



Title

**A Study of English Writing by Native Chinese Freshmen :
Teaching English Requires the Teaching of Culture(s)**

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Bio:

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ABSTRACT

This article presents a study of English academic writing by native Chinese speakers. It explores the interactive relationship of topic influence, individual (cultural) stance and text types in different cultural contexts. Specifically, it argues that topic is an essential element in writing. In the data collected, it can be seen that the stance and position a writer takes towards different topics results in differences in text types and reveals the cultural contexts in which the essays were written. The study used texts about three different topics by the university freshmen of two cultural groups, adopting both Martin's (1985) and Biber's (1988) theory to examine the thematic components and full linguistic features (as

confirmation of Themes analysis) of the texts. The findings have shown that, cross-culturally viewed, there are variations in the text type features across topics and the cultural contexts due to the stances taken. In different topics, the cultural stances and the positioning of the writers have significant effects on the text type structures created. The implications of this study suggest that the teaching of writing requires culture(s) to be an embedded concept in the teaching process.

1. Introduction

Studies of English writing by native Chinese speakers have been undertaken in different ways, starting with research by Kaplan (1966) which argued that rhetoric is culture-specific, up to more recent research investigating individual roles in the writing process. People from the same culture may write similarly or differently. The factors of shaping what writing English is like are many and dynamic. Dependent upon circumstances, people may write similarly or differently. The present study takes the perspective of topic to explore the influences upon the text type features through individual stance across different topics and in different social cultural contexts; fundamentally, this addresses the issue of whether Chinese writing English conforms to Kaplan's findings or aligns itself to the conventional contrastive rhetoric that other studies suggest. It attempts to achieve this by identifying text type features of spoken and written language features of the texts using Martin's (1985) theory and Biber (1988) theory as a confirmation. The results were interpreted through the concepts of Hortatory/Analytical writings and Left/Right protagonists. The answer to how English written by Chinese appears is presented in the conclusions. The final section outlines the implications of the study, that is, that teaching English needs to be accompanied by the teaching of culture.

2. Literature Review

Research on contrastive rhetoric has progressed significantly from the traditional views pioneered by Kaplan (1966) that oriental cultures write in a circular way and western cultures write in a linearly. At that time, Kaplan argued that rhetorical repertoires are culture-specific. The idea of linearity was confirmed by the studies of Houghton (1983) and Hoey (1986) and Leki, (1991). Scollon and Scollon's (1986) study of news items showed the circular way of presenting an argument by the Chinese, reflecting the classical structure of Ba Gu Wen in the English texts produced by Chinese writers. There are other researchers, especially in second language contexts, who have engaged with Kaplan's theory and allow that different cultures have different rhetorical techniques (Scollon, 1991, Connor 1990 and 1996).

However, there are arguments about the way people who are from the same or similar culture may employ different rhetorical structures and, consequently, write differently. In addition, people who are from different cultures may use the same or similar rhetorical structures and write in the same or similar ways (Clyne, 1980, 1987, Wu, 1983, Scollon, 1995, Kirkpatrick, 1997). The same idea was studied later by researchers who explored social-cultural influences in relation to the concepts of 'self'. For example, Scollon (1995) argued that both collectivism and individualism exist across cultures and within all cultures, so that there is also substantial space for variation between the individuals in the ways that they interpret the specific context and social conventions that they are working with.

The writer as an individual can take a stance and position about when to write and can also make choices about what rhetorical conventions to use and whether or not those conventions should reflect the socio-cultural context in which the writer finds him or

herself. There is a variation from which the writer as an individual is able to choose and make decisions. These freedoms and variations in choice and freedom in making their own decisions influence the way the writer chooses to write and can mean that what the writer produces may not reflect the dominant patterns of their social and cultural context. Nevertheless, the dominant society can also exercise sanctions so the choices that the writer makes are not entirely free.

To further this view of variation in the writer's choice and decision about what and how to write, both Martin's (1985a) study of the Theme analysis and Biber's (1988) study through the exploration of full linguistic features both provide even more specific examples. Both studies showed that writers as individuals have substantial variation in both decision-making potential and in the choices they make.

