycles over time and offered a comprehensive depiction of teachers' instructional and assessment practices in L2 writing classes (e.g., Lee & Wong, 2014). These studies tended to involve a group of school teachers trying out a range of innovative assessment and instructional strategies over an extended period of time and gathered data from participants regarding factors influencing their implementation. Few studies examined teachers' assessment practices in L2 writing classes in their naturalistic state.

Moreover, many studies focused on secondary schools; very few were conducted at the primary level. Studying a secondary L2 writing class, Lee and Coniam (2013) reported that teachers implemented FA in three phases of planning, instruction, and assessment. After reaching a general consensus about the overall plan and marking criteria, the teachers provided genre-based instructional scaffolding to clarify the

requirements of the target genre and the assessment criteria. Subsequently, in the assessment phase, task-specific feedback was delivered to help students understand their strengths and weaknesses.

Similarly, in Lee and Falvey (2014), teachers used a range of FA strategies. Before the students wrote, they explained the expectations and success criteria of the writing task and strengthened pre-writing input by involving students in activities such as text analysis, deconstruction of model texts, brainstorming, and mind-mapping. They also made efforts to provide formative feedback and engage students in peer evaluation and multiple drafts. Implementation of the FA strategies, however, varied across schools. Only one school adhered to regular peer assessment and a multiple draft pedagogy throughout the one-year study period. The other two schools adopted a mixture of product and process approaches and conducted peer evaluation and multiple drafts only occasionally. Teacher feedback on writing continued to focus on error correction.

Lee (2011) also focused on secondary teachers adopting an assessment for learning approach to teach L2 English writing. She reported a number of positive impacts on teachers' writing instruction and assessment and on students' attitudes towards writing. Teachers were found to have strengthened their instructional input and shared task-specific criteria in the pre-writing stage, allowed multiple drafts of writing, encouraged greater student involvement, and adopted collaborative writing, peer and self-editing. In addition, teachers adopted focused error correction instead of marking every single error.

Considerably fewer studies have been conducted at the primary level regarding English teachers' formative assessment practices in writing instruction. Mak and Lee (2014) examined four primary teachers' attempts to introduce AfL strategies in an L2 writing classroom in Hong Kong. Their participants attempted a range of AfL strategies including focused and coded corrective feedback, regular peer assessment, criteria-based teacher feedback, student reflection, and goal setting. At the end of the study,

however, the teachers admitted that they were unable to adhere to the plan throughout the academic year. In another study at the primary level, Lee and Wong (2014) reported what was perhaps a rare success of a writing curriculum innovation in Hong Kong. In this study, a team of teachers overhauled the traditional product approach to teaching writing and implemented a process-genre approach. FA strategies, such as diagnostic rubrics and peer assessment, were also adopted to inform cycles of drafting, revising, and re-drafting.

In the majority of the above-mentioned studies, researchers explored factors facilitating or inhibiting the implementation of FA in L2 writing classes. Facilitating factors comprised teachers' determination to conduct the FA approach, knowledge about existing research on alternative assessment, teachers' shared beliefs and collaborative efforts, the support of school leaders, and the systematic and gradual approach to scale up the innovation. On the other hand, inhibiting factors or threats to sustaining FA practices, included teacher factors and logistic factors. Teacher factors include teachers' dependence on textbooks for writing topics, materials and instructional procedure, inadequate understanding of FA and lack of assessment competence, lack of professional exchange and collaboration among teachers, conflicting beliefs between teachers and school administrators about feedback instruments and assessment purposes; *logistic factors include* inadequate school support, and factors associated with established school assessment culture that focused on written errors and summative scores, and school policies that required comprehensive error feedback.

The factors identified thus far lie on both the teacher and school level. It would be interesting to investigate the teacher factors further within a common school context to examine how individuals may respond differently to similar contextual constraints and what it takes for teachers to overcome them. With the above conceptualization and a review of existing studies, we set off to address the research questions stated at the

beginning of this article. In the following section, we will describe our research contexts and the procedures we utilized in data collection and analysis.

Methodology

This research adopted a case study approach (Stake, 1995; Yin, 2018) to investigate three teachers (each as a case) working in one public primary school in Hong Kong. Several methodological strengths associated with the case study approach make it appropriate for investigating the three research questions. Firstly, a case study approach allows the investigation of a case within its natural real-world context, providing deeper understanding of the process or dynamics of teacher practices within a concrete school context. In the present study, the three case study teachers were nested within one school, a methodological feature that is captured by a more precise term i.e. “a collective case study” (Stake, 1995, p.5) or an “embedded single case design” (Yin, 2018, p.52). For the latter term, the school can be considered the primary unit of analysis, whereas the teachers are the embedded sub-units of analysis.

Regardless of their differences in terminology, major methodology books on the case study approach agree that the notion of boundedness as a key feature to define and clarify cases. Yin (2018) calls this as “bounding the case” (p.31). Individuals, such as the teachers and their classes, have a clear boundary and thus are typical of the cases investigated in educational studies. Given the usual limit of having a small number of cases in most case studies, it was often difficult to achieve representativeness in case selection. Instead, case study researchers should aim at achieving the “balance and variety” of cases (Stake, 1995, p. 6). In our study, because we considered that age gaps and differences in teaching experience could capture a variety of differences among teachers, we selected our case study teachers to be those at three distinctive career stages (more in Participants).

Research context

The school where the research was situated was a typical, government-funded primary school with Chinese as its medium of instruction¹. The school administrators had a positive attitude towards educational initiatives promoted by the Education Bureau (EdB), and hence the FA practices promoted by the EdB had been incorporated into their school-based English curriculum. During each academic term, which lasted for three to four months, students were required to complete four sets of writing tasks. All classes of the same grade received the same sets of worksheets in which they were asked to either write a story describing some pictures or to write a passage after completing a reading task. At the end of each writing task, there were two checklists (one for a peer and the other for a self-assessment task), a teacher feedback form, and an area for students to record the corrections they made in response to teachers' feedback. The worksheets, embedding both instructional and assessment tasks, were used as the primary materials for teaching L2 writing in English in this school.

Participants

To identify case study teachers, the second researcher had brief talks with many teachers working in the school and shortlisted target teachers at three career stages. She then approached them one by one. Three teachers (pseudo-named as Ms. P, Ms. L and Ms. Y) accepted the invitation and participated along with the three classes they taught: two in Grade 4 and one in Grade 5. Detailed teacher profiles are presented in Table 2. Ms. P was the most junior, a novice teacher with only 1.5 years of teaching experience; Ms. L was very experienced with 12 years of teaching experience, and Ms. Y was the most senior of the three, a well-established veteran teacher with over 20 years of teaching experience, who was also the English panel head of this school. With more than 10 year gaps between teachers, this design allowed us to study a sufficient variety of teachers in this school within the scope of a small research project.

¹ Chinese is used for all subjects except for the subject of English.

Table 2 Profiles of the participants

	Ms. Y	Ms. P	Ms. L
Teaching experience (years)	>20	1.5	12
Position	English panel head	teacher	teacher
Class code	4C	4D	5D
# of students in class	24	30	30

Data collection

One feature of a case study approach is that multiple data collection methods can be adopted to understand each case. In this study, multiple sources of data were collected over the course of four months, which comprised semi-structured individual interviews, analysis of teacher-written feedback, and lesson observation. As only one teacher (Ms. Y) agreed to participate in an in-depth investigation, only her writing lessons were observed, from which detailed field notes were taken. Semi-structured individual interviews were conducted with the three teacher participants in their native language (Cantonese). During the interviews, the teachers were invited to describe their writing instruction and assessment practices in detail, including pre-, during- and post-writing activities. They were also asked about their views towards FA and perceived difficulty in using it or concerns about (if not using) FA strategies. Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed verbatim. Transcriptions of the interviews were given to research participants for a consistency check and verification. Finally, a total of 148 worksheets containing student writing and teacher-written feedback were collected for analysis.

Data analysis

To address RQ1 and 3, interview transcripts were coded and analyzed inductively to identify emergent themes relating to each research question (Creswell, 2015; Thomas, 2006). Specifically, the second researcher read the transcripts closely multiple times to highlight the segments related to the research questions. This was followed by a data reduction process. All highlighted segments were extracted, grouped, and labeled in sub-categories, i.e. sub-themes under each research question. For instance, for RQ1, teachers' descriptions of their practices in different stages of an instruction cycle were

coded against the FA strategies and put under the sub-categories of pre-, during- and post-writing stages. The researcher then reviewed the subcategories to reduce overlapping and redundancy among them. Afterwards, cross-case comparison (Yin, 2018) were conducted to identify the similarities and differences among the three cases. To ensure the reliability of coding and categorization, the first researcher read through the codes and themes generated by the second researcher (the main coder and analyst) to verify the codes and to check coding consistency. For Ms. Y, the information generated from the interviews was also compared with the field notes of the observed lessons for data triangulation.

To answer RQ2, teachers' written feedback on students' worksheets was annotated. The annotation started with reading through the marked worksheets to identify feedback points, that is, "*any comment, underlining or correction made on the student text by the teacher*" (Hyland, 2003, p.220). To ensure the reliability of annotation, three coders were involved. The first coder (i.e. the second researcher) annotated the whole data file; the second coder (a research assistant) read through the first coders' annotation to cross verify and highlight areas of disagreement. The third coder (the first researcher) was brought in to resolve the disagreements.

Initial data inspection found that teachers' written feedback was comprised mainly of error corrections and comments. Teachers' error corrections were then annotated based on Lee's (2004) framework of direct error correction, indirect coded error feedback, and indirect uncoded error feedback. Teacher-written comments were analyzed adopting the framework of Ferris (2003). Afterwards, Chong's (2017) terms of *feedback*, *feedback up* and *feedback forward* were applied to reveal patterns in feedback orientation.

Findings and Discussion

This section reports the findings of this study to address the three research questions, starting with a description of the three teachers' practices at different stages of a writing

instruction cycle (RQ1), followed by an analysis of teachers' written feedback (RQ2), and a synthesized account of the difficulties that teachers encountered or perceived when implementing FA (RQ3). In the interest of space, cross-case analyses are presented under each research question, followed by a discussion of the findings.

RQ 1. How do primary teachers make use of FA strategies at different stages of a L2 writing instruction cycle?

Pre-writing stage

Ms. Y's class aimed at teaching pupils how to write a story based on a series of picture cues. In the pre-writing stage, Ms. Y provided a great amount of input to facilitate students' writing. She started the lesson by engaging them with the plot of the story, then asked brainstorming questions to encourage them to come up with words and ideas to describe each picture. She corrected grammar mistakes in their answers and reviewed some grammar rules that could be used in writing the story. With enough words and ideas elicited, Ms. Y conducted co-writing with students to produce a piece of model writing. During the co-writing process, she reminded students of rules in English writing including grammar, punctuation, and formatting.

Ms. P's students were academically stronger than Ms. Y's. Ms. P also provided input on language and content in the pre-writing stage. She started the lesson with reading the instructions of the writing task, followed by a brainstorming activity in which groups of students came up with words to use in their writing. Next, she asked them to try writing a few sentences to describe what had happened in each picture so that each student was able to contribute one sentence to the story that was thus composed by the whole class collaboratively. After that, they were asked to read their composition to identify mistakes and incoherent sentences and to revise the sentences. During the process of co-writing, students could obtain an idea of what a good composition entails, yet the learning goals and success criteria were not explained explicitly.

Whilst both of the previous teachers taught Primary 4, Ms. L taught a Primary 5 class. Similar to the other two teachers, Ms. L provided input on content and language in the pre-writing stage. She started the lesson with a brainstorming activity during which she provided some new words for weaker students as well as guiding questions with picture cues to help them answer her questions and form their ideas for writing the story. Next, she gave them a sample writing to read and asked them to discuss and identify the organizational and language features of the text. After that, she asked students to list the language features that could be included in their writing.

Our analysis of the teaching and assessment practices of the teachers in the pre-writing stages (see Table 3) shows that all three teachers provided instructional scaffolding to prepare students for writing. Ms. Y engaged primarily with the first strategy (FAS 1) through demo-writing and oral corrective feedback, while the other two teachers' practices can be mapped onto FAS 1, 2 and 4. Both engineered effective tasks and activities that elicited evidence of writers' understanding of the target writing tasks and success criteria (FAS 2). Ms. P also activated student writers as a resource for learning (FAS 4) as she used student generated sentences as input materials for co-writing a model essay. In addition, both teachers provided a task that could help student writers to narrow the gaps between the target writing criteria and their existing ability. Ms. P asked students to identify and correct the linguistic problems in the collaborative essay put together from student-generated sentences. Ms. L asked students to list the language features from the model essay that they wanted to incorporate into their own writing. Both tasks moved student writers forward towards the target writing.

In terms of the agents of class activities, Ms. P and Ms. L were both able to activate and engage students (see Table 3), while Ms. Y's class was dominated by the teacher with minimal student engagement (except for producing oral responses to teacher questions during the brainstorming activity). Whilst the instructional focus of Ms. Y (the most senior) and Ms. P (the most junior) was primarily on language, Ms. L was able to engage students in broader aspects of writing through the text analysis task,

which required them to understand text organization and language features beyond linguistic accuracy.

Of the three stages of instruction, the pre-writing stage was the best implemented, as the three teachers adopted the greatest variety of instructional and assessment strategies to prepare writing as well as to clarify and share target characteristics of writing. It is worth mentioning that what were considered innovative strategies in Lee's studies several years ago (2011a, 2011b), such as using brainstorming activities, mind-maps, and asking guiding questions, were adopted by all three teachers in this study albeit to different extents. Similar to the participants in Lee's studies, the teachers in this study spent most of their energy on the pre- and the post-writing stages, with the pre-writing stage being the best conducted in terms of the variety and quality of instructional and FA strategies adopted.

During writing stage

Ms. Y's engagement in this stage was minimal; students wrote their stories at home with the words and ideas they had taken notes of in class. In their first piece of writing, no student worked on the peer- or self-assessment tasks. Ms. Y reminded them of the two tasks, so starting from the second piece of writing, a few students did the self-assessment task and asked their parents or elder siblings to proofread their work. Ms. P's writing instruction did not have a during-writing stage either; her students finished their writing at home. Again, no students did the self-assessment task and only a few asked their peers or parents to check their work before submitting their work. Ms. L's students also finished their writing at home. Unlike the other two teachers, however, Ms. L's students did peer- and self-assessment in class the next day (FAS 4 and 5), working on the two assessment tasks in their worksheets before submitting their work. Ms. L recalled, when students conducted the two FA tasks for the first time in term one, she went through the criteria with them to make sure they understood each item (FAS 1). In addition, she asked students to highlight the words in their writing which

corresponded to the key language features taught in the pre-writing lesson and to pay special attention to them (FAS 2).

To sum up, all three teachers left the writing task for their students to complete at home. Both Ms. Y and Ms. P had minimal engagement with this stage and did not provide any guidance to the two planned assessment tasks. As a result, their students tended to neglect the two tasks entirely or make minimal attempts. The third teacher (Ms. L), however, effectively engaged her students in four FA strategies (FAS 1, 2, 4, 5), providing an exceptional case.

Skipping the during-writing stage is common in Hong Kong schools. Teachers tended to consider this stage non-essential, taking too much class time, and best reserved for students to complete at home. In doing so, however, they missed opportunities to monitor, diagnose, assess, and understand students' writing processes, the essence of process writing instruction. The practice of skipping the during-writing stage was a pragmatic response to manage a packed curriculum and tight teaching schedule (Pennington & Cheung, 1995), but is also related to a more fundamental reason relating to teachers' beliefs about education and pedagogy (more on this aspect in the discussion).

Table 3 Analysis of teacher writing instruction and activities in the pre-writing stage

Instructional Strategies (IS) and Formative Assessment Strategies (FAS)	Agents		Writing instruction and activities in the pre-writing stage		
	Teacher	Students	Ms. Y	Ms. P	Ms. L
Provide instructional scaffolding that prepares writers for writing (IS1)	✓ ✓		brainstorm ideas and words review grammar rules	brainstorm ideas and words or guiding questions	brainstorm ideas and guiding questions
Clarify, share and make sure writers understand the requirements of the writing task and success criteria (modified FAS 1)	✓ ✓		correct grammar mistakes in students' oral responses conduct demo-writing with additional input on grammar, punctuation and format.	read the instructions of the writing task (target features and requirements) with students	provide students with a sample target writing text to analyze
Engage effective discussions, tasks and activities that elicit evidence of writers' understanding of the target writing tasks and success criteria (FAS 2);	✓ ✓	✓ ✓		invite students to write a few sentences to describe each picture;	ask students to discuss and identify organization and language features.
Activate student writers as a resource for learning (FAS 4 e.g. using student-generated materials as instructional input).	✓	✓		involve students in co-constructing a model essay; ask student read the co-written text to identify mistakes and incoherent sentences.	
Engage writers with tasks that can bridge the gaps between the target criteria and writers' current ability. (IS 2)	✓	✓		ask students to revise the sentences of the model essay	ask students to list the language features to be included in their writing

Post-writing stage

In this stage, Ms. Y gave students grades, comments, and corrective feedback. In the post-writing lesson, she firstly explained the common mistakes to the whole class (FA strategy 3). Then, she talked with individual students to explain how to correct the mistakes and asked them to make corrections (FAS 2 and 3). The writing process ended when students finished their corrections.

Ms. P's practices of FA in this stage included corrective feedback and follow-up activities assisting students to revise their writing (FAS 2 and 3). Before she returned the marked writing to students, Ms. P prepared one anonymous sample each of high-quality and low-quality work (FAS 4) and asked students to discuss why one was better written and how the unsatisfactory one could be improved. In addition, she sometimes organized a whole-class error-correction activity during which she commented on the common mistakes and explained how to correct them (FAS 3). Afterwards, her students would correct their mistakes, but they were not asked to re-write the story. As in Ms. Y's case, the writing process ended when students finished their corrections.

Similarly, Ms. L provided students' grades, corrective feedback, and written comments (FAS 3). However, her students re-wrote the story based on the feedback they received, and submitted a second draft in which they not only corrected linguistic mistakes but also modified the content. The writing cycle ended when the students finished their corrections for the second draft.

Providing an opportunity for students to re-draft their writing and to incorporate teacher feedback in a new draft is important for process writing instruction (Lee, 2011), yet only one teacher required students to have a second draft. The students of the other two teachers were only asked to make linguistic corrections to demonstrate their take-up of teacher feedback. Omitting re-drafting and collecting single-drafts, alongside providing comprehensive error feedback focusing on linguistic errors are features of the product-oriented approach to writing commonly found in Hong Kong schools (Pennington & Cheung, 1995; Lee, 2011). Ms. Y and Ms. P's writing instructions align

with the product-oriented approach, while Ms. L's lessons demonstrated more features of the process writing instruction. Despite a number of commendable features in her instructional and FA practices, Ms. P's post-writing activity, using two student-generated written samples could be more effective if it was followed by the students working on a second or even a third draft, incorporating insights gained from the comparative text analysis. Multiple-draft writing could push students to write better, longer, and deeper than with single drafts.

RQ2. What are the patterns in teacher feedback in the post-writing stage?

A total of 148 pieces of students' written work with 1,732 items of written feedback were collected and analysed. Table 3 presents their overall distribution. It is clear that all three teachers adopted error correction as their primary feedback strategy and gave much fewer written comments. An overwhelming majority of the written feedback consisted of error corrections (89%), with only 11% being comments. Marking every error in student writing, the teachers appeared to focus on grammatical accuracy and language use. Comparing the three teachers, Ms. P, the youngest, gave more feedback (16.74 per piece) than the other two teachers (10.22 and 10.66 per piece). She also corrected students' errors most often; 95% of her feedback consisted of error corrections. Ms. L used written comments more often than the other two; she gave 91 comments, representing nearly one fifth (19%) of her total feedback, whilst Ms. Y and Ms. P only had 7% and 5% respectively.

Error correction

Table 4 presents the distribution of the error correction types. The majority are direct error corrections, representing 87% of all corrections, followed by indirect uncoded correction (8%) and indirect coded correction (5%). In terms of feedback orientation, all three error correction strategies were considered to be *feedback up*, that is, what a student can do better in the current task. In addition, we think the two indirect correction methods bear a sense of forward looking. Both push students to think and find out the

correct linguistic forms, and the linguistic knowledge gained is transferrable to later tasks. In the feedback literature, indirect feedback is also considered to orient towards long-term development of writing (Ferris, 2006). Hence, we assigned an additional label to the two indirect correction strategies as *feedback forward*. This study found that forward-looking indirect corrections were much fewer than the now-and-here direct error corrections (13% vs. 87%). They are even fewer than what was reported in Lee's (2008) study with secondary teachers, where the percentages were 28.5% (indirect) vs. 71.5% (direct).

Comparing the three teachers' error correction preferences, we found that Ms. Y (the more senior) and Ms. P (the most junior) were similar; both preferred direct error corrections (95% and 87%), used indirect uncoded feedback occasionally (5% and 13%), and indirect coded feedback not at all or scarcely. In contrast, Ms. L preferred to use direct error correction (77%) and indirect coded feedback (22%), and used indirect uncoded feedback scarcely. Ms. L's feedback pattern appeared to align better with research-based recommendations for effective error correction, which considered indirect coded feedback to be "more conducive to reflection and cognitive engagement" (Lee, 2008, p.71). Ms. L's feedback strategy may be related to her adoption of the process pedagogy with multiple drafting.

Written comments

Compared with the amount of error correction, teachers provided much fewer written comments. Those they did provide were of diverse types and served multiple purposes (see Table 5). In terms of feedback orientation, teachers paid more attention to what the student did and could do better in the current task (i.e. *feedback + feedback up* at 81%, 66%, and 71% respectively), with a much smaller proportion of their comments focusing on what the students could improve in the next task (i.e. *feedback forward* at 19%, 18%, and 5%).

Comparing the three teachers, we found they used a similar number of comments describing *what the writers did in the task* in proportion to the total number of their written comments (39%, 43%, and 37%). Ms. Y used both positive (16%) and negative comments (23%), suggesting a balance of assessing both strengths and weaknesses. In comparison, Ms. P and Ms. L did not make any negative comment at all. A rather significant portion of their comments are positive, confirming what the students had done well (43% and 37%). This finding was at first slight surprising. Lee (2004) found teachers made more negative comments than positive ones; in a later work (Lee, 2008), she found the teachers made a similar amount of positive (38.3%) and negative comments (33.9%). Relating this finding with the teachers' career stages and instructional purpose, we think that Ms. P and Ms. L avoided negative comments in order to build relationships with students. The fact that Ms. P was rather junior (with only 1.5 year of teaching experience) and that Ms. L adopted a multiple-drafting approach and expected students to act upon her comments may explain their avoidance of negative comments. On the other hand, Ms. Y, being the most senior and established (with 20 years of teaching experience) and adopting a single-draft approach in her teaching, did not seem to be concerned about criticisms. The pattern of her written comments was more aligned with that reported in Lee (2004) about Hong Kong secondary teachers' feedback practices.

In terms of *feedback up*, teachers tended to ask questions to seek elaboration or to prompt students to write more (23%, 8%, 22%), or provided directions for improvement (19%, 13%, 12%). Ms. P provided fewer comments in this category (23% vs. 42% and 34%), but she was the only teacher who provided additional information and ideas for further writing (3%). *Feedback forward*, which was given mainly in terms of directions that were applicable to future writing tasks, received the least attention, with Ms. Y and Ms. P (19% and 18%) using it more often than Ms. L (5%).

While the above teacher comments are primarily task-referenced (Hill & McNamara, 2011), a substantial number of comments were also found not related to

the writing task per se but more about the writer (e.g., *Keep working hard!*) or the teacher (e.g., *I enjoyed reading your writing.*). These comments belong to person-referenced feedback or personalized feedback (Ferris, 2003). Ms. L and Ms. P wrote *personalized comments* rather frequently: 23% and 18% respectively. In contrast, Ms. Y wrote no personalized comment at all. We also noticed that Ms. L used quite a few smiley faces ☺ along with her remarks (13 out of 91 comments) while the other two scarcely used this strategy (1 out of 83). Smiley faces can be considered person-referenced feedback as they conveyed the teacher-reader's emotion. Though not task specific, they can mitigate the emotional impact of negative comments, and motivate and encourage learners to keep on working. They are therefore beneficial to learning, though not considered formative by some researchers (Wiliam & Thompson, 2008). Upon this point, our view is in line with Hyland & Hyland (2006b) and Goldstein (2004) that personalized comments are useful for teachers to build relationships with students, to communicate the emotion of the teacher-reader to the student writers, and to motivate writing. We are also of the view that personalized comments are especially appropriate for young writers.

It is illuminating that it is Ms. L, the only teacher who required students to write a second draft, who wrote the greatest number of personalized comments and drew smiley faces. Recalling that both Ms. L and Ms. P. were also found to avoid making negative comments, their person-orientation in providing feedback alongside building relationships with students is rather consistent. On the other hand, Ms. Y.'s task-orientation is also consistently exemplified, i.e. she offered more criticism than praise and did not write any personalized comments.

To sum up, consistent with existing studies on FA in L2 writing classrooms in Hong Kong schools (e.g. Lee, 2008; 2011), comprehensive and direct error correction was found to prevail. Teachers demonstrated considerable sophistication in writing a variety of comments covering different aspects of the written task; some also considered the affective side of writing. In terms of feedback orientation, teachers paid

more attention to what a student did and could do better in the task at hand, with a smaller proportion of their comments focusing on what a student could improve in the future. In addition, we found the three teachers demonstrated consistent orientation in writing comments (positive vs negative, task vs. person) and their orientations seemed to be associated with their career status and the pedagogic approach they adopted. In writing comments, the two less senior teachers were much more aware of building relationships with students than the senior and established teacher.

Table 4 Post-writing: Distribution of teacher written feedback

#	Sum	Ms. Y count	per piece	Ms. P count	per piece	Ms. L count	per piece
Students' work	148	58		46		44	
Error correction # and %	1658 (89%)	550 (93%)	9.48	730 (95%)	15.87	378 (81%)	8.59
Written comments # and %	174 (11%)	43 (7%)	0.74	40 (5%)	0.87	91 (19%)	2.07
Total	1732	593	10.22	770	16.74	469	10.66

Table 5 Distribution of teachers' error feedback

Feedback orientation	Error feedback type	Examples	Mean	Ms. Y	Ms. P	Ms. L
Feedback up	Direct error correction	I could writing ^{write} .	482.33 (87%)	523 (95%)	633 (87%)	291 (77%)
Feedback up/forward	Coded error feedback (Indirect)	<u>Afer</u> ^{Sp.} we bought... (Sp.=Spelling)	28.33 (5%)	0	2 (0.27%)	83 (22%)
	Uncoded error feedback (Indirect)	He went home <u>unhappily</u> .	42 (8%)	27 (5%)	95 (13%)	4 (1%)

Table 6 Distribution of teachers' written comments

Feedback orientation	Comment type	Examples	Percentage (type/total)		
			Ms. Y N=43	Ms. P N=40	Ms. L N=91
Feedback (What the student did in this task)	Positive comment	"Lots of elaborations. Well done!" "You used various connectives, nice."	16%	43%	37%
	Negative comment	"Your ideas are not consistent."	23%		
		sum	39%	43%	37%
	Ask for information	"What did she find out? E.g. How did you feel in the end?"	23%	8%	22%
Feedback up (What the student can do better in the same task)	Give information	"Being "fat" is not a personality 性格!" "The lady fainted but you did not know her. It may not be a good idea to call her family members to come."		3%	
	Give direction	"You can add more details or ideas in your experience". "Rewrite! Don't copy!"	19%	13%	12%
		sum	42%	23%	34%
Feedback forward (What the student can do better in the next task)	Explain grammar	"We don't say 'This bag has a lot of money...'. Instead we say/write 'There is a lot of money in the bag.'"	5%		2%
	Give direction	"You should pay attention to the use of past tense in story writing". "You should use more connectives to link up your ideas."	14%	18%	3%
		sum	19%	18%	5%
n/a	Personalized comments/ encouragement	"I like the ending!" "I enjoyed reading your writing." "Keep working hard!☺"		18%	23%

RQ3. What difficulties, if any, do teachers encounter when adopting FA in an L2 writing class?

The three teachers' adoption of FA strategies varied considerably. The one who made the least use of FA strategies only provided pre-writing scaffolding and corrective feedback and gathered students' common mistakes for subsequent error explanation, using only two of the five strategies. In contrast, the teacher who made the most attempts adopted all five strategies across the three stages of writing. Difficulties encountered in the implementation process were explored to understand reasons for the inadequate take-ups of FA despite school administrators' generally supportive attitude.

The major concern that all teachers expressed was students' (in)ability to conduct peer- or self-assessment. Ms. Y and Ms. P, both teaching Primary 4 pupils, believed that their students' English proficiency was too low to comprehend the meta-language (e.g. prepositions, punctuation) used in the peer- and self-assessment tasks, let alone using them to assess their own work or that of their peers.

Ms. Y reflected as follows:

“The self and peer assessment tasks are not clear enough for students to understand. Some students are so weak in comprehension that they cannot understand the criteria even if the criteria are written on the worksheet. You have to spend time in class explaining what each criterion means when students do self- and peer-assessment.”

Ms. L noted that her Primary 5 students were generally able to understand the language in the two assessment tasks, but some weak students could not identify and correct different types of mistakes or incoherent sentences. She said:

“Some weak students cannot tell the differences between adjectives and adverbs, so they cannot identify if a word is an adjective or adverb and then check if this word is grammatically correct or content appropriate.”

Ms. P expressed an additional concern about the peer- and self-assessment task: “Students are already tired after they finish writing a story of that length. If they (are required to) conduct self-assessment, they need to read the list and check each item line by line. The list is too long for students to read and also too difficult to comprehend.”

It is true that in every class there are weak and struggling pupils whose English ability may not be up to the level to engage in tasks such as assessment and reflection. There is, however, a tendency among local school teachers to under-estimate their students’ ability and set low expectations of them. In dismissing their students’ ability to perform challenging tasks, these teachers fell victims to a self-fulfilling prophecy (Lee, 2011). Admittedly, FA tasks can be demanding, both cognitively and linguistically, when students tackle them for the first time. However, the obstacles mentioned by the teachers do not seem to be insurmountable. Prior training could be provided to students for conducting peer assessment. A recent meta-analysis of 27 feedback studies found when students received appropriate prior training, peer feedback can have strong and positive effect on the quality of their writing (Thirakunkovit & Chamcharatsri, 2019). Moreover, FA instruments could be customized at appropriate difficulty levels in accordance with learners’ levels of cognitive maturity and linguistic ability. In the school where the three teachers worked, the peer- and self-assessment tools were pre-designed and embedded in pupils’ worksheets, but they were presented in a uniform manner for the whole grade without due consideration for the diversity of student levels across different classes. These instruments could be modified and customized with little difficulty. Instead of throwing the baby out with the

bathwater, for instance, descriptors on the checklist could be adjusted to align with the target language and writing features that the teacher expects pupils to learn in a particular class. The wording for each descriptor could be more concrete and specific with behaviour indicators, which could be explained in the pre-writing stage as Ms. L did with her class. Benchmark examples could also be provided, as Ms. P. did, to assist students to understand the criteria. Finally, in customizing the assessment instrument, teachers could make the task more age appropriate and interesting. Considering young pupils' attention span, the original checklists were indeed too long, and could be shortened.

As the problems related to the FA instrument design could be easily overcome, we think a deeper reason for the inadequate adoption of FA is related to its low priority among other instructional targets, as well as teachers' lack of preparation and instructional time and lack of assessment literacy. Unlike the instrument-related contradiction observed in Mak and Lee (2014), there was no incongruity between teachers' and administrators' beliefs on the benefits of formative assessment in the present study. Our teacher participants seemed to share positive attitudes towards the role that FA is capable of playing in improving learning. For instance, all participants, including the English panel head, agreed that "*self-assessment is helpful in increasing students' learning autonomy*". The problem was not because of a lack of teacher autonomy either (as in Lee, 2008) because the teachers in this school were given the liberty to adapt the generic writing and assessment tasks to accommodate their students' varied abilities. The fact that none of the teachers did so, while all of them were aware of the design problems in the worksheet, suggests that FA had a low priority in L2 writing instruction. Teachers did not consider them necessary.

It also points to a common problem documented in previous studies on Hong Kong schools, that is, teachers do not have adequate time to prepare teaching (Pennington & Cheung, 1995; Lee, 2008, 2011). As remarked by Ms. Y, “There is no time to conduct self- or peer-assessment in class, and also no time to revise and print another version of the worksheet.”

Teachers’ lack of time to prepare for teaching is related to their general heavy teaching and non-teaching workload (Qian, 2014). Related to this, teachers relied on published textbooks and existing materials, which often are not at levels appropriate for their students. However, in many schools, designing or adapting teaching materials to fit their student levels are out of the question. In the case study school, the second researcher observed, some teachers who were assigned to design writing tasks directly copied the materials designed by others without making any modifications.

Relating to the lack of teacher time, we want to comment on the school policy for comprehensive error correction. In our study, all teachers marked students’ writing comprehensively, leaving no single error unmarked. This practice while taking up an enormous amount of teacher time, is of limited effectiveness and can even be harmful according to a number of existing studies (e.g. Lee, 2008, 2011; Ferris, 2003). In contrast, focused and selective feedback are more effective and manageable, and should be adopted. Along different stages of foreseeable learning progressions (Heritage, 2007), different targets of feedback can be planned for selective feedback, for instance, from the macro aspects of writing (e.g., organization and content) in the first draft to the macro aspects of editing language (grammar and spelling) in later drafts. In terms of teacher time, focused feedback is much less time consuming and can spare teachers for more worthwhile endeavours such as planning and preparing for teaching and monitoring the learning

process. In making this suggestion, we are aware how entrenched the comprehensive error correction practices are in local school systems (as in Lee 2004, 2008) and that sound educational practices do not always gain their way to practice because of a variety of reasons. Regardless of the pedagogical and logistic benefits that selective focused feedback can offer, it remains challenging to replace the comprehensive correction practices in schools.

A related yet different issue of time is the limited instructional and assessment time embedded in the curriculum. Teachers' reliance on published textbooks and their endeavour to cover the maximum amount of content mean there is never enough time for teaching. In this study, although all three teachers engaged in the pre-writing stage with a variety of instructional and FA strategies, they all skipped the during-writing stage and left the writing task to be completed at home. Monitoring the process of writing (and the process of learning in general) was not considered essential in comparison with the real business of teaching, or more precisely, teaching as in the traditional notion of knowledge transmission (Pennington & Cheung., 1995). Process-based writing instruction in particular has been resisted for the concern that it would take away too much time from teaching or covering textbook content (Lee & Falvey, 2014).

Based on the above, we would suggest schools reduce the total number of required writing tasks, for instance, from four to two, so as to allow time for multiple drafts of each task. The quality of writing and writing experience is more important than the quantity. Secondly, we recommend a return to the during-writing stage in the L2 writing instruction cycle. Teachers should be reminded of the importance of monitoring students' writing process. Even doing it partially (i.e. observing segments of a writing process or observing a few selected students) can provide much needed insights for teachers to understand

students' writing processes and the problems in their work. Finally, we think measures should be taken to protect teachers' time for lesson preparation from the non-teaching related workload. Incentives should be provided for teachers to customize existing teaching and assessment materials and to attempt innovative instructional and assessment strategies in their teaching.

We also recommend school teachers take on professional development to improve their language assessment literacy. As is well documented in the literature, school teachers worldwide remain inadequately prepared for, illiterate or “unschooled” in sound assessment (Stiggins, 2002), despite the fact that they spend nearly one third of their professional time on assessment (Cheng, 2001). As such, school teachers, especially novice and junior ones, could find it threatening to adapt existing assessment instruments

Further discussion and conclusion

The present study adopted a widely cited framework of formative assessment strategies (Leahy et al., 2005) to examine primary English teachers' instructional and assessment practices in a L2 writing instruction cycle. Given inadequate research focusing on primary level writing classes and following the entire instruction cycle, this study provides a valuable addition to the literature. In analyzing the teacher written feedback, we referred to multiple analytical frameworks in an effort to evaluate the formativeness, effectiveness and feedback orientation. Such analytical foci set the present study apart from previous research. Notwithstanding its limitations as a small-scale study with three teachers, a number of insights have been drawn from our study, which are consolidated in the form of a checklist in Table 7, where we integrated effective instructional strategies with formative assessment strategies. The latter were based on Leahy et al. (2005) but have been adapted

and expanded to fit into the domain of L2 writing. Applications of these strategies at different stages of the L2 writing instruction process are also suggested and discussed in the following.

Strategy 1 (S1 in Table 7), designing or adapting materials for the writing task(s) and the planned assessment task(s) so that the assessment criteria are task specific and appropriate for students' ability, is important yet was missing from the instructional flow of the participants in our study. This “upstream” planning and preparation of teaching materials is a pre-requisite of proper teaching and assessment (Wiliam & Thompson, 2008, p. 67), and that it should be skipped or given little time by teachers is unfortunate. By embedding this strategy in the checklist, we hope schools and teachers can pay due attention to and reserve time for teaching preparation. Strategy 2 and 4 (see S2 and S4 in Table 7) were adapted from FAS 2 and 4 in Table 1 and Strategy 3, an instructional strategy, were the ones that our teachers adopted in the pre-writing stage. Using the three strategies together, teachers can set clear targets for student writers, clarify task-specific success criteria, and provide necessary instructional support to students to start writing. While Strategies 1 to 3 should be conducted in the pre-writing stage, we can also see the application of Strategy 4 in the during- and post-writing stages, where teachers can raise questions, organize discussions and design activities to check and monitor “where the writer is” in relation to the instructional objectives.

Table 7 Embedding FAS within an L2 writing instruction cycle:

A checklist for teachers

Instructional and Formative Assessment Strategies for L2 writing	Pre	During	Post
S1. Designing or adapting materials for the writing task(s) and the planned assessment task(s) so that the assessment criteria are task specific (align with objectives of the writing task) and appropriate for students' ability.	✓		
S2. Clarifying, sharing and making sure writers understand the writing goals and criteria for success.	✓		
S3. Providing instructional scaffolding that prepares writers to reach the target criteria (e.g. brainstorming ideas, composing outlines, providing linguistic input).	✓		
S4. Engineering effective discussions, tasks and activities that elicit evidence of writers' understanding of the success criteria of target writing tasks and identify gaps between the target and writers' current abilities (understanding where the writer is).	✓	✓	✓
S5. Activating writers as a learning resource for each other (e.g. using student-generated materials for teaching and feedback, using pair work, and group work to support individual learning, using peer assessment to provide additional feedback to writers)	✓	✓	✓
S6. Activating writers as owners of their writing (e.g. using self-assessment to evaluate the extent to which writers have met the target criteria of success)	✓	✓	✓
S7. Providing clear and constructive feedback that moves learning forward (e.g. interactive, unplanned feedback, task-referenced feedback, person-referenced feedback, feedback up, and feedback forward).	✓	✓	✓
S8. Setting or adjusting the writing objectives for a 2nd or 3rd draft of the same writing task based on the evidence retrieved from students' writing.			✓

Strategy 5 to 7 (S5-7 in Table 7), i.e. activating writers as a learning resource for each other, activating writers as owners of their writing, and providing clear and

constructive feedback, can also be implemented at all three stages. In our study, one teacher adopted S5 in the pre-writing stage. She engaged the whole class in collaborative composition of a model essay and made students to reflect on their own writing to clarify the success criteria. Activating students as resources for each other and for the teacher through collaborative writing in pairs or in small groups is also suitable for the during-writing stage, while peer-editing can be utilized in the post-writing stage. Strategy 6, activating writers as owners of their writing can be applied creatively at all three stages. At the planning stage, for instance, teachers can foster writer ownership by providing choices of writing tasks for student writers to select. Engaging students in the composition of a model essay, in self-editing, and re-drafting, are all conceivable applications of this strategy.

As for Strategy 7, i.e. *providing clear and constructive feedback*, existing research (e.g., Lee, 2008, 2011) has found clear, descriptive, focused, task-specific, criteria-referenced feedback to be formative and effective. Corrective, confirmatory, and explanatory feedback also have a role to play. Although task-referenced feedback provides more information to advance learning, person-referenced feedback is capable of providing necessary emotional support, especially so for young writers at the primary school level. Besides the post-writing stage, teacher feedback can be applied to the pre- and during-writing stages in the form of unplanned, interactive, verbal or non-verbal feedback (Hill & McNamara, 2011). Ms. Y in our study, for instance, provided interactive verbal feedback to students in the pre-writing stage.

We add Strategy 8 to the checklist, i.e. setting or adjusting the writing objectives for a 2nd or 3rd draft of the same writing task based on the evidence retrieved from students' writing, to stress the importance of having multiple drafts in L2 writing instruction. At the end of the first cycle of instruction, teachers should plan the second (and then the third)

cycle of writing based on information drawn from the previous one. Recalling our earlier discussion of feedback, we would add that feedback only becomes formative and effective when the student writers are given opportunities to respond to and act upon it in re-thinking and re-drafting their work. Effective feedback depends on the implementing of process pedagogy, especially the insistence on multiple drafting, because the benefits of feedback can only be unlocked when students engage with teacher feedback at cognitive, affective, and behavioral levels (Zhang & Hyland, 2018). Multiple drafting ensures that teacher feedback is “received attentively” (p. 90) and acted upon by students at the behavioral level.

It is our hope that this checklist can be informative and inspiring to English teachers working in primary (and secondary) schools in Hong Kong. Though it is not our intention to be prescriptive, that is, teachers can create other instructional or assessment techniques under each strategy, there is research evidence (e.g., Pennington & Cheung, 1995) that teachers who adopted a fuller set of strategies of process pedagogy tended to have more success than those who selected strategies and implemented them in isolation. One reason is that these strategies are interlinked and rely on each other to actualize their potential benefits.

At the end, we must restate that the findings of this research are based on a limited set of data, which is primarily self-reported. Although it was not our purpose to generalize the findings to other school contexts, lesson observations involving more teachers could be used to triangulate with self-reported data and strengthen the research findings. If school access is not a problem, as it is in Hong Kong, further studies can extend both the scope and variety of data sources, for instance, to include a student perspective in data collection. In the Hong Kong context, researchers can also look at other types of primary schools, such as private schools, or compare schools with different student intakes. Notwithstanding the

limitations of a small data set, we consider this study informative and bearing originality, and as such, able to make a unique contribution to the literature on EFL literacy education in the Greater China region.

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Making New Books in Rural Middle Schools in China: A Preliminary Exploration of Local Realities and Community-oriented Literacy Projects

Shizhou Yang*

Yunnan Minzu University

Meixin Nong

Funing No. 3 Middle School

Bioprofile:

Shizhou Yang is associate professor at Yunnan Minzu University in Kunming, China, where he teaches English writing (both academic and creative), directs Center for the Second Language Writing Studies and chairs the Department of English. He has published in several international journals and presented at over 10 conferences on second language writing, identity and qualitative research methods. He holds a Ph.D. in Applied Linguistics from La Trobe University, Australia. **Email:** syang@ynni.edu.cn

Meixin Nong, of Zhuang ethnicity, teaches English at Funing No. 3 Middle School in Yunnan, China. Since 2017, she has become an English teacher trainer in Funing county. **Email:** 121053898@qq.com

Abstract

While the National Teacher Training Program (NTTP) may have exposed some rural English teachers to “new” literacy theories, it remains unknown how these theories change

the ways NTTP trainees relate to
their students’ diverse

*corresponding author
Dr. Shizhou Yang, 4th Floor, Bo’wen Building, School of Foreign Languages, Yunnan Minzu University, Kunming, Yunan 650500 China

backgrounds, redesign writing tasks and evaluate their students' writing. To capture these ongoing changes, this paper reports a collaborative action research between a university-based NTTP trainer and Nong, one of his trainees, a member of the Zhuang minority who teaches at a middle school in a Zhuang rural area of southwest China. It first delineates challenges experienced by Nong and her colleagues, particularly their students' restricted writing proficiency, "Chinglish," and a seeming lack of voice. It then documents the team's joint efforts to improve the students' English writing experience by introducing to them a community-oriented literacy project, in which literacy is treated as an identity-bearing and -forming social practice. An insider view of the design and implementation of a two-week-long project with Nong's students is provided. The program's effectiveness is evaluated by drawing on students' reflections, interviews with Nong, and her students' writing samples. This study provides important understandings about community-oriented literacy education, particularly how it connects the learning of English writing with the learners' existing and imagined identities, and associated knowledges and practices. It also throws new light on identity-making processes of both the student writers and writing teachers as they work on projects that use diverse semiotic means to link them with each other and with the world outside the writing classrooms. Pedagogical implications will be discussed.

Keywords: English writing, minority learners, rural school, Yunnan

刚收到任务时，我很着急，因为不知道该怎么写，也不知道写什么，经过我的构思，我按照老师给的提示，就想起来该怎么写了，写完后交给老师，我觉得很轻松，觉得其实写一篇作文原来没有想象中那么难。直到作品被认可后，我觉得很有成就感。

When I first got the task, I was worried, because I did not know how to write, or what to write. But through planning and following my teacher's instructions, I knew how to write. After I did it, I sent it to my teacher, feeling a great relief. Actually, composition is not as

hard as I had thought. With my work being acknowledged, I felt a great sense of achievement. (QQ¹ record, 08/02/2018, Huan)

Introduction

Teaching English writing to foreign language learners has its unique challenges. These include but are not limited to large class sizes, lack of adequate teacher training, heavy workload, tiring but unproductive feedback practices (Leki, 2001; Lee, 2016; You, 2004), and sometimes not so favorable sociopolitical context which complicates both teaching and learning activities (You, 2010). These challenges are further exacerbated for ethnic minority learners in China, a total of about 26 million learners (Zhao & Ding, 2017). Most of these learners grow up in remote rural areas and so their access to quality education is often impeded by their parents' limited education and financial resources (Xie & Tan, 2009). Influenced by monolingual ideologies, they may experience intense “pains” when their home language and literacy practices are devalued in college (Wang, 2016).

Moving closer to the literacy in English in particular, compared to an overwhelming wealth of literature on the subject in both ESL and EFL contexts (cf., Leki, Cumming & Silva, 2008; Silva, 1993), there are only a few published studies on how minority learners in China learn English (e.g., Wang, 2016), and much fewer, to write in English. Among these few, two contrasting lines of inquiry seem to dominate. One line shares a problem orientation, with learners' backgrounds viewed by researchers as “an obstacle” (Alford, 2014, p. 80). Scholars in this camp often suggest that minority learners' mother tongues,

¹ Although little known outside China, the social media platform QQ serves as a Chinese equivalent to Facebook. With a red-scarf-wearing penguin as its mascot, QQ has been widely embraced by Chinese society since its launch in 1999. According to one report (Retrieved from <https://expandedramblings.com/index.php/qq-statistics/>), QQ has now more than 800 million active monthly users and more than 700 million mobile users. That is, more than half of the 1.4 billion Chinese use QQ. Among these, 60% are young people born after 1990 and by average they spend 15 hours a month on the QQ.

together with Chinese, their second language, interfere with their learning of English language and literacy (e.g., Shi & Yang, 2011; Xiao, 2017). The other camp (e.g., Yang, 2013) takes a “resource” perspective, regarding learners’ diverse backgrounds as “beneficial” to their learning (Alford, 2014, p. 80). They do not believe that minority learners are inherently slower in learning to write in English than Han Chinese or learners of other ethnic backgrounds. Rather, there are problems with existing curriculum and pedagogical designs that prevent minority learners from succeeding in gaining an additional literacy. Thus, it is necessary for literacy educators to be reflective and take actions to scaffold minority learners’ learning by, for instance, inviting them to write about their life and literacy experiences in English in a supportive group environment.

This study follows the resource approach, believing that teachers are agents for change. Situated in their local milieu and aware of their students’ needs, secondary school language teachers play important roles in imagining and designing alternative writing activities that enable their students to write in self-affirming and -enabling ways. But teachers do not have to do it all alone. Instead, they can collaborate with university researchers to find best ways of teaching to bridge the “idealism-realism gap” (Lee, 2016, p. 78-79), as exemplified in Higgins and Ponte’s (2017) recent study. With this as the backdrop, the current study explores how Nong, an ethnic Zhuang English teacher in a Zhuang minority area in southwest China, reinvigorates her writing class through a collaborative action research with a university teacher. The authors hope that insights from this study may inspire others who are reimagining their secondary school literacy classes despite limited material resources.

A Community-oriented Approach

To begin, literacy is not a lone event but a social practice. People used to associate writing with a hermit penning words to paper, smoothly or painstakingly or anywhere in-between. While it can be true at times, increasingly, ethnographic studies of both mother-tongue speakers and language learners (e.g., Heath, 1983; Lam, 2000, 2009) show that literacy, or the ability to read and write, is a socially situated activity or a social practice (Street, 1995). This social nature of literacy is well captured by “literacy event” and “literacy practice,” two important terms introduced by ethnographers of literacy. While the former zeroes in on any instance when a text mediates social interactions, e.g., a family reading a book together, the latter focuses on both the text-mediated activities and communal ways of thinking about and engaging in such activities (Street, 1995, p. 2). Such a literacy-as-a-social-practice or literacy practices perspective encourages knowing ways with literacy in context. In other words, to understand why a learner knows how to read or write in particular ways (but not necessarily in others), it is important to probe into the impact of communities’ values and conceptions of literacy on the learner’s own beliefs and ways with textual materials.