Martin's (1985a) study in a mono-cultural context of the text types produced within the expository genre demonstrated that, within a specific genre, writers can make different choices and decide to write different text types: hortatory or analytic. According to Martin, this difference in the text type is the result of the variation of the writers in choosing rhetorical conventions. He argued that besides the social and cultural influences, the writer as an individual possesses the autonomy to decide what he or she does in whatever circumstances. The writers' stances in different contexts or situations may result in their choosing different ways of presenting their 'self' in writing. It is the writer who makes the choices about what social conventions to use in what circumstances, which in turn influences the features of the text that the writer produces.

Martin argued that in the same genre and across different topics, the writers made different choices and took different positions, either hortatory (arguing for change) or

analytical (arguing for the status quo) in the way they handled their writing. The different responses of the writers to different topics are related to the features of the contexts or cultures and social environments. When the *status quo* is challenged, a hortatory stance is taken and the texts are hortatory texts. In contrast, when the *status quo* is supported, the stance is analytical and the texts produced based on this stance reveal analytical features. Since the *status quo* in the two cultural contexts may be different, socio-cultural context can also lead to the stances of the writers in different cultural contexts being different when writing on the same topic.

The terms of Hortatory and Analytical that Martin used in his study encode different social functions. He argued that these are related to the concepts of the left and right protagonists. He defined these in terms of ideology and genre. Martin (1985a) argued that ideology and genre are intimately intertwined in any culture. Ideology is linked with the concept of power, or the distribution of power in a culture. When it is challenged, the power shared in a society is questioned. When ideology is challenged, Martin (1985b) suggested a model involving two axes: antagonists/protagonists and left/right. “When ideology is challenged, genre becomes implicated. It is not so much a question of which genres a group is able to use, but which genres a group chooses to use to make its case” (Martin, 1985a:39).

For the protagonists, Martin argued that they used different genres to present their cases. “Left protagonists, often make use of Hortatory exposition in a number of modes..., Hortatory Exposition is designed to persuade people to do something” (Martin, 1985a:39). In contrast, “the right protagonists ... on the other hand tend to favor Analytical Exposition; ... try to persuade people that the *status quo* is OK nothing needs to be

changed” (Martin, 1985a:38). Both issues have two sides: maintain the *status quo* and change the *status quo*. In tackling the issue, both sides use different discourse styles.

Hortatory means that the function of the text is to persuade the reader to do what the Thesis recommends. In general, “hortatory texts are either spoken or if written, exhibit a number of the characteristics of spoken English.” (Martin, 1985:17) Analytical means that the texts have the function of persuading the readers that the Thesis is well formulated. Therefore, the text features tend to be written, and if spoken, to share many of the features of written language.

Since both hortatory and analytical stances are realized through the features of spoken and written language, the key in identifying the text features is to identify the written and spoken language features in the texts. To identify the differences in stance of the writers and the text type, the texts features are the starting point. The spoken and written text features are the key measures in distinguishing hortatory and analytical text types.

A similar view of the variation available to the writer in making the decision and the choices in what they write was supported by Biber’s (1988) study on registers and text types. Biber explored different genres by using corpus linguistic analysis. He argued that different genres have different linguistic features, such that the writers may choose different text types to express what they want to write and what they write for.

Both studies emphasized that there are different text types within one genre and across the genres. This is related to what the writer is to write about and what they write for and how they are going to write about it. However, neither of their studies has explored in depth the effects of the topic and the topic influence in the context of English for speakers of other languages.

The topic issue was addressed in Reid's (1990) quantitative analysis of the topic effect and how the writer responds to the different topics. Topic also influences the writer in choices about what he or she is to write and what rhetorical conventions or patterns are to be chosen. It is the key for the writer to make these decisions. However, Reid's study is only limited to the writer's responses to the topic and has not explored writers' choices further.

There are multiple factors in shaping a piece of writing. Each factor plays a role, but these factors are not separated; they interact and are interrelated. The writer is in physical (and to some extent emotional and ideological) control of the whole writing process. The writer as an individual has preferences and these preferences result in differences in the texts that are produced. Social and cultural contexts contribute to these differences and preferences, because these factors help to shape the writers' expression of their sense of self. The writer can make decisions about what rhetorical conventions to use in different situations.

The topics influence the decisions that the writer makes and contextualize how the writer chooses to write, shaping the writer's view and stance that are projected into the writing. The topic is a key factor for the writer in deciding what to write and how to write but interacts and is interrelated with the other factors in the writing.

Topic is the influential factor among these multiple interrelated and interacting factors. It is socially and culturally contextualized. In different cultures, the topic may influence the writers to respond to it differently or similarly. In essence, a topic is socially and culturally embedded. For the same topic, the writers from different cultures or within the same culture may respond to it differently or similarly. In responding to it, the writers take

different stance and have variations in making decisions about what text types they like to use. Consequently, the text types result differently.

3. Topics

The topics in this study were selected to promote the realization of different stances in both different and similar contexts. This was intended as a means to produce similar or different texts on the same or different topics. In different contexts or in the same contexts, the status quo may be either different, or similar, and consequently leading to variation in the stances. Thus, the resulting texts produced may also show signs of variation. In such topics, the texts produced can be identified the spoken and written language features. There were three topics designed to induce a range of hortatory or analytical responses.

Topic 1 is entitled “Gambling should be Prohibited”, which was designed to be a hortatory topic. The word ‘should’ in the topic, together with the inference that gambling already exists in the society, suggests the stance or the position of the writers to be taken is to challenge the status quo. However, due to the fact that the social and cultural context of the writers is different, writers may adopt different stances and positions. They may make different choices in handling this topic, creating either hortatory or analytical texts.

Topic 2 is called “Foreign companies are good for the economic development of the country”. The topic was considered more likely to evoke an analytical response for most of the groups in the study. The lack of any ‘argumentative’ terms such as ‘should’ and the restriction of the topic to ‘economic development’ both suggest that the topic can be handled dispassionately using analytical text features. The purpose of the topic designed in this way is to see whether under the same topic, there are differences across the cultural groups in responding to the same topic.

Topic 3 is “The Advantages of the Legalization of Drugs”. This topic was designed to be potentially either hortatory or analytical. For different cultures, the views on the legalization of drugs may result in different senses of status quo, and consequently enable different views and stances to be taken.

4. Data Groups and Texts

There were three groups of subjects from three cultural backgrounds involved in this study. One group, the focus group, made up of native Chinese speakers writing in English (CE group) as a foreign language, was selected by this researcher to examine what social conventions they use when they write in English. For contrastive purposes, other groups were used, which were made up of native Australian English speakers writing in English (AE) and native Chinese writing in Chinese (CC group).

The data collected from the above subjects were texts written by the subjects in English for the AE and the CE groups. The texts were written in short essay form in response to the set topics, designed as discussed above. In order to identify the written and spoken language features, both Halliday’s (1994) Themes Theory and Biber’s (1988) theory above were used in the data analysis to ascertain the spoken and written features of the texts written. The results of the analysis are interpreted by Martin’s concepts of hortatory/analytical and right/left protagonists.

5. Findings

The results of both Themes analysis and the full linguistic features analysis as a confirmation of the Themes analysis revealed that, regardless of linguistic background, a generalization can be made that across groups the text types produced in both Topic 1 and

Topic 3 are similar, while text type in Topic 2 is different from those of Topic 1 and Topic 3. This pattern of handling topics is consistent across the groups. Despite this general distinction, the way in which the topics are dealt with is not consistent across all groups.

5.1 Topic 1

In this topic, the *status quo* in Chinese and Australian cultures is seen as being different. In Chinese culture, at the official government level, gambling is prohibited. This government adheres to the social and cultural values of Chinese culture, in that gambling is considered to be bad and illegal. Throughout Chinese history, there have been cases of negative consequences of gambling. However, at the level of ordinary daily life for people in general, the situation is that gambling is rampant. Gambling at this level has caused serious issues, from selling children and wives to family destruction, robbery and killing.

In the Australian context, because it is a more individualistic culture, there is room for more individualized responses towards the proposition that gambling should be prohibited, since gambling is legal in Australia. In a way, gambling is openly encouraged. There has been a public establishment of Casinos and the government-sponsored lottery to allow people to gamble publicly. Public advertisements also encourage people to gamble. The question of whether gambling is bad or not depends on individual opinion. The *status quo* for gambling in such a context is that it is not a bad thing and that it is within the domain of individual choices and preferences. Thus, there is no uniform *status quo* for this topic in the Australian context.