This social turn of literacy demands us to reconsider issues related to literacy, particularly the intricate relationships between literacy and identity (Street, 2003) and the role of literacy education in shaping human possibilities. Put differently, literacy is not just a technical skill as often assumed in foreign language education. Rather, it is, first of all, an act of claiming one’s own preferred identity or ways of being in the world by joining together “community and school, history and biography” (Apple, 1990, p. x). One way this can be done, according to Willinsky (1990), is through engaging students to “publish, produce, and perform their work” to others, including their own parents (pp. 18-19) so that

“all [can] be authors” (Archer, 1999, p. 8). Similarly, but linking more directly with learners’ identity work, Norton (2000, 2013) postulates in her now widely accepted poststructuralist theory of learner identity, that language learning, and by extension, learning to read and write in a given language, amounts to “investment” into one’s “imagined identities” (e.g., a learner imagining a future as an office worker in a joint venture whose job involves reading and writing in a particular foreign language). The resources (e.g., time, efforts, and money) a learner puts in gaining the literacy thus foreshadow and embody certain desired identity positions from which the learner interacts with the world. As Norton (2013) concludes, drawing on her studies in several countries, best pedagogical practices should increase the learners’ “*capacity* for imagining an enhanced range of identities for the future,” validate learners’ existing identities, and provide them with “a sense of ownership over meaning-making” (p. 116, italics in the original). Further, literacy is also a site where a learner’s existing identities can play out as an important gateway to familiar, cultural, linguistic and discursal resources at his or her disposal. It is here that a writer’s “autobiographical self,” i.e., his or her accumulating experiences and accompanying sense of self, speaks volumes through every word the writer pens to the page (Ivanič, 1998, p. 24). Under this situation, one challenge in literacy education lies in finding effective ways to link these identities with the teaching and learning of academic literacy. Numerous studies show that learners prosper in contexts which encourage them to create what Cummins et al. (2005) term as “identity texts” or text materials which explicitly embody their cherished identities (e.g., Canagarajah, 2015; Cummins & Early, 2010; Edelsky, 2003; Giampapa, 2010; Yang, 2012, 2013). Importantly, Cummins et al. (2005) highlight the self-affirming functions of “identity texts,” regarding them as “a mirror” for learners’ positive self-reflection and potential channels for learners “to receive positive feedback and

affirmation of self in interaction with [their] audiences” (pp. 5-6). Thus, for learners to successfully engage in literacy learning in a foreign language context, it is critical to design a supportive social environment for productive identity work.

In New Literacy Studies (NLS), a sociolinguistic perspective on literacy is often assumed. As Gee, one advocate of NLS, proposes, literacy activities occur under the shaping effects of Discourse, with a capital D, which is defined as:

a socially accepted association among ways of using language, of thinking, feeling, believing, valuing, and of acting that can be used to identify oneself as a member of a socially meaningful group or “social network,” or to signal (that one is playing) a socially meaningful “role.” (Gee, 1990, p. 143)

As such, young learners are not agents without constraints, nor robots without agency. Rather, they can also practice their agency or “socioculturally mediated capacity to act” (Ahearn, 2001, p. 112) within the context of a given Discourse. Such Discourse both constrains and provides possibilities for them to engage in literacy in particular ways, in part shaped by how power is exercised.

According to Street (2003), literacy and power are intertwined. As a social practice, power can be seen in the ways in which a teacher shapes his or her students’ interactions with each other (Street, 2003, p. 78). Power is also implicated in contesting views about what can be counted as writing, and how, because, if perceived from an ideological model of literacy, a particular version of literacy is often privileged in a given context (Street, 2001, p. 13), such as in the language classroom. Therefore, instead of treating literacy as “neutral” or homogeneous everywhere, NLS scholars pay close attention to “the unequal and hierarchical nature of literacy in practice” (p. 13), or the type of literacy that is being valued. Further, NLS scholars also work actively to challenge the status quo. In other words,

they have a “transform[ing]” agenda in their ethnographic studies of locals’ use literacy, not to romanticize, but to recognize, activate and utilize learners’ local communicative repertoire for the learning of new or more standardized forms of literacy (Street, 2001, pp. 14-15). Questioning mystified “impact” of literacy, Street (2001, p. 9) elaborated on the close ties between literacy and power as follows:

These are issues about power, assumptions about one particular set of ideas, conceptions [of literacy], cultural group, being in some way taken on by another group. What is the power relation between them? What are the resources? Where are people going if they take on one literacy rather than another literacy? How do you challenge the dominant conceptions of literacy? It seems to me quite impossible to address the issue of literacy without addressing also these issues of power.

In a nutshell, alternate literacies imply shifted power relations to the extent learners’ communicative resources are activated.

Literacy and identity are also closely linked. Ivanic (1998) makes apparent this relationship between writing and identity, suggesting that every act of writing always implicates four dimensions of a writer’s identity, as defined below:

Autobiographical self: one’s evolving biography and accompanying sense of self up to the moment of composing a text;

Self as author: one’s standing as a text creator, managing both one’s own biography and other textual relations;

Discursive self: one’s image as projected through the general textual features;

Possibilities of selfhood: the sociocultural context which affords and constrains one’s writer identity in terms of *autobiographical self*, *self as author*, and *discursive self*.

Seen from Ivanic's framework then, writer identity is not only complex, but dynamic, with the sociocultural context (akin to "Discourse" in Gee's terms mentioned earlier) playing a crucial role in shaping the kinds of authors and textual identities young learners develop. Besides the above mentioned shifts towards conceptualizing literacy as social, literacy is also increasingly viewed as "literacies" with multiple meanings, ideological inclinations (Collins, 1995, p. 86), linguistic and cultural underpinnings, as well as diversified modes of communication (New London Group, 1996). Taking a multiliteracies perspective has several important pedagogical implications. It means that literacy educators should acknowledge the different ways with printed words through which members of a particular community make sense of their world (Heath, 1983). It means that literacy educators need to envisage creative ways to link academic literacy with students' home literacy and literacy practices that learners engage in in other social domains (see e.g., Heath, 1993; Lam, 2000; Norton & Tembe, in press; Yi, 2013). It also means that literacy activities should be viewed within a multilingual and multimodal framework (Fraiberg & You, 2012), not only to recognize, but also to integrate learners' diverse resources. It is an ongoing call to wrestle with monolingual and text-bias in literacy education and engage learners in pedagogical practices that allow them to act as "designers," both of meaning and of social futures (New London Group, 1996, p. 65).

Informed by the above insights from both theoretical and pedagogical innovations presented above and literature on "community-based pedagogies," we propose a community-oriented literacy framework. Community-based pedagogies seek to create "curriculum and practices that reflect knowledge and appreciation of the communities in which schools are located and students and their families inhabit" (Sharkey, 2012, p. 10). The focus is in linking school with the local community where learners come from. In

contrast, a community-oriented literacy framework seeks to facilitate similar pedagogical designs that both engage and enable multilingual learners by highlighting the intricate connections between literacy and identity work. More specifically, the framework entails the following main components: literacy as *social practices* as shaped by cultures, languages and modalities (New London Group, 1996; Street, 1995), *literacy events* as text-mediated interactions (Street, 1995) to affirm learners' multiple identities (Cummins, et al., 2005), existing identities and ways to mean as resources for creating *identity texts* (Cummins, et al., 2005) and *imagined identities* as powerhouses for learner engagement (Norton, 2000). Serving as a counter image of literacy as a lone writer penning words on page, a community-oriented literacy pedagogy has three main features. First, it is a purposefully designed social practice in which learners, with the support of their teachers, peers and diverse social others, create texts that draw on their diversified and evolving semiotic repertoires to communicate with both immediate and expanded audiences. Second, it invites learners to enter into literacy activities as agents who have diverse roots, identities, and imagined futures, and who play important roles in deciding what to write and how to write in a given context of interaction. Third, it requires key readers of learners' texts to take a deliberate stance in affirming the learners' textualized social identities while encouraging them to claim new identity options available only through the ownership of the schooled literacy. Figure 1 illustrates the intricate relationship between community-oriented literacy education and identity formation.

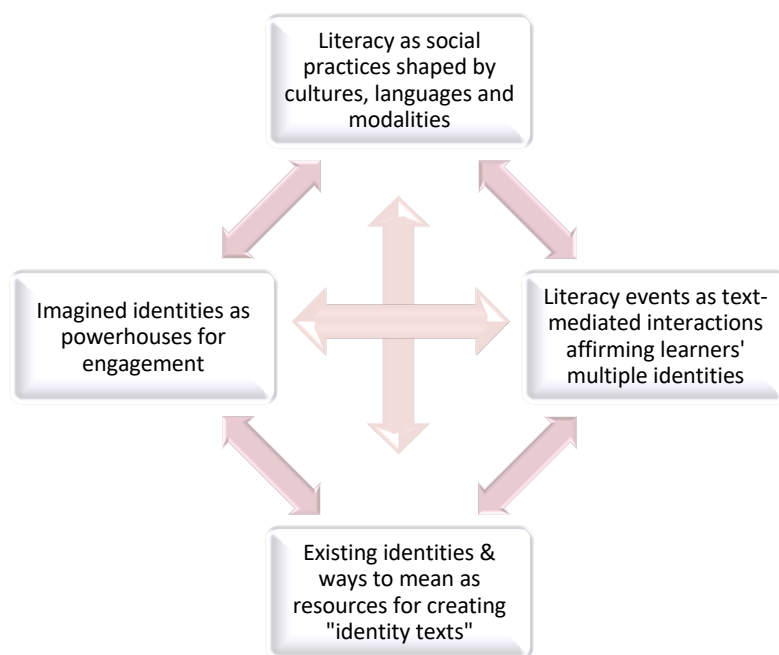


Figure 1 A Community-oriented Literacy Framework

The framework attempts to capture the two-way dynamics between literacy as a social practice and learners' identity work in nurturing social interactions. Learners are not positioned as empty vessels into which knowledge about literacy can be poured, or trainees who acquire skills in a written language through repeated drill. While important, such knowledge and skills are seen as meaningful because they are valued in school, as well as in their local communities. They are the genes of the imagined identities of a literate community and community member. Community-oriented literacy education thus joins the teaching and learning of literacy in a foreign language with what learners imagine themselves to be, in powerful ways that can speak back to their own communities and beyond, about who they are by using the literacy knowledge and skill they are developing. In other words, learners engage in community-oriented literacy because doing so allows them to pursue desired ways of being in communities both in and outside their classrooms. Community-oriented literacy education also provides important resources for learners to

succeed in the use of the school literacy. These include the learners' life experiences, imaginations, emotions, talents, and skills in other languages, local knowledge, social networks, and symbolic resources such networks imply. Drawing on these resources, learners can act as "resourceful" agents (e.g., Pennycook, 2012, p. 99) who gain and appropriate the school literacy to represent their existing identities while searching for emergent ones.

There are also dynamic interactions between imagined identities and literacy events (the horizontal bidirectional arrow), and between literacy as social practices and existing identities and ways to mean (the vertical bidirectional arrow). Looked horizontally, when a literacy event is consistent with a learner's imagined identity, active participation or investment occurs. Otherwise, there may be non-participation or compromised investment. The reverse, i.e., from right to left, is also true. A literacy event, featuring texts-mediated social interactions, may become a gateway for learners to explore emergent possibilities or identity options. Vertically, from top to bottom, literacy as social practices stresses the diverse and ever evolving sociocultural contexts in which learners write, indexing their multiple identities and ways of communicating their sense of self in a given community or Discourse. From bottom to top, learner agency is foregrounded. When learners' preferred social identities are textually represented into "identity texts," using resources at their disposal, they have the potential to disrupt established or hierarchical power relations between officially prescribed literacy and emergent literacy.

Although a community-oriented literacy pedagogy offers a promising alternative to the form-focused teaching of English writing in the EFL context, neither its implementation nor its actual effectiveness is explored adequately in China's rural areas. Next, we turn to

our own study to provide some empirical evidence of the relevancy of this pedagogy to address local realities in rural China.

The Study

Three main questions guide this study:

- 1) What are the major challenges experienced by the local teachers in teaching English writing to middle school students in rural minority areas of southwest China?
- 2) How were new initiatives designed and implemented in the teaching of English writing to middle school students in the local context?
- 3) How did the teacher and the students invest in the new initiative?

Context

The study is situated in a border county middle school in Yunnan, China, where 90% of the students are Zhuang and the majority of them can still speak the Zhuang language (QQ record, 2018/11/22). Zhuang is the largest of the 55 ethnic minority groups in China, with a total population of over 16 million¹. Among them, more than 1 million live in Yunnan, the rest in Guangxi. Zhuang people have their own distinct culture, speak a Tai language and have developed both Chinese-character-based (Bauer, 2000) and Romanized writing systems, but neither is in wide use. Despite their long history and large population, Zhuang as a whole lag far behind in both economy and education compared to coastal China.

According to Nong, a Zhuang teacher from the school and the main research collaborator, her students did not receive English education until middle school and the students' overall attitude toward learning seems far from ideal. Nong explained,

¹ Retrieved from http://www.gov.cn/guoqing/2015-07/23/content_2901594.htm.

我这里是农村地区，好多的留守儿童，大部分学生缺乏学习主动性 (*This is a rural area with many left-behind children. The majority of the students lack the incentive to learn.*) (QQ record, 2018/06/05, italics our own translation).

Nong is of Zhuang ethnicity. She began teaching English since 2009 and has become a middle school English trainer in her county. Besides doing administrative duties, she teaches 12 hours each week as a 7th grade English teacher.

Data collection methods

This is a qualitative study, more specifically a collaborative action research between a university professor, the first author, and Nong, who is the second author. From late 2016 to August 2018, the first author engaged in an annual National Teacher Training Program (NTTP) to help train six secondary school English teachers from Funing County. Having established a good rapport with these teachers and using qualitative methods, the first author collected the following data: the six teacher trainees' pre- and post-workshop questionnaires, interviews with Nong, her students' writing samples and reflections, as well as her communication with her students. Although we only met each other during training, the use of QQ, a popular Chinese instant messaging software service, allowed us to stay in touch and enabled Nong to communicate with her students even when travelling. Nong has been in the same QQ group with her students since September 2017. It provided much convenience for the class to communicate in a multi-modal manner: “我们可以发图文，截屏，视频等，及时交流思想，及时共享资源，统一发送任务通知。 *We can send texts and pictures files, screenshots and videos [with QQ] so as to share our thoughts and resources timely. We can also give announcement to the whole group regarding assignments*” (QQ record, 2018/10/17).

The data collected via QQ, cited in the format of “QQ record, year/month/date,” helped the researchers to explore English literacy education in the rural area at two linked levels. At the macro level, data from all the NTTP trainees help situate the study in the local context of rural English education in several secondary schools. At the micro level, data from Nong and her four participating student writers, all of Zhuang ethnicity, provide a more in-depth understanding of a local teacher’s process of designing, implementing, and navigating new initiatives in literacy education. All participants have given their written consents to use the data they provided, and except for Nong, all names are pseudonyms.

Data analysis

Data analysis mainly involved three steps. The first step, guided by research question 1, involved the first author reading through the six teachers’ written reflections line by line to identify their “challenges” in teaching English writing in their respective secondary schools in the same prefecture. Gradually, codes such as “limited vocabulary,” “word order” and “unsatisfactory performance” began to emerge. The second step was similar, but focusing mainly on data collected from Nong, which were copied and pasted into a Word document, arranged chronologically, and analyzed line by line. Concepts informed by the community-oriented literacy framework described above, e.g., identity, agency and investment, were applied to descriptions of both Nong and her students’ multiple identities and innovative ways with writing. An emergent method was also adopted, using labels like “invitation to reflect,” “invitation to write,” “eliciting data,” “offering support,” etc. to capture the multifaceted communication between concerned parties. The third step was checking and refining the codes for consistency. These were further refined into themes such as language and content issues for the challenges. Refining of understanding was also made possible

through ongoing, sometimes clarifying, interactions with the collaborating teachers, especially Nong. This process served as informal member check to ensure that the interpretation is accurate.

Results and Discussion

Major challenges

Three major challenges can be observed. First, many students were unable to write, even simple compositions. For instance, asked to write about “Changes in X” after studying a related sample text, the students simply replaced “*the names of people and places, without writing anything new*” (QQ record, Zhao 2017/10/29). A similar phenomenon was observed at the prefecture level. In a secondary school graduation exam, a great number of students failed to write anything about “an unforgettable event,” even though they had repeatedly practiced on similar topics before.

*During last summer vacation, I was selected to go to X county to mark middle school graduates’ English test papers. When I read the writing task, I was sure it would be OK because the task was easy. “During the middle school period, you must have had many unforgettable people and events. Please use English to narrate an unforgettable event.” We had practiced many times prior to the test, writing about both unforgettable people and events. But when I looked at the students’ test papers, I was dumbfounded. Most of the students had written a prose, describing their feelings about graduation. **Many students copied randomly from the reading passages in the test paper, thus producing off-topic compositions in most cases!** Overall, **the writing part of more than 25,000 test papers from the whole prefecture was left blank.** This was a fact hard to accept. What happened to our*

English writing? Why was it so hard for the students to write? (QQ record, Yu 2017/10/29)

These poignant stories portray a serious reality in the countryside. Many of the students, both in individual classes and across the prefecture, were engaging with English writing at a superficial level. “Copying” from a source, rather than creating something meaningful as informed by a sample text, has become their main coping strategy in writing. Put differently, without a visible template, the students would probably leave their compositions “blank.”

The second major challenge lies in language use or overall language proficiency. The middle school students were not able to use proper English sentence structures, idiomatic expressions, and word order. Nong reflected,

每次在批阅学生作文的时候我都非常地郁闷，对于二分之一的同学来说，一些很简单地句子结构他们都掌握不了，更多的错误集中体现在“中式”英语上。

Every time when I read my students' writing, I feel depressed. Half of my students cannot even use some simple sentence structures. Most of their errors tend to be “Chinglish.” (QQ record, Nong 2017/10/29)

Pan also described her students' writing as “Chinglish,” emphasizing their wrong word order and use of tense:

但结果学生上交的作文语序不对，90%以上的学生都是 Chinglish，如：I last night go home，连时态都把握不清，大部分是单词和单词的组合，根本没有人称、时态、句子结构的说法！（哭脸）

But my students have word order wrong in their compositions. Over 90% of the students write Chinglish, e.g., I last night go home. They do not even have tenses. Most of their writing is simply putting [English] words together, with nothing to do with cases, tenses and sentence structures! (A crying face) (QQ record, Pan 10/30/2018)

Nong also felt strongly about the overall low English proficiency in the countryside: “*In our rural areas, most students are weak in the basics in English, especially writing* (Nong’s writing on assignments, 2017/10/29). As such, students were also sometimes seen as developmentally unready for English writing due to their limited vocabulary. As Zhao commented:

教中学生写英语作文就像教刚出生的孩子学走路，没有会说，还没有会爬，就要求孩子去跑，在农村地区，又是少数民族地区，没有语境，词汇量又不够。

Teaching English writing to middle school students is just like teaching new-born babies to walk. They cannot speak, nor crawl, and yet they are expected to run. In rural areas, which are also minority areas, the students don’t have the context. Their vocabulary is not enough either. (Italics are the author’s translation from Chinese.) (QQ record, Zhao 2016/10/28)

It should be noted that these English teachers have named some of the most tenacious problems in teaching English to young learners. The first challenge, i.e., the lack of content in writing, seems to touch upon the complex issue of voicing by L2 writers, in particular in how they can double-voice or appropriate existing writing templates and others’ words for their own communicative purposes (Prior, 2001). The second challenge, i.e., persistent manifestations of “Chinglish,” mirrors both essentialized and more context-

sensitive discourse patterns that contrastive and intercultural rhetoric scholars (e.g., Connor, 2004; Kaplan, 1967) have identified through text analysis and more recently, through newer research methods such as corpus analysis. Likewise, the overall limited language proficiency in the rural areas echoes earlier findings that L2 writers' writing process "was more laborious, less fluent, and less productive—perhaps reflecting *a lack of lexical resources*" (italics added, Silva, 1993, p. 668). These issues cannot be resolved easily, and thus the redesigning of new initiatives need to work with more manageable problems, taking into account the teachers' own reflections and conditions in the local context.

Furthermore, it is critical not to treat the inability to write (properly) as innate to students in the countryside. Sometimes, it may be caused, at least partially, by the teachers' own teaching practices. As Zhao reflected thoughtfully, part of why her 9th graders could not write about "Changes in X" in interesting ways was because she had not provided them with ample guidance.

I believe it was because I did not cultivate my students' awareness of and ability in writing and because I did not teach thoroughly as I initially planned. Besides, I did not explain specific requirements before I asked my students to write. They were asked to write without being taught how. That is my biggest mistake. (QQ record, Zhao 2017/10/29)

With reflection as a way to move forward, next we turn to Nong's new literacy initiative for change.

Designing and implementation of new initiatives

To begin, new initiatives could not have been designed and implemented without utilizing teachers' agency. Nong exercised her agency in many ways. Most notably, it was shown

through two of her own teaching initiatives to help her students write better in English. As discussed in the previous section, the middle school students in rural areas often write what their teachers label as “Chinglish,” with their English writing showing marked features of Chinese. In Nong’s case, one issue she wrestled with constantly was her students’ Chinese word order: “我这两天一直在思考关于学生改不掉用中文语序写英语作文的问题” (*I have been thinking how to solve the problem of my students using Chinese sentence order to write English compositions. They just can’t change it.* QQ record, 2018/03/19). After pondering over it, she introduced a sentence dictation exercise to her class. “每天听写两个固定的句子…….句子内容是他们当天课堂上遇到的重点句。我认为，这样做既可以巩固当天的知识又可以为写作打下基础。(Dictating two fixed sentences every day...key sentences from the class on that day.)” Figure 2 shows the sentences Nong used on the second day of starting the dictation exercise (QQ record, 2018/03/22):

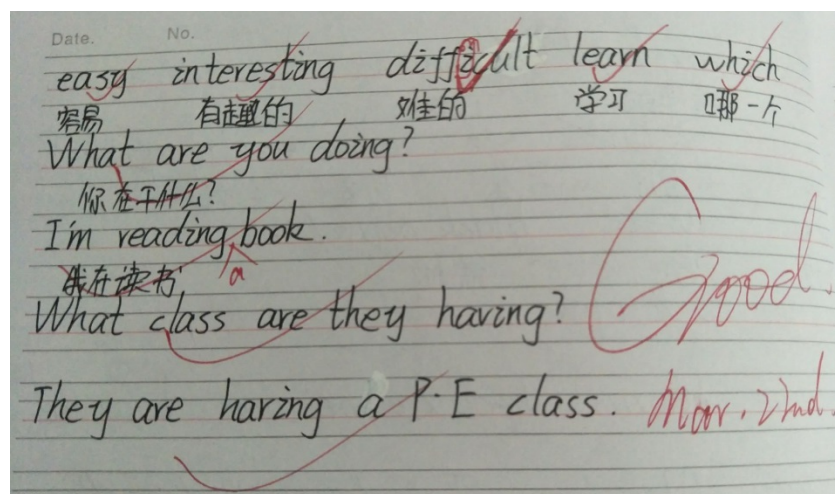


Figure 2 Nong's Dictation Sample

After two months of implementing the sentence dictation routine, Nong commented that it had been “effective” in improving students’ fluency:

I have stuck to it. My students are also used to it now. The kids feel that dictation of sentences is more challenging than doing dictation of words mechanically every day. It has been effective. Now my students' [English] writing reads more fluently than before. (QQ record, 2018/05/18)

Note that her earlier dictation of isolated words such as “easy” and “difficult,” shown in the top of Figure 2, might be useful to help the students remember the spellings of these words, but not necessarily how to use them properly. In contrast, the dictation of sentences requires that the students remember how to use words in context, at least at the sentence level. Besides, scaffolding was also built into the sentence dictation exercise to help the students learn from each other. As Nong explained:

Every time I gave the students a (sentence) dictation exercise, I would grade their sentences on the same day. Sometimes I could collect them to grade myself. Sometimes I would ask those students who need improvement to be in charge of the grading. Sometimes I would ask the students sitting at the same desk to grade each others' sentences.

Whether they made mistakes in words or sentences, they would be asked to write these words or sentences again based on the grading results. They should then resubmit the material together with the new dictation. (QQ record, 2018/08/03)

Especially noteworthy is the involvement of “those who need improvement” as graders, an identity with more power than that of a learner. It seems an act on the teacher’s part to share her power with her struggling students, an example of “collaborative use of power” (Cummins & Early, 2010). As a whole, the sentence dictation exercise shows the teacher’s agency in designing new ways of teaching, implementing it and involving her students in

creative ways. Despite this, the sentence dictation, which lasted from late March to mid-July (QQ record, 2018/08/02), was similar to dictation of words in that both limited her students' capacity to create. In other words, both exercises positioned her students mainly to reproduce prescribed sentences and content.