In responding to this topic, the CE group took the hortatory stance to challenge the *status quo* existing in the general public in Chinese culture. They challenge the *status quo*, which is that gambling is rampant in China. In light of the problems which have arisen

from widespread gambling, the writers from the CE group argued that it should be prohibited. This argument is the same as the stated position of the government. Thus, in this topic, the stance of CE group is to support that of the government in challenging the *status quo* as manifested in the behavior of the general public. The government is itself in a hortatory relationship with the general public on the issue of gambling in China.

In taking a stance against gambling, the CE group wrote hortatory texts, which revealed at the same time a wider range of grammatical items. Taking pronouns as an example, they wrote about gambling, using 'he', 'they', 'you', 'I', 'we' and 'they' personalized in relation to the topic of gambling rather than justifying the argument through the objective use of 'it'. It is the people involved, and their relationship with the gambling issue that is the frequent concern of the writers. The use of pronouns had the effect of bringing the people involved into the writing. These pronouns are the dominant Themes in the Simple Theme category in the CE texts. In brief, then, it has presented a pattern of collective cultural features in responding to the topic.

In contrast, the AE group took a different stance or positioning by their individual 'selves', which were projected and presented into the English texts by the native Australian English writers. The emphasis on individualism is an essential feature of Western culture and is believed to be an endorsement of the dignity and entitlement of ordinary persons before the law and other citizens. Such individuals are thought of as open, egalitarian, assertive, relatively unself-conscious, and not as attentive to nonverbal or contextual cues in the public presentation of 'self'.

The culture of this individual self prioritizes the objective, detached and intellectual expression of the truth. In dealing with the issues of gambling, the positioning of the self as a writer is as a right protagonist. The aim of this view is to explain the things as they are.

Due to the individualism of the culture, there is no uniform collective *status quo* in relation to the issue of gambling. Contrary to the Chinese situation of the elite asserting a morally correct view, in the Australian context the debate occurs within all strata of society so that there is no clear source of a “moral” view. The major views on both issues are based on individual preferences and individual choice. The culture does not unambiguously determine whether these issues are good or bad.

At the official level, there are people who have power, and favour gambling. They consider gambling as positive. For example, there are views that gambling can promote the economy and bring income and tax to the country or state. However, there are also people who have power and are against gambling. Therefore, at the official level, the two extremes also exist.

At the general population level, opposing views also exist. There are people who want to gamble and like gambling. There are also people who oppose both gambling and drugs because of the potential for damage to people and the society.

At both the official and the public levels, there is a split in opinion, such that there is no clear-cut support for either good or bad. The *status quo* on these two issues is debatable. Culturally it is ambiguous. Social values in relation to these two issues are also debated. Individual choice and individual preferences are being addressed and reflected by the writers.

Within such a cultural context and in such a cultural stance, the writers of the AE group in dealing with this issue took the cultural stance of individualism. Gambling is neither inherently good nor bad. From this perspective, an individual response is required and the individual preferences should decide whether or not gambling and drug taking are bad.

In responding to this topic, the writers present themselves more as right protagonists by avoiding the expression of personal feelings as they present the evidence and more frequently give both sides of an issue. By presenting arguments for and against the issues, the readers themselves are left to make the final decision about whether drugs and gambling are good or bad. Consequently, the writers appear to be suggesting that it would be possible for individuals to reach different conclusions by giving greater weight to specific evidence. The apparent objectivity of the presentation of both sides of the case leaves it more open for an individual reader to make choices and this leaves less room for a generalized moral sense.

Due to these cultural influences and the effects of the cultural context, the text structures of the AE texts are discussion-like, giving both sides of the argument, good and bad, simply representing the facts as they are. The stance taken is analytical and the text exhibit written language features. According to Martin (1985a), the texts of the AE group belong to discussion texts and have more exploratory features, presenting more than one point of view.

In taking such an analytical stance, the AE group writers play the right protagonists' role to explain the facts as they are. Consequently, the texts by the AE group have written language features with more lexical density and can be categorized as being analytical.

5.2 Topic 2

The results revealed that Topic 2 is different from Topic 1 and Topic 3 across the groups. However, there is a group difference between the AE group and the CE group.

In the Chinese cultural context, the *status quo* in relation to the involvement by foreign companies in the country's economy is mainly that it is good for the economic development of the country. Due to collectivist cultural features, responses may tend to be similarities in responses may be evident. In effect, this maintains the *status quo* that foreign companies are good for Chinese economic development.