Relating to the new initiative of making illustrated bilingual books, Nong's agency was apparent in several other ways too. For instance, she translated the first author's extensive instructions from academic English into simple and concise Chinese that her students would easily understand, calling it “绘画故事” (*an illustrated story*) (QQ record, 2018/07/12). Seeing that no students had responded to her initial requirement to write their own books, she waited. Then, when holiday started and prompted by the first author that her students' illustrated books were important for the research, she decided to ask some of her best students to give it a try. She even provided a sample for her students (QQ record, 2018/07/16).

Additionally, Nong also showed her agency when she recognized the potential benefits that the book-writing projects might bring to her herself and her students. Asked what made her decide to pursue the book-writing project, she explained:

原因一：我的学生很需要在写作能力方面的有所改进和提升；二：双语绘画故事形象、生动、简单等特点比较符合基础差的农村孩子；三：我希望我本人和我的学生都能多接触外面的世界，开阔视野。

The first reason: My students have a great need to improve their writing. The second reason: Illustrated bilingual books are vivid and simple, especially fit for students from the rural area. The third reason: I hope that both myself and my students can get more connected with the outside world so as to enlarge our vision.

(QQ record, 2018/11/25)

This quote, along with previous ones, shows that as a teacher, Nong always sought ways to improve her students' English writing. When such an opportunity appeared, she grabbed it. This agentive response, powered by the imagined identity (Norton, 2000) of her and her students "*connect[ing] with the outside world*," played a crucial role in engaging her students in the book making initiative.

Furthermore, the implementation of the project was greatly facilitated by the use of modern communication technologies, in this case, QQ. It allowed the two authors, who lived in two different cities, to keep in touch about the project. In May, the first author wrote to Nong to encourage her to try something new, a boundary-crossing discourse-level writing project (QQ record, 2018/05/25), besides her sentence dictation exercise:

Invite your secondary school students to **write an illustrated bilingual story book about a member of their families**. They can **first work with images**, which they can take by themselves or draw pictures or simple sketches about this family member of theirs. They can then arrange the pictures in order, and then **write stories first in Chinese and then English what the particular family member is doing**. [Encourage the students to **use words and sentence structures from the class**.] Given that the students are not literate in their own written scripts but can still speak the language, they can be encouraged to **tell the story to their own families using their mother tongue**. If possible, you can **help connect the students with people who know the written script to help create written stories in Zhuang as well**. A literacy project like this thus encourages the learners to frequently cross boundaries between school and home, between life and literacy,

between known and new. Their use of the traditional literacy in English is more on the creative than the drilling side of language use.

These instructions suggested to Nong other ways of engaging her students in English writing. First, a writer identity option was made available to the students. Their bilingual identity, with a much higher expectation of the students than dictation, is also highlighted, as they are to “write an illustrated bilingual story book.” Being bilingual is then not treated as a problem causing “Chinglish” but a resource to draw upon in written communication, as advocated by translingual scholars like Canagrajah (2015). Second, the use of images, be they sketches or photos, is integrated. More specifically, visual representation serves as a means to facilitate the students’ writing process, as they are told to “first work with images.” Third, there is a heightened sense of linking the school learning with the home environment. Not only were the students encouraged to write “about a member of their families,” they are also encouraged to “use words and sentence structures from the class.” Unlike their previous writing tasks, such as their sentence dictation exercise, this project asks the students to “tell the story to their own families using their mother tongue.” If possible, also connect them with people who know the Zhuang script “to help create written stories in Zhuang as well.” Thus, their stories have multiple potential audiences both within their own families and the Zhuang speaking communities. Put concisely, the students are to write to communicate with audiences both in and outside school, rather than to show their linguistic proficiency, i.e., if they have mastered the conventional sentence orders and spellings in English.

Additionally, the QQ technology allowed Nong to communicate with her students even though she had gone to the provincial capital for teacher training. As mentioned earlier, Nong’s students did not respond to her invitation to write their own books right away.

There might be several reasons for their initial reluctance. One main reason might be because the students were getting ready for their final exams and did not want extra work. It might also be because the students did not yet know how to write the books as it seemed that Nong only mentioned in passing in class about the project. Whatever the reason, the summer holiday had already started and there were still no responses from the students. Prompted by the first author again on the QQ about the project, Nong said that she would contact her students right away. She could still gather data through the QQ group of her class and send photos of her students' stories.

On the QQ group, Nong facilitated her students' writing of "*illustrated stories*" in several ways. For instance, she forwarded to her students a Weibo article that a colleague suggested to her after hearing of the project, asking her students to use it as a "模板" (*model*) (QQ record, 2018/07/12). The article was about a six-year-old Indonesian boy, who drew simple but vivid pictures with English captions to narrate his parents' divorce, concluding that he was "happy" because he still had both parents' love without having to see her parents quarreling anymore¹. Receiving her students' works on the QQ, Nong would then provide feedback in written Chinese, and occasionally recorded voice messages, to ask her students to "*add a title*," "*add colors to the [picture of the] dancer*" or to clarify some of the content. One function on her phone also allowed her to highlight directly on her students' illustrated stories, so they could know exactly what she was commenting on. At times, Nong would impose a deadline on her students by demanding that Wei, for instance, "赶紧完成插图故事，明天发给我看" (*Quickly finish your illustrated story and send it to me tomorrow*) (QQ record, 2018/07/26). A sample of one student's illustrated story, to be

¹ See a link here: <https://www.weibo.com/3536826167/GfGCacna8>.

presented next, should then be understood in relation to both Nong's agency and affordances provided by the QQ technology.

Teacher's and students' investment

In early August, two weeks after the summer holiday began, Nong shared with me four of her students' illustrated bilingual books. They touch upon various themes, as shown by their book titles: "*My Friends and I*" by Ping, "*A Happy Day*" by Wei, "*My Sister and Me*" by Cai, and a book without a title by Huan, featuring her experience of participating in a dance contest. Next, we will use Ping's 9-page book as the main example, using other books only for additional insights, to unpack what book writing entails for the students and their teacher. Four principles can be drawn from this project.



Figure 3 Ping's Book Cover

Principle 1: The illustrated bilingual book writing project taps into writers' multiple social identities, and with these, their agency (see Figure 3 & 4). One identity is that of a friend. Such an identity breaks the boundaries of school and classroom. At that moment, it also requires one to negotiate, as did one of the students, who asked Nong, “老

师可以写我跟朋友在一起都干了什么，一起玩了什么吗?” (*Teacher, can I write about what my friends and I did and what we played?*) (QQ record, 2018/07/17). Thus, instead of being positioned just as a learner writer, as through repeated dictation exercise, starting with her book cover, Ping foregrounds her identity as one among her friends. The different colors of clothing and hair styles highlight differing gender as well as personality while a smile on all the faces and the holding of hands indicate a warm group dynamic. Other identities are also implied, e.g., as a runner (Figure 5), a basketball player (Figure 6), a swimmer (Figure 9), and a reader (Figure 10). Besides, the drawing of images positioned the writer also as a drawer. Instead of using printed English words to mean alone, the writer here also used her own drawings to communicate this to her readers. Last, the writer was positioned as a designer too. She not only provided a title, “My Friends and I,” but also did so in the proper format, with conventionalized capitalizations. She was to place it in a spot of her own choice, with self-decided distance from her drawings. All these indicate that she was being an agent in the writing process.



Figure 4 Ping's 2nd Page

Principle 2: The illustrated bilingual book writing project allows the writers to create “identity texts” using English alongside other languages and language varieties. In Figure 4, for instance, Ping uses both Chinese and English, even within one sentence (e.g., “我叫 Judy”). “Me,” written in dark blue, is singled out on the left, juxtaposed with her three “friends” on the upper right. The book thus has the potential to foreground the writer’s own individuality. Note that “friends,” written in orange, is not capitalized. It seems that the writer is aware that in this context, a single English word is enough to communicate her idea. Further down below on the right, Ping writes, “我有很多朋友她们对我很好” followed by its literal translation in English: “I have many friends they are kind to me.” This run-on sentence is used alongside Standard Written English, “My name is Judy.” Nonetheless, the starting of a different line at “they” seems to have helped. Her teacher was not in any way bothered by it. Thus, in writing her illustrated bilingual book, Ping utilized diverse resources, i.e., both complete sentences, isolated words, a mixture between Chinese and English, and non-standard English to communicate who she is, in relation to her friends.



Figure 5 Ping's 3rd Page

Principle 3: The illustrated bilingual book writing project provides ample opportunities for both scaffolded and self-initiated learning using multilingual and multimodal means of communication. For instance, the title of the book “My Sister and I” (Figure 3) was suggested by Nong as one of the two potential titles in her typed phone messages (QQ record, 2018/07/27). In Huan’s writing on a dance contest, Nong helped her with demarcating her conclusion. She first underlined two sentences in the last paragraph, and then sent two separate voice messages in Chinese (QQ record 2018/07/16) to Huan, asking for clarification:

XXX 小朋友，老师划线的那两个句子是文章里面的老师对你们说的话呢，还是你们自己总结的语言。如果是你的自己的收尾的语言的话，你最好要另起一段，这才像是收尾的样子。

XXX Little Friend, are the two sentences underlined by the teacher words spoken by the teacher in your story or your own summary? If they are your own words to summarize, you'd better place them in a separate paragraph, making them look more like a conclusion.

Confirming that these were her summarizing words, Huan started a new paragraph as the conclusion in her revised version. In another exchange, Nong provided help with language, “went (go 的过去式)” (*the past tense form of go*), as well as clarification questions, “去妈妈家？还是去奶奶家？” (*went to mother’s home or paternal grandma’s home?*) All these interactions suggest that although the teacher provided occasional help with the form, the primary focus of these exchanges, as mediated by the smartphone-technologies, rested on the meanings that the writers wanted to communicate. Likewise, using the smartphone, one student also performed better than she could on her own. As Ping, the author of “My Friends and I,” responded, what she wrote was “自己加手机” (*partly hers, and partly from*

her phone) (QQ record, 2018/07/27), implying probably that she had used her phone to translate some of her words or sentences into English.



Figure 6 Ping's 4th Page



Figure 7 Ping's 5th Page

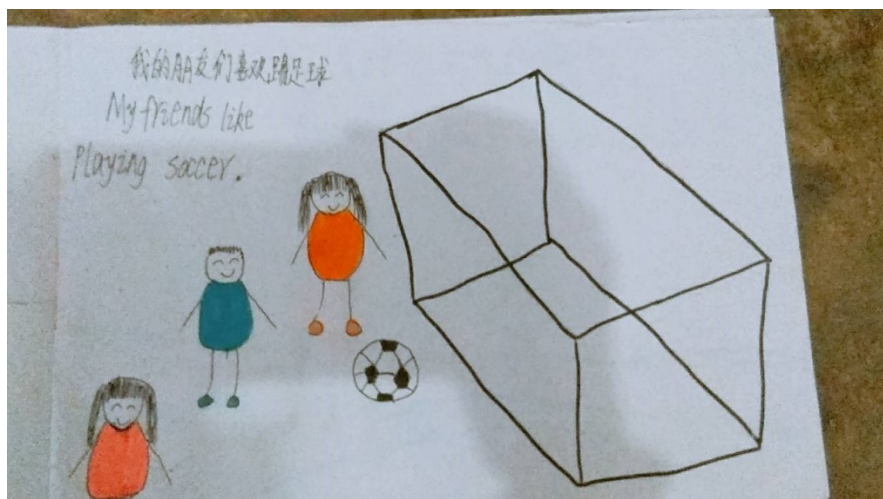


Figure 8 Ping's 6th Page

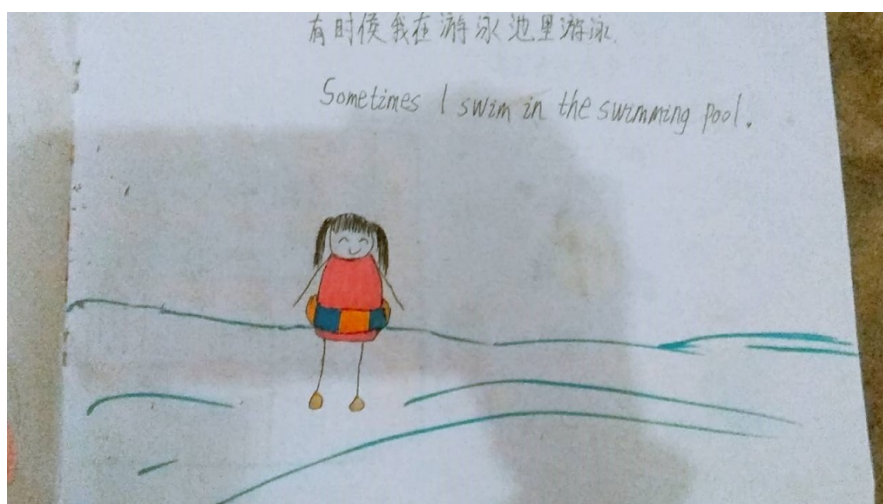


Figure 9 Ping's 7th Page



Figure 10 Ping's 8th Page



Figure 11 Ping's 9th Page

Principle 4: The illustrated bilingual book writing project initiates a different teacher and student relationship. Although Nong remains the teacher, she invited rather than required her students to write. As she wrote to Wei,

今天下午开始筹划插图故事吧！讲述一个小故事，先把自己想写的情节画出来，先完成几幅图画，然后再一幅一幅地配上简短的文字。老师期待你的作品哦！

Would you start planning on writing your illustrated story this afternoon? Narrate a small story by first drawing the plot you want to write about or draw some pictures. You then add short explanations to each picture. Teacher looks forward to seeing your work! (QQ record, 2018/07/16)

Ten days later, still not hearing back from Wei, Nong wrote again, urging her to work on the project. “赶紧完成插图故事，明天发给我看。” (*Complete your illustrated story soon, and send it to me tomorrow.*) (QQ record, 2018/07/26) In such exchanges, the teacher played more the role of a manager than that of a language police officer. The encouragement to use images together with writing also contrasts with the text-dominant-and-condense writing typical in the semester’s writing tasks. Figure 11, for instance, asks the students in Chinese to describe Mr. Brown, an American, with all the details already provided. As such, the writer is positioned to translate, rather than to create, with only limited content generation and creative ways of communication.

【写作题目】

根据下面信息，描述布朗先生。布朗 (Brown) 先生来自美国。他是个高个子，他长着一双大眼睛，一个大鼻子，一张圆脸，满头金黄色的头发。他最喜欢的颜色是白色和黑色。他穿着白色的衬衫、黑色的裤子。他是一名英语老师。
要求：词数在 40 个左右，书面整洁。

Figure 12 Nong's Writing Assignment on Oct. 28, 2018

Implications and Conclusion

In literacy education in rural areas, it is easy for teachers to be bogged down with an excessive focus on their students’ problems, especially in their deviations from the standard norms valued in high-stake exams. Granted, it is important to teach Standard Written English (SWE) to these students, using methods like dictating of sentences. However, it is perhaps more important to unleash the agency of important local literacy players. In fact,

just as this study shows, the two can actually happen simultaneously. Through the implementation of a community-oriented literacy project, the teacher functions more as a literacy broker for her students to assist them in their meaning-making processes. For those students actively involved in the project, the key seems to lie in the provision of new writing activities that invite them to communicate with the world, not just with their teacher, by using a wide range of semiotic resources at their disposal while expanding these resources through ongoing social interactions. Like other scholars (e.g., Lam, 2000; You, 2011) have shown, the students in the current study can also communicate resourcefully. Their ethnic and rural roots should not prevent them from creating “identity texts” (Cummins, et al., 2005) or telling interesting stories about themselves and important social others, with a touch of multilingual and multimodal creativity. Meanwhile, one needs to ponder why many other students did not yet participate in the project. One reason might be because these reluctant participants do not yet feel comfortable with using two of the four main prescribed modes of communication, i.e., drawing and Chinese. Future studies may consider practical ways of facilitating these students’ book-making and sharing endeavor by integrating Bloom software program, which provides free images, ready-made book templates, scripts of many of the world languages, and diverse modes, including voice recording and PDF, to share a new book with others. This is perhaps how forward thinking literacy educators can help design the future. Testing and refining a community-oriented literacy pedagogy, they can open up more spaces in which learners from diverse backgrounds can, just like Huan quoted at the beginning of this article, also compose their own success stories in literacy in ways they have never imagined.

This study is limited in several ways. To begin with, due to the teacher’s busy schedule, the project did not take off until the holiday, resulting in an explorative study in

the extracurricular context rather than in a classroom-context as originally planned. Future studies can situate in a class and gain more insights by analyzing additional data (classroom observations, students' writing samples in regular classes and interviews with them). In addition, as the innovative writing program only took place in one primary school and only during the summer holiday, findings of this study may not be generalizable to other schools or even other periods in the same school. Furthermore, due to the teacher moving to another school, it became increasingly difficult to contact the whole class. As a result, the study could not uncover why only a few students engaged in making illustrated bilingual books while others did not. Such knowledge would be useful for local teachers to design their future literacy activities. Last, the study has yet to discover the extent to which the students shared their books within home and community and the interactions surrounding these books.

Despite these limitations, this explorative study has some important implications for English literacy education in rural areas in China and perhaps similar contexts as well. First, the findings suggest the need to critically evaluate the role of Standard Written English (SWE). While SWE will continue to function as the bedrock of English-mediated communication in various social contexts (Yang, 2015, 2018), focusing on it exclusively or promoting it uncritically in the rural schools among young learners may prove unproductive. Keep in mind Yu's poignant observation: Even after numerous practices on unforgettable events and people, many middle school graduates from her prefecture still failed to write a good narrative in English, some even resorting to copying from the test paper. In future writing teacher training through NPPT, it is imperative to "broaden teachers' conceptualization of writing ability" (Lee, 2016, p. 75) by introducing them to and engaging them with literature on multiliteracies, World Englishes, and Translingual

Practices. Doing so in a supportive training program, teachers can expand their language teacher identity to gradually embrace other identity options as general writing teachers and L2 writing teachers (Lee, 2013; Racelis & Matsuda, 2015). That is, they may become teachers who can help their students to negotiate linguistic differences and construct their sense of self by crossing cultural and linguistic boundaries (Canagarajah, 2015, 2018).

Second, the findings show the importance of designing meaning-focused writing tasks. Making English writing a community-oriented literacy activity, as introduced in the present study, is such an alternative. Note that students begin to negotiate with their teacher about the content (e.g., “老师可以写我跟朋友在一起都干了什么，一起玩了什么吗?” *Teacher, can I write about what my friends and I did and what we played?*), and the teacher also asks questions of clarification (e.g., “去妈妈家？还是去奶奶家？” *went to mother’s home or paternal grandma’s home?*). While there were instances of correcting students’ mistakes in forms (e.g., “went (go 的过去式)” (*the past tense form of go*), certain deviations from the standard were ignored (e.g., “I have many friends they are kind to me.”) as the meaning of these are clear in the context of the page. More attention was given to large discourse units for meaning making such as book titles and conclusions, with the students’ deliberate use of the resources at their disposal to communicate what matters to them. These include drawings, languages (Chinese and English), font sizes (big and small), conventions (capitalizations and punctuation marks), colors (yellow, orange, black, red), space (large blanks versus small), single words (e.g., “friends”) as well as larger units of discourse such as phrases (e.g., “My Friends and I”) and paragraphs. “Meaningful literacy” (Hanauer, 2012) seems a viable option to invite less proficient secondary school students to invest actively into exploring and textualizing important aspects of their lives while offering them

ample opportunities to experiment with and become proficient in using writing conventions to accomplish their communicative purposes.

Third, the findings also indicate that forming collaborative relationships outside the immediate locale and work circle is crucial in designing and implementing community-oriented literacy initiatives. Without such a positive collaborative relationship between the first and second authors, discussing back and forth possible ways to solve students' problems, Nong would probably rely on sentence dictation to teach her students how to write properly in English. All the theories introduced in the training workshops, such as the poststructuralist theory of learner and identity and literacy as a social practice, would bear little to no effect on her classroom practice. Likewise, the first author would have missed a great opportunity to learn about local teachers' and students' agency, as manifested through the few completed projects. In short, this study has provided a possible path for professionals who are interested in "support[ing] teacher learners in [their] initial community investigations" to link with their communities and go beyond any prescribed curriculum (Sharkey, 2012, p. 11).

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Reader Stances and Writer Responses in L2 Peer Review: A Study of L2 Writing Literacy among Hong Kong Secondary School Students

Amy Kong

The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

Gavin Bui*

The Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

Bioprofile:

Amy Kong is a Lecturer in the Department of English, the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong. With the research interest in L2 writing and collaborative learning, Dr Kong worked on the topic of peer review in the ESL writing classroom for her PhD dissertation. Her recent work includes a book chapter in *Teaching L2 Writing Throughout the Greater China Region* (2019). **Email:** amykong@hsu.edu.hk

Gavin Bui is Associate Professor in the Department of English at the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong. His research interests lie in task-based language teaching and learning, L3 motivation, and L2 writing. His recent publications appeared in *Language Teaching Research* (2018), *Applied Linguistics Review* (2018), *System* (2019) and *English World-Wide* (2019). Currently, he serves as a co-editor of *Asian Journal of English Language Teaching*. **Email:** gavinbui@hsu.edu.hk

*corresponding author

Dr. Gavin Bui, Hang Seng University of Hong Kong,
Department of English, Hang Shin Link, Siu Lek Yuen,
Shatin, N.T., Hong Kong

Abstract

One research area concerning peer review in L2 writing literacy development has been to examine the impact of training on the quality of peer feedback and/or interactions. However, few studies have adopted the micro-genetic approach to exploring the types of scaffolds (e.g., advising, instructing, reacting, eliciting, and asking for clarifications) and the social relationships (authoritative or collaborative) between two trained peers over an extended period, especially between young learners. Adopting the Vygotskian sociocultural framework, the study explored how mutual scaffolding unfolded between Hong Kong secondary students when they moved through the zone of proximal development (ZPD) after training. Twenty Secondary 1 (equivalent to Grade 7) students participated in a writing course of twelve 1.5-hour sessions. The presentation of an array of scaffolding strategies marked the beginning of the course, followed by the instruction on five narrative writing tasks in the subsequent weeks. Each time, students completed the essay at home and paired up for peer review in the following class. Three dyadic peer review sessions were recorded, transcribed, and coded to explore what scaffolds were applied by the reviewers, what responses were elicited from the writers, and what social relationships were resulted. Stimulated recalls and pre-/post- interviews were conducted to understand students' rationale for their strategy choice. Results show that the readers tended to adopt "advising" during peer interactions, which did not induce meaningful responses from the writers and resulted in the disruption of the ZPD. The current research suggests that the emergence of camaraderie during peer review depends on the types of scaffolds adopted by the readers since they propel the writers to respond differently. However, the choice of scaffolds stems from individual preferences in addition to training. The study unveils the

inadequacies of peer review in L2 writing literacy training and relevant pedagogical implications are discussed.

Keywords: L2 literacy, peer review, zone of proximal development, interactions, scaffolds

Introduction

The importance of writing in L2 literacy development cannot be overstressed. According to the IELTS Performance Report (2016) by the British Council, the writing component remained the lowest in Hong Kong and elsewhere; instructional solutions to the situation have become a major issue in teaching L2 literacy. One of the pedagogical approaches that attract pervasive attention in the field is the adoption of peer review in teaching L2 writing (Lee, 2017). Past studies on peer review (e.g., Braine, 2003; Hirose, 2012; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Miao, Badger, & Zhen, 2006; Ruegg, 2015) often explored effectiveness of peer review by simply comparing the peer review groups and the control/teacher feedback groups in terms of the quality and numbers of feedback given by the students without exploring the social relationships that happen during peer review. From the socio-cultural theory (SCT) perspective, peer review is a social, collaborative activity. One cannot provide a convincing answer to the question of how to conduct peer review to maximize its effectiveness without considering the process of the activity. It is, therefore, important to examine moment-to-moment peer interactions in order to understand the peer interaction processes because it informs us of strategy choices that may lead to desirable social relationships, which in turn optimizes the outcomes of peer review. Moreover, it has been claimed that scaffolding strategies such as “requesting clarifications” and “eliciting” can enhance the intensiveness of interactions during peer review (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Liu

& Hansen 2002). This study investigated whether junior secondary students (see also Bei, 2009; Bui & Yu, 2019) in Hong Kong could benefit from peer review training and adopt the instructed desirable strategies to increase the intensiveness of peer-to-peer interactions. Borrowing the lens from the SCT, the current research adopted the micro genetic approach to examining the strategies used by junior secondary students in Hong Kong during peer review and the social relationships resulted from their peer interactions.

Literature Review

Socio-cultural Theory (SCT) and Micro-genetic Approach to Examining Peer Review

One of the theories that investigate how social factors contribute to individual development is sociocultural theory (SCT), which stresses the interaction between people's development and the cultural environment in which they live. Vygotsky (1993) claimed that "human gains control over natural mental functions by bringing externally formed mediating artefacts into thinking activity" (Vygotsky, 1993, p. 116). This process is called mediation and the externally formed mediating artefacts could include interactions between people or people and artefacts.

SCT in Second Language Acquisition (SLA) research offers a framework which regards cognitive development as a mediated process that is strongly influenced by the participation in social activities (Lantolf, 2000; Lantolf & Appel, 1994; Lantolf & Thorne, 2006, Pavlenko & Lantolf, 2000). The engagement in social activities can be found in different settings, such as family life, workplaces, peer collaboration, and instructional contexts such as schools. Language, being a symbolic artefact that serves as a means to control higher mental functioning, is one of the primary tools for mediation (Lantolf, 2007). Higher mental functioning develops through interaction within these social environments,

and language use and development play a crucial role in Vygotsky's notion of mind. SCT also elaborates a view of the development of autonomy through socially mediated learning processes (Benson, 2007).

From a SCT perspective, peer review is an ongoing process. One promising approach to studying such dynamic processes is offered by the micro-genetic design as it allows researchers to closely observe moment-by-moment changes rather than products. According to Lavelli, Pantoja, Hsu, Messinger, and Fogel (2005), micro-genetic designs are defined by the following key characteristics: First, individuals are observed through a period of developmental changes; second, observations are conducted before, during, and after a period during which rapid change in a particular domain occurs; third, observations are conducted at time intervals that are considerably shorter than those required for a developmental change to occur. For instance, if a developmental change takes place over several months, observations should be conducted weekly or even more frequently. Lastly, the observed behaviors are intensively analyzed through mixed methods, with the goal of identifying the processes that give rise to the developmental change.

Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

One of the key constructs derived from the SCT is the zone of proximal development (ZPD) (Vygotsky, 1978), which is frequently adopted as the theoretical construct in research on peer collaboration (e.g., De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994; Fernández, Wegerif, Mercer, & Rojas-Drummond, 2015; Jung & Suzuki, 2015; Swain, Brooks, & Tocalli-Beller, 2002; De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994, 2000). Vygotsky suggested that cognitive development of individuals takes place through social interaction. He viewed interaction with peers as an effective way of developing learning strategies within the ZPD, which is the “distance

between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem-solving under adult guidance, or in collaboration with more capable peers” (Vygotsky, 1978, p. 86). For example, during L1 acquisition, by subordinating their behavior to adult speech, children acquire a particular language used by other members of the community (usually adults and older children) and eventually utilize this language to regulate their own behavior (De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994). In other words, children develop the capacity to regulate their own activity through linguistic means by participating in activities which are initially regulated by others. When this is applied to the interaction between L2 learners, “the less knowledgeable partner (the novice) is provided support and guidelines from a more knowledgeable partner (the expert), which is also referred as ‘scaffolding’” (Hansen & Liu, 2005, p. 81). Under the expert’s guidance, the novice can gradually master the task on his/her own and the scaffolding can be removed. It should be noted that the goal of peer collaboration is autonomy—what the learner can do today only with assistance, he/she will do independently tomorrow (Benson, 2007, 2013; Vygotsky, 1978).

With reference to the concept of the ZPD, Vygotsky’s regulatory scale of development could appear during the process of peer review (De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994). As presented in Table 1, during peer review, an object-regulated (OBR) learner indicates that he/she is bounded by the text itself and is not able to revise the task on his/her own; nor is he/she able to do so under the peer’s guidance. The other-regulated learner (OTR) is guided by another peer during the revision task. The peer provides scaffolding for the learner to advance towards the completion of the task. The learner is not able to do the revision on his/her own but is able to achieve some degree of control over the task with

the help of peer assistance. A self-regulated learner (SER) is capable of independent problem-solving during peer review.

Learners at different stages of regulation in peer interaction form two types of social relationships, the symmetrical relationship, which “occurs[ed] when peers, at any given moment, [were] are at the same stage of regulation and share[d] control of the task to the same degree” (De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994, p. 491). In the SER/SER intervention, both individuals are self-regulated, and each is able to respect the private world of the other. However, there may be disagreement when they are intolerant of each other’s views. In the OTR/OTR intervention, none of the peers can complete the task successfully on their own but they may provide some “scaffolding” to each other. However, due to limited linguistic knowledge, students may strategically handle the task and eventually arrive at a resolution which is not completely correct, look for external resources, or even abandon the task. Last, when both parties are object-regulated (OBR/OBR), neither peer understands clearly the purpose of the task or has sufficient knowledge to finish the activity appropriately. The second type of relationship is asymmetrical and occurs when one peer is at a higher stage of regulation than the other. In the OTR/OBR intervention, the OTR member needs assistance but the OBR member fails to provide help. In the OBR/SER intervention, the SER member works on his/her own on revision while the OBR member fails to engage in the task at all.

Vygotsky’s ZPD could be fully embodied in the OTR/SER intervention, in which the self-regulated learner is able to provide scaffolds to the other-regulated learner so that the latter can potentially progress under the guidance provided by the former. The OTR/SER intervention was further identified as having two different natures: authoritative and collaborative. In the authoritative intervention, the suggestions of the SER participant

are put forward at the expense of the OTR peer. This may result in the SER peer totally controlling the review session, appropriating the text, and making revisions on his/her own without consulting the OTR peer. During this dominating interaction, meaningful negotiation between the peers is less likely. On the other hand, in the collaborative intervention, the SER participant tries to see the text from the perspectives of the OTR peer in order to help him/her achieve the task goals. This is the most ideal and typical situation that characterizes the ZPD, in which the SER member strategically assists the OTR peer by providing “scaffolding”, which in turn helps him/her to progress towards self-regulation.

Table 1 Vygotsky’s Regulatory Scale of Development (1978)

Types of Learners	Characteristics
Self-regulated learners (SER)	Capable of independent problem-solving
Other-regulated learners (OTR)	Able to achieve some completion of the task under the peer’s “scaffolding”
Object-regulated learners (OBR)	Unable to do the task on his/her own, nor is he/she able to do so under the peer’s guidance

Note. The ideal relationship according to the Zone of Proximal development: Self-regulated vs. Other-regulated (SER/OTR: Collaborative)

Adopting Vygotsky’s concept of ZPD and its related concept of “scaffolding”, De Guerrero and Villamil (1994) analyzed the peer review interaction among 54 intermediate ESL College students enrolled in a writing course. They examined the types of interaction (e.g., interactive, non-interactive, off-task) that occurred between members of a dyad engaged in peer revision and the types of social relationships (e.g., SER/OTR authoritative, SER/OTR collaborative, SER/OBR) that resulted from participants’ cognitive stages of regulation. Results show an extremely complex and productive interactive revision process among the participants. There were great varieties of interaction types. The majority were

interactions between the reader and the writer, showing that there were indeed collaborations between peers rather than students working alone. In general, self-regulation was dominant among the students because of the frequent use of L1 as the mediating linguistic tool that facilitated communication and achievement of the task goals. Students by and large displayed asymmetrical SER/OTR relationships that were collaborative in nature rather than authoritative. In addition, Villamil and De Guerrero (1996) and De Guerrero and Villamil (2000) further explored the mediating/scaffolding strategies in L2 peer revisions. The studies reported that a huge array of scaffolding mechanisms was displayed in the interaction between two learners as they worked cooperatively in revising the text. They also unveiled various scaffolds that facilitated peer negotiation, ranging from advising, eliciting, reacting, asking for clarifications to instructing. A more recent study that adopts the SCT to explore peer review instances was conducted by Yu and Lee (2016). In the study, they conducted a case study of EFL university students participating in group peer review activities. They reported that students used different strategies including communicating in the L1, making reference of the writing criteria, adopting rules, seeking help from teachers, and playing different roles; however, the study did not provide documentation about the scaffolding mechanisms employed by the participants, which could be a contributing factor in the development of different regulatory relationships between participants. On the other hand, adopting the activity theory derived from the SCT, Kong (2019) conducted a multiple-case study to explore how secondary learners in Hong Kong executed peer review after receiving training. The four participants acknowledged the significant role of training in guiding them to employ an array of mediating mechanisms ranging from advising, eliciting, instructing, evaluating, to requesting clarifications. However, her case study did not employ the micro-genetic approach to investigating how

different strategy uses influenced the writer's response and the resulting social relationships over an extended period of time.

Peer Review Training

Many techniques have been introduced to improve efficacy of peer review in the L2 writing literature. One of them is to provide students with peer review training and to introduce proper guidelines before peer review. Citing Rollinson (2005), Moloudi (2011) suggested explaining peer review values and providing modelling to students. Moreover, to increase students' intensiveness of interactions, Hansen and Liu (2005) and Liu and Hansen (2002) proposed to instruct students to deploy a myriad of scaffolding strategies that could lead to an increase in clarification and negotiation of meaning, thereby boosting the level of cooperation. They categorized effective comments into three types, namely, evaluation, suggestions, and asking for clarifications, and further acknowledged that clarifications can intensify interaction as they provide a chance for the peers to discuss their perspectives in detail so that the author can know more clearly why and how to revise the text.

There have been numerous studies that examine the impact of training on the effectiveness of peer review in the literature. For example, Stanley (1992) guided his students through an extended coaching procedure, which included analyzing evaluation sessions, exploring rules for effective communication, and studying the genre of student writing. He reported that, compared with the uncoached students, students who received coaching demonstrated a greater level of engagement in peer review interaction and gave clearer guidelines for the revision of drafts. Bui and Kong (2019) explored how metacognitive training in peer review processes helped young learners provide more comments on global writing issues and a higher incorporation rate of peer feedback in

subsequent drafts. Berg (1999) observed that the revised drafts of the trained students showed greater improvement in the global level than those of the untrained students, regardless of the proficiency levels. Similarly, Zhu (1995), Min (2005), and Rahimi (2013) recorded more responses in the trained peer review groups and an enhanced standard of revisions after training. Nonetheless, despite a manifestation of the effectiveness of training, these studies explored the effectiveness of training by simply comparing the trained groups and untrained groups in terms of the quality and numbers of feedback given by the students without looking into how training influenced the social relationships during peer review.

Research Gaps in the Literature and Research Questions

As discussed above, De Guerrero and Villamil (1994) took into account the SCT and the ZPD to document different types of episodes (e.g., reader-writer interactive, reader/writer non-interactive, off-task) and social relationships (e.g., SER/OTR authoritative, SER/OTR collaborative, SER/OBR) in L2 peer review in L2 writing literacy. These two factors are important as they are conducive to the ZPD that transforms the learner into an autonomous writer eventually. Given that both learners are situated in the SER/OTR intervention, the more interactive the episodes are and the more collaborative the peers are, the more ideal the learning development is (De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994). In addition, different types of scaffolds (e.g., advising, eliciting, reacting, asking for clarifications, and instructing) were also documented in the previous studies (e.g., De Guerrero & Villamil, 2000; Hanjani & Li, 2014; Kong, 2019; Min, 2005; Lin & Samuel, 2013; Villamil & De Guerrero, 1996). However, these studies did not explore whether extensive training may cast an influence on the reviewer's use of strategies, resulting in different types of episodes and social relationships during peer review, nor did they explore the ways the writer responded to the

reviewer's comments. Knowing how the writer responds to the reviewer's comments is important because the ways of responding might influence the nature of interactions and the social relationships (Donato & McCormick, 1994; De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994), and peer-peer collaborative dialogue could propel language learning (Swain, Brooks, & Tocalli-Beller, 2002). Moreover, the participants of De Guerrero and Villamil's studies (1994, 1996, 2000) were intermediate ESL college learners, native speakers of Spanish, who were enrolled in an ESL communication skills course. In other words, there are no such studies that explore relationships between peers' scaffolding strategies and social relationships in the Asian context, particularly among junior secondary students after they receive training.

The present study was intended to explore Hong Kong junior secondary students' choice of scaffolds during peer review after being coached. It also tried to document what social relationships were formed under such interactions and investigate how different scaffolding strategies might have impacted learners' transition across the regulatory scale. The concepts of scaffolding and the ZPD derived from the SCT can best explicate what is going on during peer interaction. As such, three questions are proposed as follows:

1. What types of scaffolds did the trained students employ during peer review and what types of responses were elicited from the writer?
2. Did the trained students display a significantly higher number of interactive reviewer/writer episodes and self/other-regulated (collaborative) relationship in peer review, which is conducive to the ZPD?
3. Is there any relationship between the reviewer's adoption of scaffolding strategies, the writer's responses, the nature of episodes, and the occurrence of social relationships?

Methodology

Participants

Twenty secondary-one students in Hong Kong, aged 12 to 13, voluntarily participated in the current study. They came from two Band one secondary schools where English was the medium of instruction (EMI). Students from a band-one EMI school are usually considered more competent English learners than those from lower-banding (Bands two and three) schools.

Data Collection Procedures

The participants were invited to take 12 sessions of an after-school writing course, which was taught by the first author. Each session lasted for around 60 to 90 minutes. Throughout the course, the researcher introduced students to five pieces of narrative writing with respect to the context, metalanguage, and structural elements of each writing. The topics of the writing were a personal homepage, a diary of the school picnic, a news report, a personal letter involving a two-day itinerary in Hong Kong, and a story-writing about friendship. Narrative was chosen because it is the most frequently taught mode of discourse in the S.1 curriculum.

Before the first writing topic was introduced in the second lesson, the researcher provided training (see Appendix I for the details) and interviewed participants with regard to their past peer review experiences and their perceptions of peer review, using the semi-structured format, in the first lesson. The second lesson introduced the first writing topic, after which students had to finish the writing task at home. The next lesson, the students paired up and conducted peer review for 30 minutes. Before peer review, a peer evaluation form (Appendix II) was distributed to individual students for reference. The researcher went through the structural elements and language features on the form with the students to ensure their correct understanding. The teacher also reminded them of the goal of the activity and the use of scaffolding strategies and appropriate expressions during the activity.

Since the micro-genetic approach was adopted to trace the moment-by-moment happenings during peer review processes, participants' real-time interactions were audio-

recorded to diagnose what conversational or behavioral patterns had transpired during their peer interactions. Six student helpers who were PhD students in Applied (English) Linguistics were asked to attend the peer review sessions. Each of them sat in one pair so that he/she could help with the audio-recording of the peer review session with the use of the MP3 player. Each peer review usually lasted for 30 minutes. During peer review, if students had questions, they were also allowed to ask the teacher.

The interactions of the first, third-, and the last peer review sessions were audio-recorded and transcribed to explore the types of strategies adopted during peer interactions. To unveil why students chose to employ some specific scaffolds, students were invited to take part in a stimulated recall session individually one day after each peer review session. Stimulated recall is a retrospective approach to “prompt participants to recall thoughts they had while performing a task or participating in an event” (Gass & Mackey, 2000, p. 17) and its potential in researching education has been well documented (Meier & Vogt, 2015). During the stimulated recalls, students were shown some episodes of the previous peer review session and prompted to explain why they displayed a certain behavior and what their feelings were towards some peer review instances. After the whole course, participants were semi-structure-interviewed by the researcher about their perceptions of training and peer review. All the interviews and stimulated recall sessions were conducted in Cantonese, their mother-tongue, to facilitate their recalling process.

The students’ and their parents’ consent had been obtained before they took part in the course. They were fully informed that the students’ interactions, stimulated recalls, and interviews would be recorded and used anonymously for data analysis and that all the data would be kept confidential.

The Training

With reference to Liu and Hansen (2005) and Villamil and De Guerrero (1996), a training session was designed and given to the participants in the first lesson before the first formal peer review session (Appendix A). During this training, participants were emphatically reminded that the goal of peer review was to improve the writing task collaboratively. They should be taking up the roles as a reviewer or a writer alternatively. Affection to the peer's writing and openness to the peer's comments should be retained during the process. Such awareness-raising instruction is an important step to ensure students develop appropriate attitudes towards peer review (Hu, 2005).

The most crucial part of the training was that students were presented with scaffolding strategies potentially useful for the upcoming peer interaction. Examples of these include advising, eliciting, requesting clarifications, reacting, and instructing. Moreover, since "requesting clarifications" and "eliciting" can enhance the intensiveness of interactions during peer review (Hansen & Liu, 2005; Liu & Hansen 2002), students were strongly recommended to adopt these strategies during peer review. In addition, the training introduced appropriate language expressions to students by providing them with a checklist showing them useful phrases or sentences to be used in peer review. Students were reminded to give constructive comments (e.g., *You should talk about why you like your schoolmates*) instead of vague comments (e.g., *your writing needs improvement*) to ensure their peer knows specifically areas that need improving.

It should be noted that each time before the actual peer review, the teacher went through the goal of peer review, the scaffolding strategies, and the useful expressions with the students again for reinforcement. In addition, students were given the feedback form that lists all the criteria (the selected structural elements and language features) to be

assessed for each writing task (see Appendix B for an example). These structural elements and language features were introduced to students before peer review so that they could comment on them with appropriate metalanguage expressions. They were then asked to go through the writing three times. During the first time, they should read through the text and give comments on the content pursuant to the structural elements listed on the form. Then, they could read it once again to indicate the mistakes related to the language items selected on the form. Finally, they could skim the work for the third time to grasp an overall impression of its organization and style. Such selective focus helped ease their cognitive load (Bui, 2019). Last, students were asked to use English during their interactions; however, they could adopt code-mixing—using both Cantonese (L1) and English (L2)—in case of predicaments to express themselves in English.

Data Coding and Analysis

The audio-taped pair-talk sessions were transcribed and coded by the researchers into different segments called episodes, which was defined as a segment in the pair talk during which learners focused explicitly on the essays (Swain & Lapkin, 1998). Each episode was further coded into two major types of episodes, namely, on-task and off-task (De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994). The on-task episodes were further divided into three types: reviewer/writer interactive, reviewer/writer non-interactive, and teacher vs. student (See Table 2 for detailed descriptions).

Table 2 Types of Episodes (De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994)

On-task (Reviewer/Writer Interactive)	Episodes in which both the reviewer and the writer discuss revision of a trouble source.
On-task (Reviewer/Writer Non-interactive)	Episodes in which only the reviewer or the writer talks about how to revise a trouble source without intervention from either party.
On-task (Teacher vs. Student)	Episodes in which the student talk to the teacher about the writing.
Off-task	Episodes in which the students are talking about other issues unrelated to the writing.

Based on De Guerrero and Villamil's (1994, 1996) studies, the on-task episodes (reviewer/writer interactive and review/writer non-interactive) were further coded to sort out what scaffolding strategies the reviewers had adopted and what different types of social relationships were resulted (See Tables 3 and 4).

Table 3 Scaffolding Strategies (Adapted from Villamil and De Guerrero, 1996)

	Description	<i>Examples from the Current Study</i>
Advising	Suggesting a revision or recommending that changes be made	<i>Maybe you can describe more about how you felt at that time?</i>
Eliciting	Drawing out opinion, answers or reaction	<i>I wrote a letter...letter.... here...what's wrong?</i>
Reacting	Making evaluative comments	<i>I think you have included too many dialogues in the story.</i>
Requesting clarification	Asking the writer to clarify or justify the intended meaning	<i>Sorry...why do you say that your shirts are dirty?</i>
Instructing	Giving mini-lessons on vocabulary, grammar or other aspects of writing	<i>Here...you have two people, so you should use the plural "are"</i>

Table 4 Types of Social Relationships (Adapted from De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994)

	Description	Examples from the Current Study
SER/OTR Authoritative	The reviewer is at a self-regulatory (SER) level as he/she can point out the mistake whereas the writer is at the other-regulated (OTR) level as he/she acknowledges the reviewer's comments and understands why he/she is wrong. However, the intensity of negotiations is not strong as the writer accepts the comments passively.	<i>Reviewer: I think you can add an "s" in the word "book(s)".</i> <i>Writer: O...I am so careless! It is plural!</i>
SER/OTR Collaborative	Both the writer and the reviewer negotiate with each other and both understand thoroughly "what to revise, how to revise, and why to revise" (Goldstein & Conrad, 1990, p.457).	<i>Reviewer: And my shirt was very dirty...why was it dirty?</i> <i>Writer: I mean I was in a hurry when going out, so the shirt was not very tidy.</i> <i>Reviewer: Maybe untidy?</i> <i>Writer: Yes...untidy...</i>
SER/SER	Both the writer and the reviewer are capable students who can show control of the task.	<i>Reviewer: I think you can use another verb to describe the action?</i> <i>Writer: I copied this verb from the course materials...you see... (pointing at the notes)</i> <i>Reviewer: Yes...I mean you can use some other verbs apart from the one we have learnt in class such as "apologized".</i>
SER/OBR	The reviewer gives comments in an assertive tone and gives little room for negotiation from the writer. In return, the writer only reacts by keeping silent. It is not clear whether or not the writer is aware of the reviewer's comments, nor does he/she make any effort at engaging in improving the task together with the reviewer, so he/she is object-regulated (OBR).	<i>Reviewer: In this session "My School", I think you can describe more about your school life such as how your schoolmates behave in class.</i> <i>Writer: (No response)</i>

OTR/OTR	Both the reviewer and the writer are at the other-regulatory level. They fail to settle the conflict on their own and so they seek help from the teacher.	<i>Reviewer: Is there any climax here?</i> <i>Writer: Yes...there's a dream...</i> <i>Reviewer: But it's real...how come it can be a dream?</i> <i>Writer: It's just a story...why can't it be the dream?</i> <i>(Both seeking advice from the teacher to settle the dispute)</i>
OTR/OBR	The reviewer is not very sure about the answer and so he/she tries to seek confirmation from the writer, but the writer does not give him/her any response.	<i>Reviewer: I phoned Amy...shouldn't we add something here? I am not sure... (looking at the writer)</i> <i>Writer: (No response)</i>
OBR/OBR	The reviewer is at the object-regulated (OBR) level because he/she is bounded by the text. The writer, despite being asked by the reviewer, does not engage in the interaction.	<i>Reviewer (reading the essay) (L1): what's that?</i> <i>Writer: (No response)</i> <i>Reviewer: (Keeping on reading the essay)</i>

In addition to examining the differences of the scaffolding strategies employed by the students in the present study, it is also worthwhile to examine the differences in the ways the writers responded to their reviewers, which might influence the collaborative nature of interactions and social relationships (Donato & McCormick, 1994; De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994), hence the progress of language learning (Swain, Brooks, & Tocalli-Beller, 2002). With this regard, the way the writers responded to the reviewers' comments during peer review were coded in the current study. It should be noted that in the present study, one response was coded as students showing at least one turn-taking during the interaction, which consisted of the comments and opinions of both parties, as illustrated in Table 5.

Table 5 Types of the Writer's Responses

	Description	Examples from the Current Study
Offering Justifications to the Reviewer	The writer offers a clear justification to the reviewer's question.	<i>Reviewer: I am not sure...why were you late?</i> <i>Writer: Because my alarm clock did not go off. This was stated in the next paragraph.</i>
Asking the Reviewer for Clarifications	The reviewer attempts to correct the expression. The writer feels confused and so he/she asks for the reviewer's clarifications.	<i>Reviewer: I called her lots of times...shouldn't it be "many"?</i> <i>Writer: What do you mean by many? Are they different?</i>
Explicit Acknowledgement	The reviewer tries to give comments and the writer also clearly acknowledges and accepts the reviewer's comment.	<i>Reviewer: Here... you only have one pet, right? So, there shouldn't be an "s"?</i> <i>Writer: I know I know...I made a mistake!</i>
Ambiguous Responses	The writer only gives a short or vague signal to respond to the reviewer's feedback by saying: <i>OK, Hmhm, Haha, (L1) Oror</i> . These signals are insufficient to show whether the writer understands or even acknowledges what the reviewer has said.	<i>Reviewer: Here...you should use "are" ... there are two people...</i> <i>Writer: Hm...</i>
No Response	The writer responds by keeping silent, giving no clues as to whether the he/she really acknowledges, understands, or even notices the feedback.	<i>Reviewer: You haven't included any title for the story...</i> <i>Writer: (Silent)</i>

Thirty percent of the data, including the coding of the pair-talk sessions and the interviews, were checked by two PhD students majoring in Applied (English) Linguistics to ensure the inter-reliability of the coding process. The stimulated recalls and the interviews were also transcribed and analyzed to triangulate the data obtained from the transcripts of their interactions.

Results

Question One: What types of scaffolds did the trained students employ during peer review and what types of responses were elicited from the writer?