At the official level, the view of foreign companies is that they are good for the economic development of China. The implementation of the 'open door' policy in China suggests that the official view favors more foreign companies. Due to this policy, the media and the other forms of propaganda promote this view. At the wider public level, the view of foreign companies is also positive. People think foreign companies are good for the country since they promote the country's economy and upgrade people's living standards. Therefore, there is no conflict between the public view and official view on the issue of foreign companies. The answer to whether foreign companies are good is uniform and collective.

In the Australian context, in contrast, there is disagreement between the governmental view and the students' view. The government takes the stance that foreign companies are good for the country's economic development. Foreign companies, such those from the US are encouraged to invest in Australia. However, there are some student views that foreign companies are detrimental to the health of national companies, as they endanger

the national economy. Their opinions towards the foreign companies are seen in strongly opposing views.

The stance that the CE group writers took is consistent with the *status quo* of the culture, which supports the investment by foreign companies in China. The Chinese government has an open door policy to encourage such investment in China, which can be seen through the emergence of more joint-venture companies, sole-share foreign companies, and companies partly sponsored by the foreign companies. Foreign companies are welcome in China. Accordingly, the stance of the CE writers on this topic is to maintain the *status quo* by supporting the government policy of encouraging foreign companies in China.

In responding to the idea that foreign companies are good for national economic development, the CE group writers reveal a common response in support of international economic involvement. Since the government and people appear to be in agreement as to the *status quo*, a sense of collectivism encourages people to identify with that stance. This is an analytical process, the outcome being that the resultant texts can be categorized also as analytical. These results suggest that the changes in the text features in this topic are more written language like. It also reflects the change of the positioning of the writer as a self in response to the change of topics. Consequently, the projections of the self into the texts are different and the cultural stances the writers have taken are different in this Topic.

For the CE group, the positioning of the writer changed from that of the left protagonists, persuading, as in Topic 1 and Topic 3, the move towards that of right protagonists, positively and analytically explaining that *foreign companies are good for the economic development of the country*. The cultural stance of the writer projected into

the texts by native Chinese speakers writing in English is still the collective stance in that all of them present a similar sense of self.

In contrast, for the Australians writing in English on this topic, the cultural stance on this issue changed from that of discussion (because the values are debatable) in Topic 1 and Topic 3, to the presentation of a stance seen as contrasting with the official view. In Australia, foreign companies are considered good for the economic development of the country at the official government level. The government encourages foreign companies and foreign investment in Australia and this position represents the official *status quo*.

However, the view of certain sections of the public is often opposed to foreign companies and against this *status quo*. These sections of the public consider foreign companies as not good for the country's economy because they make Australia's own companies insecure. Too many foreign companies threaten local jobs and employment leading to a sense of anxiety and insecurity about having foreign investment in Australia. Therefore, there is a conflict between the official view and parts of the public view.

With this cultural stance, the Australian writers (university students who generally do not favour foreign companies) have taken the stance of left protagonists in dealing with this topic, and positioned themselves as left protagonists. They seek to challenge the *status quo* and to persuade the readers that foreign companies are not good for the country's economic development. In this they express a view that is "collective", but with parts of the general public rather than with the official view.

In taking this stance, the AE writers use a more hortatory style in expressing their view in their writing. Consequently, the texts contain an increase in the spoken text features. Lexical density in Theme is reduced, compared with that in Topic 1 and Topic 3. There is

an increase in personal reference, manifested by the increased use of personal pronouns of “we” and ‘they’ in their writing. Thus, the texts become hortatory in nature.

5.3 Topic 3

For this topic of legalization of the drugs in a Chinese cultural context, the *status quo* is similar to that in topic 1. The majority agrees that there are no advantages in the legalization of the drugs. The cultural and social values in relation to drugs are that they are harmful and should not be legalized. From Chinese history, from the Opium War to now, there is evidence that drugs are harmful and can not bring benefits to the people. Consequently, the *status quo* view is that they should not be legalized.

For the same topic, in the Australian context, the *status quo* is not clear, which is similar to the situation surrounding topic 1. There is no single or uniform position and stance. Some drugs are legalized and some drugs are prohibited at the government level. Certainly, there seems to be widespread acceptance that drugs are not desirable, but there is also the alternative view that everybody should be allowed to make their own decisions, if they do not harm anybody else. This is consistent with the individualistic cultural disposition, that individuals have the right to make their own choices and decisions.