A total of 267 episodes, segments in the pair talk during which students focused explicitly on the essays, were identified in the current study. Each episode was further coded based on Table 1 to identify different types of episodes (the numbers of the different types of episodes are presented in Question Two below).

As the first research question is intended to explore the types of scaffolds employed by the trained students when they engaged in peer interactions, only the reviewer/writer (both interactive and non-interactive) episodes (N=221) were transcribed and coded according to the scaffolding mechanisms listed in Table 2. Table 6 shows the percentages of different scaffolding strategies used by the reviewers in the present study.

Table 6 Frequencies and Percentages of Different Scaffolds
(with Chi-squared Goodness of Fit tests) in Reviewer/Writer Episodes

	Homepage (Total: 74)	News (Total: 61)	Story (Total: 86)	Total (N=221)
Advising	32 (43.24%)	21 (34.42%)	34 (39.53%)	87 (39.37%)
Eliciting	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	1 (1.16%)	1 (0.45%)
Reacting	15 (20.27%)	7 (11.47%)	13 (15.12%)	35 (15.84%)
Requesting Clarifications	18 (24.32%)	24 (39.34%)	25 (29.10%)	67 (30.32%)
Instructing	9 (12.16%)	9 (14.75%)	13 (15.12%)	31 (14.03%)
Significance	$\chi^2 = 15.41$ $p = 0.00$	$\chi^2 = 14.21$ $p = 0.00$	$\chi^2 = 28.33$ $p = 0.00$	$\chi^2 = 101.29$ $p = 0.00$

As shown, most students followed the instructions given during the training sessions and showed an array of scaffolding mechanisms during interactions. The frequent adoption of these scaffolds could be attributed to the effect of training, as one of the students, Olivia, mentioned in the final interview:

“I think training was effective. It taught me how to give comments in different ways...I didn’t learn how to conduct peer review in primary school. I think your training was good because I have learned a better idea of how to conduct peer review.”

The students frequently adopted the strategy, “advising” (Total: 39.37%), followed by “requesting clarifications” (Total: 30.32%). On the other hand, the least employed strategy by the reviewers was “eliciting” (Total: 0.45%). The fairly frequent adoption of the strategy, “requesting clarifications”, could be attributed to the training during which

students were emphatically reminded to ask their classmates questions when they encountered instances of which they were unsure, in order to increase the extent of interactions as well as the sense of collaboration. However, although “eliciting” had been introduced to the students, they seldom adopted this strategy in the actual peer review. When the interactions were examined in detail, it was found that towards the last peer review session, some students did show the employment of “eliciting”, which had not appeared in the previous two peer review sessions, but such increase was very small. On the other hand, although there was a sharp rise in the employment of “requesting clarification” in the second peer review session (24.32% -> 39.34%), the employment of the strategy dropped (39.34% -> 29.10%) in the last peer review session. In contrast, the employment of both “advising” (34.42% -> 39.53%) and “reacting” (11.47% -> 15.12%) showed a slight increase in the last peer review session. These changes show that the learners did not adjust their employment of strategies after accumulating more peer review experiences, nor did they adopt certain kinds of recommended scaffolds (i.e., requesting clarifications and eliciting) more frequently after being repetitively reminded of the use of such scaffolds each time before peer review. It seems that apart from training and peer review experiences, there could be other factors that influenced learners’ choice of strategies. During the stimulated recalls, some students were asked about the reasons for their preference of “advising” over the other two scaffolds—“requesting clarifications” and “eliciting” that were highlighted in the training. One of the students, May, mentioned in the second stimulated recall:

“I felt a bit strange to elicit her (the writer’s) answers when I knew the answer already.”

Another student, Olivia, also explained in the first stimulated recall the reason why she tended to use “advising” during peer review:

“It’s natural. The immediate reaction when I knew how to correct a mistake was to give advice directly to him (the writer).”

To explore the types of writers’ responses, the reviewer/writer episodes (N=221) were segmented into turn-takings. Each turn-taking consisted of the comments and opinions of both the reviewer and the writer. The writers’ responses were then coded based on Table 5.

Table 7 shows different responses given by the writer when they received their peer’s comments.

Table 7 Frequencies and Percentages of Different Responses
(with Chi-squared Goodness of Fit Tests) in Reviewer/Writer Episodes

	Homepage (Total: 74)	News (Total: 61)	Story (Total: 86)	Total (N=221)
Offering Justifications to the Reviewer	21 (28.38%)	19 (31.15%)	23 (26.74%)	63 (28.51%)
Asking the Reviewer for Clarifications	0 (0%)	5 (8.20%)	12 (13.95%)	17 (7.69%)
Explicit Acknowledgement	9 (12.16%)	5 (8.20%)	1 (1.16%)	15 (6.79%)
Ambiguous Responses	8 (10.81%)	1 (1.64%)	4 (4.65%)	13 (5.88%)
No Responses	36 (48.64%)	31 (50.82%)	46 (53.49%)	113 (51.13%)
Significance	$x^2= 27.73$ $p = 0.00$	$x^2= 32.31$ $p = 0.00$	$x^2= 77.14$ $p = 0.00$	$x^2= 173.14$ $p = 0.00$

As shown in Table 7, in 28.51% of the instances, the writer offered justifications to the reviewer. These instances could be the result of the reviewer's adoption of the scaffold "requesting clarifications". When the reviewer did not understand part of the text and raised a question, the writer immediately resolved the problem by offering justifications.

In addition, some students gave ambiguous responses such as "OK", "Hmhm", "Haha", "(L1) Oror" on a few occasions (Total: 5.88%). When asked in the second stimulated recall whether she actually understood the peer's comment by saying "umum", one of the participants, Angel said:

"When she (the reviewer) said I was incorrect, I just accepted it."

On the other hand, half of the students did not respond to their reviewers (Total: 51.13%). When asked in the stimulated recalls why they kept silent upon receiving the reviewer's comments, some students could not give a definite reason while some said that they were not aware of the comments. In fact, these silent reactions to their reviewers' comments could disrupt the interactive nature of the dyadic talk. This will be discussed in the next question.

Question Two: Did the trained students display a significantly higher number of interactive reviewer/writer episodes and self/other-regulated (collaborative) relationship in peer review, which is conducive to the ZPD?

According to Table 8, the majority of the total 267 episodes were on-task (interactive, non-interactive, and teacher vs. student), during which students either discussed the essays with each other interactively/non-interactively or discussed the essays with the teacher when they had difficulties. Only a few episodes were off-task, during which students were engaged in casual conversations. However, when examining the moment-to-moment

interactions in more detail, it was found that there was no significant trend of changes in terms of the nature of the interactions (interactive vs. non-interactive) across the three peer review sessions. In fact, there was even a drop in the percentage of the interactive tasks and a rise in the non-interactive tasks. This shows that even though students received training and gained more peer review experiences, they did not display more intensive interactional dynamics.

Table 8 Frequencies and Percentages of Different Types of Episodes
(with Chi-Squared Goodness of Fit Tests)

	Homepage (Total: 86)	News (Total: 82)	Story (Total: 99)	Total (N=267)
Reviewer/Writer Interactive	37 (43.02%)	29 (35.37%)	40 (40.40%)	106 (39.70%)
Reviewer/Writer Non-Interactive	37 (43.02%)	32 (39.02%)	46 (46.46%)	115 (43.07%)
Teacher vs. Student	10 (11.63%)	19 (23.17%)	12 (12.12%)	41 (15.36%)
Off-task	2 (2.33%)	2 (2.44%)	1 (1.01%)	5 (1.87%)
Significance	$\chi^2 = 108.65$ $p = 0.00$	$\chi^2 = 26.78$ $p = 0.00$	$\chi^2 = 57.00$ $p = 0.00$	$\chi^2 = 125.02$ $p = 0.00$

Due to the nature of this set of frequency-based data, Wilcoxon Signed Ranks tests were performed to examine the differences between some of these different types of episodes (See Table 9). First, the on-line episodes (i.e., interactive, non-interactive, and teacher vs. students) significantly differed from the off-task episodes. Such differences could be attributed to the effects of training, during which students were reminded to stay on-task to collaborate with each other to better their writing tasks. In fact, Winnie, a student

who had no previous peer review experiences, acknowledged the role of training in the final interview and said:

“I think peer review allows me to collaborate with each other to revise the writing. Now I know that I have to be responsible because I have to help her (Hazel) to better the draft.”

In addition, the number of the reader/writer episodes, both interactive and non-interactive, was also significantly higher than the number of the teacher vs. student episodes, which demonstrated that students were quite capable of working on their own during peer review processes. In fact, as revealed through the transcripts of the recordings, students usually asked the teacher only when they came across unknown words or expressions. For most of the time, they talked to their peers about what needed to be improved in their writing tasks.

However, it seemed that there was no significant difference between the interactive and the non-interactive episodes, which meant that students engaged in interactive interactions and non-interactive interactions equally. This phenomenon could be accounted for by their use of different strategies, which resulted in different types of responses from their partners. The relationship between the employment of strategies and results in the interactive/non-interactive episodes will be further discussed in Question 3.

Table 9 Comparisons between Different Types of Episodes

Off-task = 0.17 (0.46)	Reviewer/Writer Interactive = 3.53 (4.38)	$Z = -3.82$ $p = 0.00$
	Reviewer/Writer Non-interactive = 3.83 (4.79)	$Z = -3.85$ $p = 0.00$
	Teacher vs. Student = 1.37 (2.17)	$Z = -3.16$ $p = 0.00$
Teacher vs. Student = 1.37 (2.17)	Reviewer/Writer Interactive = 3.53 (4.38)	$Z = -2.47$ $p = 0.01$
	Reviewer/Writer Non-interactive = 3.83 (4.79)	$Z = -1.98$ $p = 0.05$
Reviewer/Writer Interactive = 3.53 (4.38)	Reviewer/Writer Non-Interactive = 3.83 (4.79)	$Z = -0.27$ $p = 0.79$

Note. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks tests. SDs in ().

Following the discussion on the extent of the interactions, we can now turn to the social relationships resulted from the participants' cognitive stages of regulations. As discussed in the literature review, there are two types of social relationships (De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994): symmetrical (occurring when one peer is at the same stage of regulation as the other) and asymmetrical (occurring when one peer is at a higher stage of regulation than another). The most ideal and typical situation, characterized as the ZPD, is the SER/OTR collaborative, where the SER participant tries to see the text through the eyes of the OTR peer in order to help him/her achieve the task goals and strategically assists the OTR peer by providing scaffolding, which in turn helps him/her to progress towards self-regulation.

Table 10 shows the results of the coding of different writer/reviewer episodes (interactive and non-interactive; $N=221$) into different types of social relationships based on table 4. In the present study, the patterns of the social relationships across the three sessions are variable and complicated, which may be mainly attributed to their different abilities to assist their peers at different times, as well as the different scaffolding strategies the peers have employed.

Table 10 Frequencies and Percentages of Different Social Relationships in the Reviewer/Writer Episodes across the Three Peer Review Sessions

	Homepage (Total: 74)	News (Total: 61)	Story (Total: 86)	Total (221)
SER/OTR (Authoritative)	14 (18.92%)	4 (6.57%)	5 (5.81%)	23 (10.41%)
SER/OTR (Collaborative)	18 (24.32%)	15 (24.59%)	29 (33.72%)	62 (28.05%)
SER/SER	3 (4.05%)	3 (4.92%)	2 (2.33%)	8 (3.62%)
SER/OBR	35 (47.3%)	31 (50.82%)	41 (47.67%)	107 (48.42%)
OTR/OTR	2 (2.70%)	1 (1.64%)	4 (4.65%)	7 (3.17%)
OTR/OBR	0 (0%)	2 (3.27%)	2 (2.33%)	4 (1.81%)
OBR/OBR	2 (2.70%)	5 (8.20%)	3 (3.49%)	10 (4.52%)

According to Table 10, the most frequently occurring social relationship was self-object regulated (SER/OBR), which was prevalent across the three peer review sessions. Such a social relationship is not conducive to Vygotsky's ZPD. When the reviewers encountered trouble, they tended to give advice in a direct, absolute, and assertive tone, which led the writers to passively or even silently receive the feedback and resulted in a lack of negotiation. Therefore, it was difficult to know whether the writers had really paid attention or taken up the feedback. Thus, they could be seen as being bound by the text, as they failed to achieve the collaborative nature of the peer review task. The episode below shows how a self-object regulated (SER/OBR) relationship was formed:

Episode 1 (Advising vs. No Response => SER/OBR Relationship)

Reviewer: I think you can add what the witnesses said after the accident.

Writer: (Silent)

The second most frequently occurring social relationship was self-other (SER/OTR: Collaborative), particularly in the last peer review session. Such results were attributed to the use of the strategies of “requesting clarifications” by the reviewers, as demonstrated in Episode 2:

Episode 2 (Requesting Clarifications vs. Offering Justifications => SER/OTR Relationship: Collaborative)

Reviewer: Here...I am not sure why you used the expression “The same”. “The same” means the two people are the same?

Writer: No...I mean...she wears glasses too, so I used the same...the same to emphasize that she also wears the... the same ... the same glasses as me!

Reviewer: I see... “the same glasses”!

In episode 2, the reviewer wondered why the expression “the same” was used in the writing, and the writer managed to offer a sound justification to the reviewer. Therefore, the question was resolved by the intersubjectivity with the use of the dialogue. Such intervention naturally led to the collaborative nature of the self-other regulated intervention and is the most ideal relationship proposed by Vygotsky’s ZPD.

When the Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test was conducted between the self-other regulated (SER/OTR: authoritative) and the self-other regulated (SER/OTR: collaborative) relationships, it was demonstrated that the collaborative relationship occurred significantly more frequently than the authoritative one (See Table 11).

Table 11 Comparisons between Means of SER/OTR (Authoritative) Relationship and SER/OTR (Collaborative) Relationship

Self-other regulated (SER/OTR: Authoritative)	Self-other regulated (SER/OTR: Collaborative)	Significance
0.79 (1.35)	2.14 (3.18)	$Z = -2.80, p = 0.01$

Note. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test. SDs in ().

However, the difference between self-other (collaborative) and self-object regulated episodes was insignificant (See Table 12), which once again demonstrated the powerful and devastating effects on the collaborative nature of social relationships, of the reviewers choosing to use the “advising” strategy. The relationships between strategies, responses, and social relationships will be further elaborated in Question 3.

Table 12 Comparisons between Means of SER/OTR (Collaborative) Relationship and SER/OBR Relationship

Self-other regulated (SER/OTR: Collaborative)	Self-Object regulated (SER/OBR)	Significance
2.14 (3.18)	3.69 (4.42)	$Z = -0.82, p = 0.41$

Note. Wilcoxon Signed Ranks test. SDs in ().

Question 3: Is there any relationship between the reviewer’s adoption of scaffolding strategies, the writer’s responses, the nature of episodes, and the occurrence of social relationships?

As mentioned, the writer’s responses are one of the determining factors for the collaborative nature of social relationships (Donato & McCormick, 1994; De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994). There are altogether five types of responses as revealed by the participants in the present study, which were: offering justifications to the reviewer, asking the reviewer for clarifications, explicit acknowledgment, ambiguous responses, and silence. While the former three types of responses (i.e., offering justifications, asking for clarifications, and explicit acknowledgment) demonstrated the writer’s intensive engagement in the peer

interaction, the latter two (i.e., ambiguous responses and silence) disrupted the ZPD as they halted the interaction.

As for the scaffolds, “eliciting” and “requesting clarifications” were identified as ideal strategies in the current analysis because these strategies could elicit writers’ justifications or answers, which in turn enhanced the intensiveness of interactions (Liu & Hansen, 2002). On the other hand, “advising”, “reacting”, and “instructing” could be less ideal because writers could simply stay silent after receiving these types of scaffolding, leaving ambiguity of whether the writer had really taken the feedback on-board and thus constituted a loose interaction between the writer and the reviewer.

Spearman correlations in Table 13 show that the number of ideal strategies highly-correlates with the number of responses given by the writer ($r = 0.85, p = 0.00$). In other words, the more the ideal strategies such as “eliciting” or “requesting clarifications” were adopted by the reviewers, the more the full responses from the writers could be obtained. On the other hand, if students adopted non-ideal strategies such as “advising”, “reacting”, or “instructing”, more ambiguous responses or even silence were elicited from the writers ($r = 0.85, p = 0.00$).

Table 13 Spearman Correlation between Reviewers’ Strategies and Writers’ Responses

	Ideal Strategies (Requesting clarifications and Eliciting)	Non-ideal Strategies (Advising, Reacting, and Instructing)
Total Full Responses (Offering Justifications + Asking for Clarifications + Explicit Acknowledgment)	$r = 0.85, p = 0.00$	$r = -0.07, p = 0.73$
Ambiguous and No Responses	$r = -0.13, p = 0.49$	$r = 0.85, p = .00$

Moreover, according to Table 14, the total number of responses (justifications + clarifications + explicit acknowledgment) highly correlates with the occurrence of reviewer/writer interactive episodes ($r = 0.99, p = 0.00$) but negatively correlates with the appearance of reviewer/writer non-interactive episodes ($r = -0.43, p = 0.02$). In other words, the fuller responses the writer gave to their reviewer, the more interactive was the nature of their interactions and the fewer non-interactive episodes were seen. On the other hand, the number of instances showing no or ambiguous responses by the writer significantly contributed to the occurrence of non-interactive episodes ($r = 0.90, p = 0.00$), but these ambiguous responses and silence almost display an inverse relationship with the emergence of interactive episodes ($r = -0.35, p = 0.07$). These results have demonstrated that the intensiveness of interactions can be highly impacted by whether the writer showed full responses after receiving feedback.

Table 14 Spearman Correlation between Interactive/Non-interactive Episodes and Responses

	Total Full Responses (Offering justifications + Asking for clarifications + Explicit acknowledgement)	Ambiguous and No Responses
Reviewer/Writer Interactive Episodes	$r = 0.99, p = 0.00$	$r = -0.35, p = 0.07$
Reviewer/Writer Non- interactive Episodes	$r = -0.43, p = 0.02$	$r = 0.90, p = 0.00$

Most importantly, these different responses also affected the social relationships. As discussed, the ideal social relationship, according to Vygotsky, is self-other regulated. That sort of social relationship could have happened only if both parties were engaged in interactive negotiations in which the writer delivered substantial responses after receiving

the reviewer's feedback. Most ideally, if discussions were realized in the form of repeated clarifications or justifications, the collaborative nature of the social relationships would result. On the other hand, when the writer did not show any responses to the reviewer, this indicated that the writer was not paying attention to the reviewer's feedback or that he/she had ignored the goal of the peer review activity, which was to collaborate with each other to improve the writing task. In other words, the writer was bound by the text, leaving only the reviewer to comment on the text alone. The possible result of this behavior was self-object regulation. Table 15 shows how the intensity of interactions correlated with different social relationships. It was found that the number of the interactive episodes highly correlated with the number of self-other regulated (collaborative) episodes ($r = 0.84, p = 0.00$). On the other hand, when the writer and the reviewer were engaged in a non-interactive negotiation, more self-object regulated relationships resulted ($r = 0.94, p = 0.00$). What is more, a negative correlation was also witnessed between collaborative relationships and non-interactive episodes ($r = -0.36, p = 0.05$), as well as self-object relationships and interactive episodes ($r = -0.43, p = 0.02$).

Table 15 Spearman Correlation between Interactive/non-interactive Episodes and Regulatory Relationships

	Self-other regulated (Collaborative)	Self-object regulated
Reviewer/Writer Interactive Episodes	$r = 0.84, p = 0.00$	$r = -0.43, p = 0.02$
Reviewer/Writer Non- interactive Episodes	$r = -0.36, p = 0.05$	$r = 0.94, p = 0.00$

When the above correlational analyses are taken together (Figure 1), it can be concluded that when the reviewers adopted ideal strategies such as “eliciting” and

“requesting clarifications” during peer review, the writers gave fuller responses to their reviewer to acknowledge their peer’s comments, the interactive nature of negotiations were enhanced, which in turn resulted in a more collaborative nature of peer review realized by self-other regulations. On the other hand, when the reviewers used assertive scaffolds such as “advising”, “instructing”, and “reacting”, the writers did not respond, the interactions would be nil and objected, and bound episodes would result. As the presence or absence of responses decides whether there is collaborative social relationship in nature, the importance of the writer’s responses should never be overlooked. The elicitation of writer responses could, in fact, be affected by different scaffolds used by the reviewer. In other words, reviewers (be they teachers or students) should be aware of the use of ideal strategies and the writer’s responses when they are engaged in interactions so as to promote the ZPD.

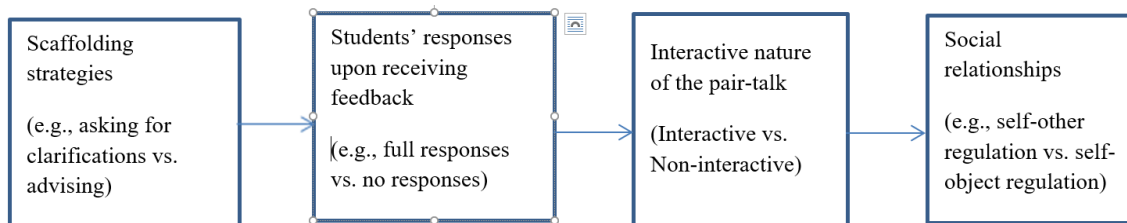


Figure 1 Relationship between the Reviewer’s Adoption of Scaffolding Strategies, the Writer’s Responses, the Nature of Episodes, and the Occurrence of Social Relationships

Discussion

Most students in the current study stayed on task during peer review. Moreover, even though they were allowed teacher assistance, most of the episodes demonstrated in the present study saw students’ talk about the essays. According to the interview with the participants, such results could be attributed to the impact of training. During the training

sessions, students were briefed about the main objective of peer review that students should work collaboratively to improve their essays. Moreover, students' active role in the current peer review activity was also emphasized frequently. As a result, most students deemed themselves as having the responsibility to help their peer to improve the writing task. Most of them treated the peer review activity seriously and stayed on-task; working independently to review their partner's essays, and these findings were in line with De Guerrero and Villamil's study (1994), in which most participants also stayed on-task and interacted with each other as readers/writers.

In the present study, students showed an array of scaffolding mechanisms during peer review processes. They adopted their instructions from the training session and employed these strategies during interactions, which included "advising", "eliciting", "reacting", "asking for clarifications", and "instructing". Such findings were in line with the findings of the past studies (e.g., De Guerrero & Villamil, 1996; Kong, 2019; Mendonca & Johnson, 1994; Stanley, 1992). Such adopting of different types of strategies could be the result of training. In fact, most of the students acknowledged the role of training in instructing them in expressing opinions and commenting on essays.

Although the training session did not introduce students explicitly to different types of social relationships, it emphasized the collaborative nature of the peer review activity via intensive negotiations. In fact, many students in the post-writing interview were also aware of the importance of collaboration when executing peer review. As a result, some students in the current study endeavored to take part in intensive interactions, thus resulting in the second most frequent occurrence of the collaborative, self-other regulated interventions, which was categorized as the most ideal and typical intervention by Vygotsky's ZPD.

However, despite the intervention of training, there were still less than desirable results obtained in the present study. First, students' choice of "advising" out-weighed that of "eliciting"; second, there was no significant difference between the interactive and non-interactive nature of the pair-talk episodes; and lastly, the occurrence of self-object regulation was more frequent than collaborative self-other regulated interventions.

In an attempt to increase the intensiveness of interactions, "eliciting" and "requesting clarifications" were highlighted to encourage students to adopt these two ideal scaffolds more frequently during peer review. However, despite such emphasis, students in the present study displayed remarkable preference of advising their peer over asking their peer for clarifications. The main reason for their choice, according to the final interview, was that they felt uncomfortable trying to elicit their peer's answers if they already knew how to edit the text, and their immediate reaction when they spotted a flaw which they thought they knew how to edit was to give advice to their peers. Such a tendency of the adoption of the "advising" strategy failed to propel their peer's full responses. Without meaningful responses from the peer, the dyadic interaction collapsed, and students' uptake of their peer's comments was not entirely guaranteed. This disrupted the ZPD.

Peer review is a frequently adopted technique in the writing classroom. It is indeed not a sheer editing process, but a highly complex interactive activity that should take account of learners' scaffolding strategies and social relationships. All these elements are inter-related, leading to desirable outcomes in long-term learning development (Lantolf & Thorne, 2007) in ESL writing. The current study has provided a full picture of how secondary school students employed different scaffolding strategies and demonstrated a variety of social relationships during peer review processes. Interestingly, such different kinds of scaffolds could also lead to different kinds of response from the writer, which in

turn affected the collaborative nature of the peer dialogue when students were engaged in the dyadic revision. In fact, the idea that peer-peer interaction may also foster learning has been well-documented in the literature (e.g., Swain, Brooks, & Tocalli-Beller, 2002; Tudge, 1992; Wells, 1999;). From both the social and cognitive perspectives, peer working within the ZPD can support writing development through, for instance, questioning, proposing solutions, counteracting, and offering justifications (Swain, Brooks, & Tocalli-Beller, 2002; Teng, 2016, 2019). It is, therefore, highly recommended that reviewers should make use of those scaffolding means that can directly elicit more responses from writers, in order to increase the interactive and collaborative nature of the peer review activity. With proper training, it is believed that learners can be introduced to certain types of scaffolds (i.e., “eliciting” and “requesting clarifications”) that help to elicit more intensive interactions. However, as shown by the interview data, apart from training, students’ individual preferences over the choice of certain strategies are also important factors that should not be neglected. For example, in this research, some reviewers preferred “advising” the writer whenever they spotted a mistake, despite adopting the “requesting clarifications” and “eliciting” strategies that were recommended in the training session.

Conclusion

The present study sheds new light on the complex processes of peer review and the multifaceted social relationships between writers and peer reviewers in the L2 writing classroom. There have been only a few past studies that explored the moment-to-moment interactions during peer review (De Guerrero & Villamil, 1994, 2000), not to mention those in the Asian context. This study adopted the micro-genetic approach to examining the peer review processes among secondary students in Hong Kong. It also took into account the

factor of training by exploring coached students' employment of scaffolding strategies, which in turn affects the occurrence of ideal social relationships (i.e. SER/OTR collaborative) that propels the ZPD, leading to possible advancement in students' writing literacy. The results of the present study can serve as a reference for teachers to design their L2 writing peer review training session. As this research focusses solely on the peer review strategies employed and the social relationships thus induced, other issues such as the incorporation rate of peer review in the subsequent draft should be addressed in future studies.

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Appendix A: Peer Review Training

A Formal Training Session for Peer Review

What Is Peer Review?

You should read each other's writing and give comments on it. In other words, you need to work together to make the writing better!

Why Peer Review?

- To appreciate and learn from each other's writing.
- To train your critical thinking—what is a good writing? How to make it better?

Procedures of Peer Review

- First, read the text once. Based on the evaluation form, comment on its content. For example, if you think the writer does not talk about the school facilities, you can put a tick in the box of “Needs Improvement”.
- Second, read the text once again. Circle or underline the mistakes about the language items listed on the evaluation form.
- Last, read the text very quickly to feel its overall organization and style.

How to Behave during Peer Review?

- Reviewers: Show interest and respect towards the peer's writing.
- Writers: Show your openness to your peer's comments. Answer their questions. Clarify your thoughts. You are working with each other to improve the writing!
- **Don't work alone.** Please keep eye contact with each other - You are talking to each other.

How to TALK during Peer Review?

- **Content:** Give your peer hints before telling the suggestions directly. For example, in the writing “My Secondary School”, if you think the writer does not talk about the school facilities, you can put a tick in the box of “Needs Improvement” first. Then, before you directly tell your peer the suggestions, you can ask the writer: *What is missing in this paragraph?*
- **Language:** You may circle/underline the mistakes (e.g., inappropriate use of tenses or vocabulary) and ask your peer to correct them one by one first. If he/she has difficulties, give him/her some hints and help them to correct the mistakes.

Comment Types and Useful Sentences in Peer Review

- **Asking for clarifications: (Strongly Recommended!)**

Why do you love your school?

What do you mean by XXX?

Why do you use the simple past tense here?

- **Guiding your peers indirectly (Strongly Recommended!)**

The use of tense here...do you know what's wrong with it?

Can you think of another adjective you should use here?

- **Giving suggestions to your peers:**

I think you can write one more about your school teachers.

There is something wrong with the adjective here. Maybe you can use another adjective like...

- **Evaluating your peer's work:**

The description of your school facilities is excellent.

The description of your essay is not clear enough.

I like your use of adjectives that describe personalities a lot.

I don't like your choice of words.

- **Teaching your peer directly:**

Please use the simple past tense here because the event has passed.

The word should be spelt as 'X-X-X-X'

Other Useful Sentences for Peer Review

I am not sure what you mean here. Could you explain?

Can you come up with some better words?

You have worked so hard on this paper. But I think you can describe more about....

Can you tell me why you say...? (e.g., why you like you schoolmates?)

Vague Expressions You Should Avoid!!

Your writing is quite good (How good is it?)

Your writing is bad! (This is discouraging, and why is it bad?)

Your text needs improvement. (Please tell your peer what he/she should improve.)

You should write more in your text. (What should your peer write more?)

Appendix B: Sample Evaluation Form

Evaluation Form on “My Homepage”

Content and Structure

	Excellent 😊😊😊	Pretty Good 😊😊	Average 😊	Needs Improvement 😞
1. There is an attractive heading.				
2. There are relevant sub-headings.				
3. There is an interesting description of ‘Myself’ – e.g. name, age, physical appearance and personality.				
4. The section on ‘My Family’ is clearly described.				
5. There is a clear description of ‘My Favourite Hobbies’.				
6. The description of the section on ‘My School is’ is interesting.				
7. The section on ‘My Best Friend’ is clearly described.				

Other comments:

Language Use

	Excellent 😊😊😊	Pretty Good 😊😊	Average 😊	Needs Improvement 😞
1. The simple present tense is used correctly.				
Any bad examples:				
2. Suitable expressions or adjectives describing appearance are used.				
Any good examples:				

Any bad examples:				
3. Adjectives describing personality are used appropriately.				
Any good examples:				
Any bad examples:				
4. Grammar is mostly correct.				
5. Words are of a wide range and generally accurate and appropriate.				
6. Punctuation and spelling are correct.				

Other comments:

➤ **Genre**

	Excellent 😊😊😊	Pretty Good 😊😊	Average 😊	Needs Improvement 😞
The general tone and style of the homepage show that the writer is aware of the purpose, context and audience of the genre.				

Other comments:

Effects of Extensive Reading on Taiwanese 11th Graders' Motivation and Grammatical Competence: A Preliminary Study

Ying-Chun Shih*

National Taipei University of Business

Bioprofile:

Ying-Chun Shih is an Associate Professor in the Department of Applied Foreign Languages, National Taipei University of Business, Taiwan. She holds a Doctor of Education degree in TESOL from Queen's University, Belfast, UK. Her research interests include extensive reading, reading strategy instruction, and also second language acquisition. **Email:** shihyg@gmail.com

Abstract

Research on extensive reading programs integrated into English grammar classes has been limited. To increase our knowledge in this area, this study investigated the impact of extensive reading on the motivation and grammatical competence of eleventh-grade students in an English grammar course at a five-year junior college in Taiwan. A quasi-experimental pretest-posttest design was employed; it included two intact English grammar classes, one as a control and the other as the experimental group. Both groups received English grammar instruction in class. The experimental group participated in an extensive

reading program outside the classroom for one academic year. The results indicated that the

*corresponding author

Dr. Ying-Chun Shih, National Taipei University of Business,
321, Sec. 1, Jinan Rd., Taipei, 10051, Taiwan

experimental group (with grammar instruction plus the extensive reading activity) significantly outperformed the control group (only in relation to grammar instruction) in terms of their self-reported motivation and grammar structure performance. Students' responses from post-study questionnaires further revealed that the extensive reading activity increased students' motivation not only in reading but also in learning grammar. This study yielded the finding that extensive reading has a positive impact on promoting the motivation and grammatical competence of the EFL learners.

Keywords: extensive reading, quasi-experimental design, motivation, English grammar

Introduction

Literature on second language (L2) literacy development has focused on two crucial issues. Earlier researchers (e.g., Crowhurst, 1991; Eisterhold, 1990) explored how reading skills influence writing performance, while more recent researchers (e.g., File & Adams, 2010; Mirhassani & Toosi, 2000) have investigated the effect of certain pedagogical instructional techniques on students' L2 literacy development. This study, therefore, aims to address the latter concern. Specifically, this study investigated the impact of an extensive reading program on eleventh-grade students' motivation and grammatical competence which are essential to achieving literacy success, enabling students to read and write clearly, accurately, and fluently.

Reading has been considered the most effective way to increase literacy. When people want to learn something new, reading has served as a convenient and crucial medium for them to navigate a novel world and grasp the information they want to understand. While uncertainty remains regarding how many readings should be done for extensive reading, Krashen (2004) advocates that it is always beneficial for students to do free voluntary

reading, metaphorically saying that to eat a lot of junk food is harmful to learners, but to do a lot of junk reading is beneficial to learners. Hence, it is advisable to read as much as possible, that is, to read extensively. The term “extensive reading” was firstly applied by Harold Palmer (1964) in foreign language pedagogy. In Palmer’s view, extensive reading meant “rapidly” (1921/1964, p. 111) reading “book after book” (1968, p. 137). A reader’s attention should focus on the meaning, not the language, of the text. In language-teaching terms, extensive reading is regarded as one of four styles of reading (Day & Bamford, 1998); the others are skimming, scanning, and intensive reading. Extensive reading has been termed “pleasure reading” (Day & Bamford, 1997), “sustained silent reading” (Grabe, 1991), or “free voluntary reading” (Krashen, 2004). No matter what it has been called, the main idea is to ignite learners’ interest in reading as well as to sustain their motivation in learning their first language or a second/foreign language. However, since it is still not clear to what degree extensive reading activities strengthen areas of students’ second language acquisition other than their reading and vocabulary proficiency, this study attempts to investigate whether students’ grammatical competence could also benefit from extensive reading programs. Additionally, students’ reading motivation is examined to obtain a comprehensive picture of the effects of extensive reading.

Theoretical Background and Literature Review

The Input Hypothesis and Affective Filter Hypothesis

Krashen’s input hypothesis has been found to have significantly influenced the field of second language acquisition (Helgesen, 2003). His perspectives towards second language acquisition have inspired numerous practitioners of language pedagogy (Ellis, 1997). His hypothesis of learning-acquisition distinction (Krashen, 1985) has been widely discussed in the development of second language competence. He hypothesizes that acquisition

occurs subconsciously like children acquiring their first language, while learning happens consciously like foreign language learners gaining language knowledge. In other words, language acquisition happens without learners' conscious effort; once language is acquired, the acquired knowledge is already rooted in the mind (Krashen, 2003). On the other hand, language learning occurs with learners' conscious effort; the learned knowledge is embedded in the mind. According to Krashen, language acquisition contributes more than language learning to second language development, and language is produced only in the acquired system, with the learned system simply serving as a monitor of the acquired system (Jordan, 2004). In spite of Krashen's hypothesis concerning input and second language acquisition (SLA) being considered simplistic (Hafiz & Tudor, 1990), the acquisition-learning distinction has positively influenced foreign language teachers' teaching. Several educators and researchers have designed language learning tasks with this distinction in mind.

With respect to the Input Hypothesis, Krashen posits that:

...humans acquire language in only one way – by understanding messages, or by receiving 'comprehensible input'....We move from i , or current level, to $i + 1$, the next level along the natural order, by understanding input containing $i + 1$. (Krashen, 1985, p. 2)

In addition, there are two corollaries for the Input Hypothesis. First, because speaking is a result of acquisition, speech is produced on its own and develops from comprehensible input. Second, if input is understood and sufficiently used, the language knowledge necessary for language development is naturally elicited (Krashen, 1985). Therefore, massive comprehensible input seems to be substantial for successful language education.

Comprehensible input, however, is still insufficient for language acquisition to occur. Even though learners are exposed to language input, the affective filter, a mental block, might still more or less hamper the language input learners need for their language acquisition (Krashen, 1985). When the affective filter is high, learners will be anxious and lack confidence. Then, the language input will be reduced and acquisition might not take place (Krashen, 1994). Consequently, the Affective Filter Hypothesis suggests that a low affective filter should increase input, and make learners more receptive to the input (Richards & Rodgers, 2001). Although little research has been done to support the causal relationship between learners' personality variables and acquisition, the mechanism has intuitively drawn SLA researchers' attention (Scarcella, 1990).

According to Krashen (1981, 1982), learners' second language acquisition can be encouraged through abundant comprehensible input. Therefore, language and literacy development can be fostered by extensive reading. In other words, extensive reading leads to better reading comprehension, writing style, vocabulary, spelling, and linguistic development.

In summary, the infusion of extensive reading programs in second/foreign language contexts is closely associated with the notion that learners need sufficient comprehensible input and a lower affective filter for the target language. Given the fact that students differ in their interests, as well as in their potential rates of progress, an extensive reading program that allows for a very high degree of individualization is indispensable.

Motivation Theories

Motivation has been a major issue in the field of psychology, as it is the core of biological, cognitive, and social regulation. During the first half of the 20th century, the prevailing theories of motivation stressed psychological drives as the source of energy for all activated

behavior. By the 1950s, drive-based approaches were unable to provide appropriate explanations for a variety of phenomena. Hence, a new concept of motivational psychology incorporating cognitive notions appeared which differentiates between the concepts of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation (Deci & Moller, 2005).

Intrinsic motivation, according to Deci and Ryan (1985), based on the inherent need for competence and self-determination, is defined as “the innate, natural propensity to engage one’s interests and exercise one’s capacities, and in so doing, to seek and conquer optimal challenges” (p. 43). Intrinsic needs are innate and serve as an influential energizer of behavior. Supporting innate needs when learners are exposed to new ideas or exercise new skills will facilitate self-determined learning (Ryan & Deci, 2000). In contrast, extrinsic motivation refers to “doing something because it leads to a separable outcome” (Ryan & Deci, 2000, p. 55). Extrinsically motivated behaviors become more self-determined through the processes of internalization and integration. The theoretical basis of motivation for this study rests on self-determination theory, which highlights the development of intrinsic motivation by supporting an individual’s autonomy, competence, and relatedness, resulting in the desired educational outcome (Deci, Vallerand, Pelletier, & Ryan, 1991; Man, Bui, & Teng, 2018; Reynolds & Wang, 2014).

Most motivational researchers have rejected the view that human motivation should be regarded as resulting simply from either extrinsic or intrinsic factors and now recognize the potential benefits of a more balanced perspective that allows for a combination of intrinsic and extrinsic factors (Hidi, 2000). Although in these new theoretical tendencies researchers deem that rewards with informational feedback might not be adverse to intrinsic motivation, a generally negative attitude towards extrinsic rewards still prevails.

Extensive reading has been drawing increasing attention as a potentially effective form of reading instruction. Since the Fijian book flood study (Elley & Mangubhai, 1981), research has provided compelling empirical evidence of the benefits of extensive reading on varied aspects of L2/FL ability, such as vocabulary (e.g., Chang & Hu, 2018; Horst, 2005; Reynolds & Bai, 2013), reading comprehension (e.g., Alzu'bi, 2014; Robb & Kano, 2013; Tanaka & Stapleton, 2007; Yamashita, 2008), reading rate (e.g., Beglar, Hunt & Kite, 2012; Bell, 2001; Iwahori, 2008; McLean & Rouault, 2017; Vu & Nguyen, 2017), and grammar structures (e.g., Alqadi & Alqadi, 2013; Lee, Schallert, & Kim, 2015). Among them, the studies investigating the effects of extensive reading on grammatical performance appear to contradict one another. For example, Alqadi and Alqadi's (2013) study indicated that extensive reading has been effective for low intermediate level undergraduates' acquisition of grammatical structures. In contrast, Lee, Schallert, and Kim's (2015) research showed that although middle school students at high and middle language proficiency levels could benefit from extensive reading activities in terms of their grammatical structures, those at low levels do not. In addition, a meta-analysis of extensive reading research including 34 studies (two PhD dissertations and 32 research articles) provided 43 different effect sizes and a total sample size of 3,942 participants (Nakanishi, 2015). The findings reported a medium effect size ($d = 0.46$) for group contrasts and a larger effect ($d = 0.71$) for pre-post contrasts for participants who received extensive reading instruction compared to those who did not.

More recently, due to a number of shortcomings in the previous meta-analysis research concerning extensive reading, Jeon and Day (2016) replicated the meta-analysis to examine the overall effectiveness of extensive reading on reading proficiency in ESL and EFL settings. They gathered 71 samples from 49 studies published from 1980 to 2014,

including a total of 5,919 participants. The results showed a small to medium effect for both experimental-versus-control group design ($d = 0.57$) and pre-to-post-test design ($d = 0.79$). Moderator analysis revealed growing interest in extensive reading over the past 30 years. Additionally, extensive reading as part of the curriculum indicated the highest mean scores among extensive reading types. In a nutshell, the supremacy of extensive reading over an intensive/traditional reading approach corresponds with the previous meta-analysis findings.

As for the relationship between L2 reading motivation and extensive reading, only a handful of researchers have studied this issue. Mori (as cited in Nishino, 2007), for instance, investigated Japanese female university students' reading motivation via a questionnaire. The findings revealed that in terms of long-term reading behavior, *intrinsic value of reading and learning English* (one of the L2 reading motivational sub-components she identified) was a strong predictor of the amount that the participants read. Furthermore, Takase (2003) examined Japanese university students' reading motivation in an extensive reading program. The results showed that *intrinsic motivation toward reading English*, one of the L2 reading motivational sub-components that Takase identified, strongly predicted the amount that the students read. Takase also noted that the participants' motivation changed greatly when they proceeded through the extensive reading program.

On the other hand, using a qualitative, multi-case approach, Judge (2011) examined nine avid participants regarding their motivation for reading in a Japanese high school. The findings corroborated that extensive reading provided the participants with autonomy, access to interesting materials, and the impetus for continued L2 acquisition.

Problem Statement and Purpose of the Study

Although positive findings are available in the literature on extensive reading programs, some questions still remain to be answered. First, since extensive reading programs have usually been conducted in reading classes, there is a lack of investigation on the effectiveness of extensive reading programs for English grammar courses in EFL contexts. Moreover, whether extensive reading is an appropriate approach to enhance learners' motivation and grammar usage while they are studying English grammar is still unknown. To add to the literature and give further insights regarding these issues, an empirical study should be conducted. Therefore, the purpose of the current study is to investigate the impact of extensive reading on students' motivation and their grammar usage while they were taking an English grammar course in an EFL context. In addition, this study also aims to gather information on the participants' responses regarding the integration of an extensive reading program into a grammar course.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopted a quasi-experimental research design, including two intact English grammar classes. One class acted as the untreated control group and the other class engaged in an extensive reading program.

Participants

The participants in this study were 93 eleventh-grade students (10 males, 83 females; age range 16–17) enrolled in two intact English grammar classes in the second year of a five-year junior college of business in Taiwan. These participants, who majored in English, had

two periods of English grammar class per week. The English grammar class would prepare them for passing the intermediate level of General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), developed by the Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC) in Taiwan (Roever & Pan, 2008). Therefore, they were at the basic level of English proficiency. Each period lasted fifty minutes. The researcher at the same time was their English grammar teacher. One class served as the experimental group ($n = 51$), and the other as the control group ($n = 42$). The same textbook was assigned to both English grammar classes by the administration, *Macmillan English Grammar in Context-Intermediate* (Vince, 2008).

Instruments

Motivational questionnaire

The Motivational Questionnaire used in this study was adapted from Takase (2007). The questionnaire consists of 27 items related to L2 reading motivation and attitudes (see Appendix A). According to Takase (2007), this 5-point Likert-scale questionnaire was constructed based on L2 learning research (e.g., Gardner, 1985; Koizumi & Matsuo, 1993; Schmidt, Boraie, & Kassabgy, 1996; Takase, 2001; Yoneyama, 1979) and educational psychology (Wigfield, 1997). Takase (2007) developed the questionnaire by examining the relevant literature on L2 reading motivation and attitudes. Consequently, these items of the motivation questionnaire were subjected to rigorous scrutiny for content validity.

Takase (2007) reported the reliability coefficient for the motivation questionnaire as $\alpha = .78$, indicating that the data collected were considered rather reliable. For the current study, Cronbach's alpha was also calculated to measure the reliability of the questionnaire. The results of the reliability measurements were as follows: experimental group (pre) α

= .85, experimental group (post) α = .84; control group (pre) α = .79, control group (pre) α = .83, which showed that the instrument was fairly reliable.

In addition, based on Takase's study (2007), items 1, 2, 3, 7, 15, and 16 of the motivation questionnaire gathered information on students' intrinsic motivation for L2 reading, items 4, 5, 6, 9, 12, 17, 20 to 22 measured entrance exam-related extrinsic motivation, and items 13, 14 and 24 to 27 examined instrumental motivation and negative attitude toward extensive reading. Items 24 to 27 were negatively stated and reverse-coded.

A post-study questionnaire

A post-study questionnaire (see Appendix B) was designed to elicit the participants' feedback towards the extensive reading program and was administered to the experimental group. The questionnaire was divided into two parts, with four questions in the first part and two open-ended questions in the second part. The participants' responses to the four items in the first part concerned their beliefs regarding the effects of the extensive reading program. The second part, with two open-ended questions, was used to probe the participants' reflections or comments on the extensive reading program and determine the feasibility of incorporating the extensive reading program in future grammar courses.

Grammar structure test

The grammar structure test was adopted from an Intermediate reading exam of The General English Proficiency Test (GEPT), developed by the Language Training and Testing Center (LTTC) in Taiwan (Roever & Pan, 2008). The reading exam consists of three sections: word choices/grammar usages, cloze passages, and reading comprehension questions. In the reading exam, the two sections of word choices/grammar usages and cloze

passages were used to evaluate students' grammar competence. Therefore, the two sections were selected for analysis in this study. The word choices/grammar usages includes 15 items (3 points each), and the cloze passage contains 10 items (3 points each). Therefore, the total score of the two sections is 75 points.

Procedure

In the first several classroom sessions, the experimental group was orientated to extensive reading by instructions on how to select graded readers and keep reading diaries. The duration of the extensive reading intervention was one academic year. All the participants completed the Motivational Questionnaire as the pretest and posttest before and after the treatment. In addition, a post-study questionnaire was administered to the experimental group after the intervention.

Extensive reading was incorporated in the class in the following way. Several hundred diverse copies of graded readers published by Oxford, Longman, and Macmillan were made available in the school library to the experimental group over the course of the intervention. The participants were asked to read graded readers twenty minutes per day, Monday through Friday. They were also required to keep their own reading diaries (see Appendix C) as homework. In the reading diaries, students listed the title of the book they were reading, the number of minutes they read per day, and how much they liked the book. The reading diaries were collected every two weeks. Based on their reading diaries, the teacher checked their progress and provided appropriate advice when necessary.

Data Analyses

In data analyses, both descriptive and inferential statistics were performed to investigate the effects of extensive reading on EFL learners' reading motivation and grammatical competence in terms of pretests and posttests for the experimental and control groups. An independent sample *t*-test was applied to examine whether a significant difference existed between the experimental and control groups in terms of their reading motivation and grammatical competence in pretests and posttests. Since a significant difference between the experimental and control groups was found in the participants' pretest scores of grammar tests, an ANCOVA was therefore conducted by considering the pretest scores as a co-variance to examine the effects of extensive reading on students' grammatical competence.

Results

Findings from the Motivational Questionnaire

In order to identify whether or not extensive reading influenced the participants' overall motivation, an independent sample *t*-test was used to compare the respondents' scores. As shown in Table 1, on the pretest, there was no statistically significant difference for the motivation between the two groups ($t = 1.02, p = .312$). According to the means (the experimental group: 3.48, the control group: 3.40), the participants had a moderate degree of motivation. After treatment, in the posttest, there was a significant difference between the two groups ($t = 1.99, p = .049$), favoring the experimental group. In other words, the experimental group's overall motivation improved significantly more than that of the control group. Actually, the control group's motivation indicated a slight decline (3.40 to

3.38), which means that the control group's motivation became somewhat less from the pretest to the posttest.

Table 1 *Group Differences on Reading Motivation*

Phase	Group	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Pretest	Experimental	3.48	0.38	1.02	.312
	Control	3.40	0.29		
Posttest	Experimental	3.53	0.39	1.99	.049*
	Control	3.38	0.27		

Note. Experimental group $N = 51$; Control group $N = 42$. * $p < .05$.

Both experimental and control groups' motivation components were further investigated to obtain a detailed picture of how extensive reading influenced their motivation in Table 2. The results showed that no significant difference between the two groups was found in the pretests in terms of the three motivation components (intrinsic motivation $t = -.45$, $p = .650$; extrinsic motivation $t = 1.07$, $p = .285$; instrumental motivation $t = .77$, $p = .440$). After the intervention, in the posttests, the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group in terms of all motivation components including intrinsic, extrinsic and instrumental motivation ($t = 2.52$, $p = .013$; $t = 2.55$, $p = .012$; $t = 2.90$, $p = .005$).

Table 2 *Comparison of the Means for Motivation Components*

Component	Group	Pre <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>t</i> (<i>p</i>)	Post <i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>t</i> (<i>p</i>)
Intrinsic	Experimental	3.41 (.54)	-.45 (.650)	3.55 (.58)	2.52 (.013*)
	Control	3.46 (.40)		3.26 (.46)	
Extrinsic	Experimental	3.77 (.54)	1.07 (.285)	3.89 (.48)	2.55 (.012*)
	Control	3.65 (.52)		3.63 (.46)	
Instrumental	Experimental	2.81 (.45)	.77 (.440)	2.85 (.43)	2.90 (.005*)
	Control	2.74 (.41)		2.61 (.34)	

Note. Experimental group $N = 51$; Control group $N = 42$. * $p < .05$

Experimental group's Responses to the Post-study Questionnaire

In this section, the experimental group's responses to the post-study questionnaire are reported. The purpose of the post-study questionnaire conducted at the end of course was to uncover the experimental group's beliefs and views about incorporating the extensive reading program into the English grammar course. The statistical results of the participants' responses to items 1 to 4 are displayed in Table 3.

As Table 3 illustrates, the percentages of Items 1 to 4 suggest that most of the participants showed positive responses toward the extensive reading program. Of the 51 students, all considered the extensive reading activity to be beneficial for their "*reading ability*", 33 felt it positively affected their "*motivation in reading English grammar*", 36 in "*getting better grades on English grammar tests*", and 42 reported it helped them "*understand the grammatical structures better*". Overall, the participants believed that the extensive reading program was effective in increasing their English grammar knowledge and improving their motivation. It is a satisfying result that most of the participants had a positive response toward the extensive reading program. This finding highlights the significance of the extensive reading program.

Table 3 *Participants' Beliefs in the Effects of Extensive Reading Program*

Item	Response	N	Percentage	
1. I think the extensive reading activity promotes my reading ability.	SA	21	41.1	(SA+A) 100
	A	30	58.9	
	N	0	0	
	D	0	0	
	SD	0	0	
2. I think extensive reading activity enhances my motivation in reading English grammar.	SA	10	19.6	(SA+A) 64.6
	A	23	45.0	
	N	17	33.3	
	D	1	2.1	
	SD	0	0	
3. I think extensive reading activity helps me get better grades on English grammar tests.	SA	10	19.6	(SA+A) 70.5
	A	26	50.9	
	N	15	29.5	
	D	0	0	
	SD	0	0	
4. I think extensive reading activity helps me understand the grammatical structures better.	SA	11	21.5	(SA+A) 82.2
	A	31	60.7	
	N	9	17.8	
	D	0	0	
	SD	0	0	

Note. N = 51; SA: Strongly Agree, A: Agree, N: Neutral, D: Disagree, SD: Strongly Disagree.

Findings from the Grammar Structure Test

Since the statistical results of the independent sample *t*-test showed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups on the pretests (the experimental group: $\bar{x} = 44.29$; the control group: $\bar{x} = 34.64$, $p < .05$), students' pretest scores were considered as a co-variant. An ANCOVA was accordingly performed. Table 4 shows the descriptive statistics of grammar structure posttest scores between the experimental and control groups.

Table 4 *Descriptive Statistics for Different Student Grouping Learning Achievement*

Group	<i>N</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Adjusted Mean
Experimental	51	52.41	11.81	51.25
Control	42	42.10	13.50	43.51

This study investigates the effects of an extensive reading program on students' grammar structure scores. Table 5 shows that the covariant (pretest) reached a significant level ($F = 6.75$; $p < .05$) and therefore must be factored out in order to compare different student groupings' posttest scores. After factoring out the influence of pretest scores, it was clear that the experimental group (adjusted $\bar{x} = 51.25$) significantly outperformed the control group (adjusted $\bar{x} = 43.51$) on the grammar structure posttest. Taking these statistics into consideration after factoring out the influence of pretest scores, it can clearly be seen that the experimental group performed significantly better on the grammar structure tests than the control group did when receiving the extensive reading program.

Table 5 *ANCOVA Summary Table for Different Student Groups*

Source of Variance	Type III <i>MS</i>	<i>Df</i>	<i>MS</i>	<i>F</i>	Post hoc
Covariate (Pretest)	1007.55	1	1007.55	6.75*	
Between (Group)	1200.40	1	1200.40	8.04**	Experimental > Control
Within (Error)	13432.42	90	149.25		
Total	15640.37	92	2357.20		

Note. * $p < .05$. ** $p < .01$.

Discussion

Successful second language literacy development requires the acquisition of grammatical competence. Students acquire grammar structures most effectively when they can see their relevance to authentic reading. In this study, extensive reading was integrated into a traditional EFL grammar class. The intervention was conducted to probe into whether an

extensive reading program could promote students' motivation and grammatical competence. The experimental group was compared to the control group to determine whether any differences in terms of motivation toward learning English would be found. In addition, this study further investigated the feasibility of incorporating an extensive reading program into an English grammar course.

The results from the motivation analyses showed a statistically significant difference between the control and experimental groups' motivational questionnaire results on the posttests, indicating that the extensive reading program increased students' intrinsic, extrinsic and instrumental motivation to learn EFL, supporting Takase's perspective (2003) that extensive reading is an effective strategy for motivating EFL high school learners who showed a moderate amount of reading. This study is, nevertheless, inconsistent with Takase's finding that extensive reading did not increase the reading motivation of those students who read the greatest amount. The inconsistent findings could be attributed to the characteristics of the participants in this study. Since the secondary school English education in Taiwan has been relying on reading as the main source for language input and typically is laden with the instruction of lexical and grammatical knowledge (Kao & Reynolds, 2017), based on the responses from the closed-ended post-study questionnaire items, the participants in this study appeared to be very receptive to the extensive reading program for promoting English grammatical competence. This suggests that instead of conventional intensive reading activities such as skimming a specified text for specific questions to respond to, according to the findings of this study, an extensive reading program involving learners reading texts for pleasure and developing their own reading strategy repertoires incorporated into an English grammar class serves as a plausible alternative for other EFL contexts similar to Taiwan.

Although research studies surveying language learners' perception or attitude towards extensive reading courses or curriculum (e.g., Jeon, 2008; Shin & Ahn, 2006; Takase, 2007) have revealed positive viewpoints towards these activities, these self-report studies do not assess learners' language performance or knowledge and cannot serve as evidence to show the effects of extensive reading. In addition, previous studies were conducted to explore the effects of extensive reading on students' vocabulary acquisition or reading comprehension have revealed the benefits of extensive reading (e.g., Chang & Hu, 2018; Iwahori, 2008; Robb & Kano, 2013; Teng, 2015, 2019). The scope of language performance investigated in their studies however is still narrow, limiting the generalizability of extensive reading effects. To address the issue of the narrow scope of language performance, the current study enhances previous studies by investigating students' English grammar structure knowledge, further revealing that the implementation of an extensive reading program can facilitate EFL learners' development of grammar structure knowledge. This finding highlights the importance of frequent input to encourage second language acquisition (Ellis, 2002); it suggests that eleventh-grade students, if given opportunities for exposure to large amounts of linguistic structures for one year, could improve their English grammatical competence. Since the EFL learning context compared with the ESL context provides fewer opportunities for learners to develop reading abilities, this study encourages EFL learners to read English graded readers extensively that they have selected themselves. The current study seems to parallel the findings from previous research studies, which show extensive reading to be beneficial to EFL learners' grammar knowledge, as assessed with multiple choice format tests at the junior high school level (Lee, Schallert, & Kim, 2015) and with writing passages at the university level (Alqadi & Alqadi, 2013). Since students' second language proficiency levels might moderate the

effect of extensive reading, a close look at Lee et al.'s study revealed that low proficiency learners at the eighth grade could not benefit from the extensive reading activity. The current study, on the contrary, showed that eleventh-grade students at the basic level could reap benefits from extensive reading. This further suggests that the success of extensive reading should depend on students' linguistic threshold (Cummins, 1979). Since eleventh-grade students have a better command of lexical and syntactic knowledge than the eighth graders, they could experience more gains in grammatical knowledge from the extensive reading program.

Research has also shown that if teachers allow students to select reading materials they are interested in, their vocabulary learning improves more than that of those who read assigned readings (Reynolds & Bai, 2013). The finding of this study contributes to the extensive reading literature, indicating that learners' grammatical competence could also benefit from reading self-selected reading materials extensively. The current study also serves as one piece of evidence attesting to the value of free voluntary reading for SLA (Krashen, 2004). This study, however, counters what Yamashita (2008) found. Her study revealed that extensive reading is effective for promoting EFL learners' reading comprehension but not grammar competence. While extensive reading allows learners to freely explore language structures or usages on their own, whether learners consciously notice certain linguistic features plays a crucial role in their second language literacy development. One possible explanation for Yamashita's finding could be that learners in her study might not have paid attention to linguistic features while doing extensive reading. It is, therefore, proposed that activities with a focus on helping learners notice linguistic features to increase their grammatical competence should be developed along with extensive reading programs.

Overall Results and Pedagogical Implications

Reading has been considered the most effective way to increase literacy. This study has examined the benefit of extensive reading activities on EFL learners' reading motivation and grammatical competence necessary for their future literacy success. The findings showed that students receiving both grammar instructions and the extensive reading activity could significantly outperform those who received only grammar instructions in their reading motivation (including intrinsic, extrinsic and instrumental motivation) and grammatical structures. Students who received extensive reading activities further expressed their positive motivation not only in reading activities but also in grammar learning.

The issue of the extent to which free voluntary reading is effective for improving students' language performance requires more classroom-based evidence to support its benefits. This study serves as empirical evidence to support the positive effects on other areas of language performance, that is, grammar usages or structures. Although classroom teachers are already familiar with traditional methods to teach English grammar, they have started to seek more effective techniques to improve students' motivation and grammatical competence. The findings of the current study inform instructors of an alternative to developing learners' grammatical competence. That is, instructors or curriculum developers could design activities in which students could freely choose reading material they find interesting after class. This study suggests that teachers provide different levels of graded readers for students to choose, while drawing their attention to linguistic forms in those reading materials with the primary focus on meaning and communication. After the extensive reading activities, teachers could design relevant focused tasks in which certain grammatical structures have to be used to fulfill a communicative purpose. In such

a way, the learning benefits might last much longer, which entails a need for further investigations.

Limitations and Suggestions

This research, however, is subject to several limitations. Firstly, since this study used self-report measures to investigate students' reading motivation, multiple methods (e.g., qualitative methodologies such as observation and in-depth interviews) should be adopted to allow for a deeper analysis into how extensive reading activities influence students' motivation. Secondly, the grammatical competence was evaluated in multiple-choice formats in this study and it was inevitable for learners to guess correct answers. This study, therefore, suggested that students' grammatical competence should be assessed in authentic writing tasks in order to obtain a more reliable outcome of students' grammatical performance. Ultimately, because the effects of extensive reading might vary with students at different proficiency levels, future studies should take the language proficiency into considerations.

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Appendix A: Motivational Questionnaire

1. Of all English studies, I like reading best.
2. Reading English is my hobby.
3. I enjoy reading English books.
4. I am reading English books to get better grades.
5. I am reading English books to succeed on the entrance examination.
6. I am reading English books because I will need to read English in college or a university.
7. I am reading English books because it is required.
8. My parents suggest that I read English books.
9. I am reading English books to become able to read long passages on the entrance exam easily.
10. Reading English books helps me to understand and appreciate English literature.
11. I am learning English reading because I want to read newspapers and magazines in English.
12. I am learning English reading because I want to get a better job in the future.
13. I am learning English reading because I want to read information in English on the Internet.
14. I am learning English reading because I want to exchange e-mail in English.
15. I am reading English books to become more knowledgeable.
16. I am reading English books to compete with my classmates.
17. I am reading English to become more intelligent.
18. Reading English books will broaden my view.
19. I want to know more about English-speaking countries.
20. I am reading English books to become a faster reader.
21. I want to be a better reader.
22. I don't like to be disturbed while reading English books.
23. I don't like to read English books that have difficult words.
24. I want to look up new words in the dictionary while I am reading.
25. I like intensive reading better than extensive reading.
26. The speaking skill is more important than the reading skill.
27. I like listening to English better than reading it.

Appendix B: Post-Study Questionnaire

Listed below are statements about what you think concerning extensive reading program. Note that there is no right or wrong answer for each statement. Please circle the number (1, 2, 3, 4, 5) to indicate the extent to which you agree or disagree with each statement.

strongly disagree	disagree	neutral	agree	strongly agree
1	2	3	4	5

1. I think extensive reading program promotes my reading ability.
2. I think extensive reading program enhances my motivation in reading English grammar.
3. I think extensive reading program helps me get better grades on English grammar tests.
4. I think extensive reading program helps me understand the grammatical structures better.
5. Do you approve the use of extensive reading program?

☐ Yes, the reason is _____

☐ Neutral

☐ No, I think _____

6. As for the extensive reading program, do you have any suggestions or thoughts?

Appendix C: Reading Diary

Date	Name of Book	Time Spent	Number of Pages	Interest*

* Criteria of Interest: 5 = very interesting, 4 = interesting, 3 = a little interesting,

2 = not very interesting, 1 = not at all interesting.



Classroom Writing Assessment and Feedback in L2 School Contexts

I. Lee, Singapore: Springer, 2017. Pp. 1+ 157, €93.59, ISBN: 978-981-10-3924-9

Jingjing Ma*

Hang Seng University of Hong Kong

Bioprofile:

Jingjing Ma works as Assistant Professor at the Hang Seng University of Hong Kong and her research interest includes L2 writing and learning-oriented assessment. **Email:** maggiema@hsu.edu.hk

Intended for L2 writing teachers and researchers, Icy Lee's book *Classroom Writing Assessment and Feedback in L2 School Contexts* aims to explore how to utilize effective classroom writing assessment and feedback to promote the teaching and learning of writing in L2 school contexts.

The Introduction (or Chapter 1) explains the aims of the book and highlights the importance of examining classroom assessment of writing from the perspectives of assessment *for* learning (AfL) and assessment *as* learning (AaL) as well as the important role of feedback in classroom writing assessment. It also provides an overview of the book.

Chapter 2 clarifies different purposes of classroom writing assessment (i.e., AoL--assessment of learning, and AfL/AaL) and explains the theoretical tenets underpinning

*corresponding author

Dr. Jingjing Ma, Rm. 423B, Block M, The Hang Seng
University of Hong Kong, Hang Shin Link, Siu Lek Yuen,
Shatin, N. T., Hong Kong

each. Underscoring the necessity
of using classroom writing
assessment to facilitate learning

as well as learner metacognition and self-regulation, this chapter offers guidelines of effective classroom writing assessment practice.

Against the backdrop of the important position of AfL in educational reform policy in different parts of the world, chapter 3 unpacks the notion of AfL, defined as the process in which learners and their teachers seek and interpret evidence for use to decide the current and desired levels of performance and how to close the gap between the two. The chapter then presents insights from AfL in writing research, outlines issues related to the implementation of AfL in L2 school writing contexts, and suggests pedagogical principles for effective implementation of AfL in L2 writing classrooms.

Chapter 4 focuses on assessment as learning (AaL), a subset of AfL. It examines the theoretical underpinnings of AaL including theories related to metacognition, self-regulated learning, and autonomy, recommends AaL strategies in L2 writing classrooms, reviews research findings on AaL in writing, and suggests directions for further research.

Chapter 5 looks into the theoretical perspectives on feedback in L2 writing, foregrounding the usefulness of sociocultural theories for investigating the influence of contextual variables on feedback in L2 writing. From a sociocultural perspective, it examines feedback as a form of mediation and its role in promoting AfL, as well as factors affecting implementation of effective feedback practices in L2 writing. This chapter also gives a brief introduction to different types of feedback, including teacher feedback, peer feedback, and technology-enhanced feedback, which are the topics of subsequent chapters.

Chapter 6 intends to help develop teachers' feedback literacy. It first summarizes salient findings of teacher feedback research in L2 writing, including focuses of teacher feedback, written corrective feedback, written commentary, and oral feedback. It then examines the gap between research and practice regarding teachers' written feedback

practices in L2 school contexts, followed by an exploration of the influence of contextual factors on such a gap. The chapter then underlines the importance of context to teachers' written feedback practices and their professional development concerning effective feedback practices. It ends by examining guiding principles for effective teacher feedback that can be used to promote student learning of L2 writing.

Chapter 7 focuses on peer feedback in L2 writing, an essential strategy of AfL/AaL. It begins by reviewing the theoretical underpinnings of peer feedback including process writing theory, collaborative learning theory, interaction theory in SLA, and sociocultural theory. The chapter then offers answers to frequently asked questions about peer feedback based on research insights into this topic. Finally, it gives practical tips for teachers to implement peer feedback in their writing classrooms.

Chapter 8 examines the key features of portfolio assessment, differentiates two types of writing portfolios in L2 school contexts, and highlights the dual purposes of portfolio assessment (i.e., AfL/AaL and AoL). It then explains the portfolio process in terms of pre-, during, and post- writing stages, and the crucial role different sources of feedback play in the portfolio process. Finally, drawing on research findings, the chapter evaluates writing portfolios as a pedagogical and assessment tool and explores challenges in its implementation.

Chapter 9 begins by introducing different technology-enhanced writing tasks that lend themselves to the promotion of AfL in L2 writing classrooms, including digital storytelling, blog-based writing, and collaborative writing on Wiki. It then discusses the use of technology in teacher-, self- and peer- assessment. Finally, it uses the case of a writing ePlatform to illustrate how it helps promote AfL/AaL in the writing classroom.

Chapter 10 highlights the importance of classroom assessment literacy. It first defines teacher assessment literacy and points out that it is lacking based on a summary of findings related to this topic. Next it focuses on writing teachers' classroom assessment literacy by emphasizing its importance and outlining its knowledge base. Feedback literacy is then underscored and pertinent research is reviewed to show the significance of a contextualized approach. Research on the classroom assessment literacy of L2 writing teachers is reviewed to identify important factors affecting its development. Future directions especially focusing on L2 writing teachers' professional development are discussed. The chapter ends by reviewing the topics of all the chapters and foregrounding the importance of assessment literacy.

This book makes a valuable contribution to the field of L2 writing assessment by highlighting various important issues in L2 writing assessment and suggesting directions for further research based on a careful review of research. It also strikes a balance between the theoretical and the practical in L2 writing assessment. The terms in the book are explained in a way that is easily understandable to practitioners. With clear and concrete guidelines and examples, this reader-friendly book serves as an excellent reference for L2 writing teachers to implement AfL, AaL and feedback strategies appropriately. These guidelines and examples may also provide teacher educators with ideas on how to enhance teacher trainees' classroom writing assessment literacy to contribute to the latter's professional development.

This book has attached great importance to viewing classroom writing assessment from AfL and AaL perspectives. Such an emphasis is understandable for the sake of drawing readers' attention to the paradigm shift from AoL to AfL/AaL. However, this emphasis may highlight the dichotomy between AfL and AoL while downplaying the

importance of creating synergy between the two, although the author has also acknowledged that summative writing assessment may serve AfL purpose.

Despite the limitation, this book serves as an invaluable reference for both researchers and practitioners who are interested in the power of classroom writing assessment and feedback in promoting students' learning of L2 writing.

Teaching English to Young Learners: Critical Issues in Language

Teaching with 3-12 Year Olds

J. Bland (Ed.). London: Bloomsbury Publishing plc, 2015. Pp. ix+301,

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Sylvia Liu*

University of Macau

Barry Lee Reynolds

University of Macau

Bioprofile:

Sylvia Liu currently is a Ph.D. student of English Education, University of Macau. Sylvia does research with Professor Reynolds in ICT in Early Childhood Education, L1/L2 Vocabulary Acquisition/Instruction, and L2 Vocabulary Learning Strategies. **Email:** yb77105@connect.um.edu.mo

Barry Lee Reynolds PhD is Assistant Professor of English Education in the Faculty of Education at the University of Macau, Macau SAR, China. He has taught EGP, EAP, ESP and trained language teachers in the USA, Taiwan, and Macau. Web: <https://www.um.edu.mo/fed/staff/BarryReynolds/index.htm> **Email:** BarryReynolds@um.edu.mo

English teachers of young children spend a great deal of effort ensuring they are providing

*corresponding author

Ms. Sylvia Liu, Room 2052, Faculty of Education,
University of Macau, E33, Av. da Universidade, Taipa,
Macau, China

a child centered learning
environment. It is important for
novice and seasoned teachers

alike to reflect back upon the holistic approach that sets the tone for teaching English to young children. *Teaching English to Young Learners: Critical Issues in Language Teaching with 3-12 Year Olds* edited by Janice Bland aims to encourage reflective practice amongst English teachers of young children. The book has laid a foundation for English teachers to move from traditional English education approaches of teaching and assessment to becoming more actively involved in the process of building and facilitating English competency in young learners. English learning is understood in this book as the supplier of opportunities for the widening of young language learners' horizons. More specifically, the aim of this 15 chapter volume is to provide readers with knowledge and skills about the teaching of English to young learners in the school setting. Each chapter addresses a key aspect of teaching language to young learners.

Chapters one through three lay out a complex historical perspective of English as a global language. It also covers theoretical issues of English teaching, thus provides the background information necessary to understand contemporary English teaching. For example, Enever (ch. 1) discusses the advantages and disadvantages of an earlier start of teaching English in both the classroom and home context, while Rixon (ch. 2) presents a number of critical issues in contemporary worldwide contexts which emphasize optimizing English teaching situations. As stressed by Mourão (ch. 3), who takes an in-depth look into what it means for pre-primary second language education to be effective, both pre-service and in-service teachers have to be equipped with both qualifications and competences before teaching pre-primary learners.

Chapters four through seven are logically organized, building an optimal condition for holistic English instruction for young learners. Kersten and Rohde (ch. 4) cover immersion education. They synthesize the current literature from different angles such as

types of programs (i.e., early immersion, middle or delayed entry, and late entry), cognitive effects (i.e., mental flexibility, thinking skills, metalinguistic awareness, and communicative sensitivity), young learners with special needs, and bilingual pre-schools. The core aspects of cognitive effects are also rooted in content and language-integrated learning (CLIL), as supported by Bentley (ch. 5), who claims that “CLIL teachers must therefore analyze the cognitive demands of subject tasks to ascertain what kind of thinking is involved...Content, communication and cognition are therefore interrelated” (p. 94). Likewise, when discussing task-based language teaching (TBLT), Pinter (ch. 6) emphasizes that in addition to meeting young learners’ linguistic and social demands, teachers also have to meet their students’ cognitive and meta-cognitive demands. Immersion, CLIL, and TBLT represent the ideals of bilingual approaches. Kersten (ch.7) then sets up the argument that young learners’ second language development can greatly benefit from implicit and explicit exposure to formulaic language.

In the remaining chapters of the volume, English teaching is viewed as rooted in what comes naturally to young learners. In chapters 8, 10, and 12, Bland offers up children’s poetry, storytelling, and drama as pattern-rich language learning content for the young learner classroom. Driscoll and Simpson (ch. 9) provide an insight into intercultural practices in English teaching. They claim that when the focus of curriculum is on establishing intercultural understanding, teachers foster the essential features (i.e., an open mindset, tolerance, cultural sensitivity, and an understanding of diversity) for preparing young learners’ future lives. Mourão (ch. 11) highlights the untapped potential of picture books for second language learning which can be used to encourage active engagement and various meaning-making experiences. Schmid and Whyte (ch. 13) also highlight the potential of technology for language acquisition. They provide readers concrete examples

of how technologies can be adapted in early childhood classrooms for task-based language learning. To assess the quality of teaching and learning, Becker (ch. 14) claims that teachers need to have various competencies including a proficient level of English, knowledge of young learners' needs, and familiarity with various types of assessment and portfolio techniques. Regardless of one's preferred teaching and assessment methods, Tomlinson (ch. 15) claims materials used for said teaching and assessment must be designed not only to motivate young children but should also adhere to local and universal criteria.

This book is a must-read for researchers and teachers looking to expand their knowledge of young learner language education. What sets this book apart from other books on the subject is the examples provided of real classroom practice, which may make it more accessible to teachers of young learners. This volume offers readers a useful summary of current theories, research, and classroom practices. The writing style of the chapters is easy to understand without ambiguities, yet palpably intense. The above-mentioned points make it clear why many professionals in early childhood education have recommended this work as a reference for second language teacher training programs. However, it may be a bit difficult for those not familiar with language teaching. For example, it may be a challenge for novice teachers to increase their self-awareness regarding the various issues covered by this volume if they are trying to teach English to young learners while simultaneously acquiring new knowledge from the book. We encourage such readers to consider companion reading of other volumes such as *Teaching English by the book: putting literature at the heart of the primary curriculum* (2018) and *Young Learner Education* (2018).

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