Consequently, individualized views on the legalization of drugs may result in the expression of different stances in addressing this topic. Some writers may take the view that drugs should be legalized and that it is the individual’s choice and individual preferences or decisions that are important.

The stance that the CE group takes in this topic is also hortatory, because the lexical density of the Theme revealed that the CE group in this topic has less lexical density and more use of grammatical items, such as pronouns, which demonstrated the personalized

involvement of the people. Again, the people and the effect of drug-taking upon people remain as the focal points of the texts. For example, the use of the third person pronoun singular form 'he' indicates the drug-taker, who is involved in the drug-taking; the use of singular form of the first person pronoun 'I' indicates the writer; for one of the others, the use of the plural form of the third person pronoun 'they' indicates the drug-users, the people who are involved with drugs; the use of the plural form of the first person pronoun 'we' indicates the members of the society along with the others. This use of different pronouns is to show that everybody in the society, I, he, she, we, you, they, has been touched and is related to and involved in the drug issue. The use of 'it' in this topic by the CE group is rare, since it not only indicates the drug-taking issue itself, but also society in general.

In contrast, there is a different stance or positioning of individual self, projected and presented into the English texts by the native Australian English writers. The stance is one which presents individualism, the essential feature of Western culture and is believed to be an endorsement of the dignity and entitlement of ordinary persons before the law and other citizens.

Due to the individualism of the culture, there is no uniform collective *status quo* in relation to the issue of drug taking. The debate occurs within all strata of society so that there is no clear source of a "moral" view. The major views on both issues are based on individual preferences and individual choice. The culture does not unambiguously determine whether these issues are good or bad. There is a split in opinion at both the official and the public levels, in favor of and against drug-taking

Within such a cultural context in such *status quo*, the AE group writers present themselves in this topic more as right protagonists by avoiding the expression of personal feelings. This is due to the fact that they present the evidence and more frequently give both sides of an issue. They stated objectively that drug-taking is an issue of individual preference and personal choice. As a consequence, the AE group takes an analytical stance, since the text features are written language features, manifested, for example, by less use of pronouns, compared with that of the CE group in the same topic. Texts are analytical texts, which is consistent with the results of the analysis.

6. Conclusions

In both Topic 1 and Topic 3, the CE group analysis results have illustrated the presence of spoken text features and lead to the conclusion that these texts have extensive hortatory features. This suggested that the CE group positioned themselves as left protagonists on these topics, taking up positions and stance against the *status quo*. In contrast, the AE group texts in both topics contain many written text features. Accordingly, the texts have been classified as being analytical. This has led this researcher to conclude that the AE writers positioned themselves as right protagonists on these topics.

In contrast, when writing about Topic 2, the approaches adopted by the two groups were much more convergent. This is shown in the use by the CE group of more spoken language features and the fact that their texts had become more analytical, while the AE group texts contained more spoken language features and were more hortatory.

Topic 2 has revealed that in both cultures, there are both hortatory and analytical text types, and that it is only a matter of the degree of the differences in the extent to which different writers draw on these traditions in their writing on different topics. Thus, the

results cannot simply be interpreted to mean that the CE group writes only hortatory texts and the AE group only analytical texts. The results revealed there is a complexity in the factors that influence what the texts are. The multiple factors interact and are interrelated.

This interpretation suggests that the role of culture is more significant than the role of linguistic insight, but the sense of culture that is implicit in this claim is not the same view of culture as appears in the works of Kaplan and contrastive rhetoric interpretations. Culture does not seem to provide a simple ‘way to write’ framework. Rather, culture appears to provide a set of values that writers use in choosing how they will write about a given topic and, as a result of these choices, the writers finally produce quite different text types in the different topics.

The research demonstrated that English texts written by the Chinese native speakers (CE group) cannot simply be said to be the same as the native Chinese writing in Chinese, or the as same as the native English writing in English, or simply be said to be hortatory or analytic. This is because there are multiple factors that contribute to the shaping of the texts as they are, such as topic – the most influential factor of all, writer – his/her variation and freedom in making decisions about what to write and how to write, in their diverse cultural and social contexts. It is this complexity of factors that underlies the topic and the writer’s ideology, and the writer’s stance which may change in different topics and in different contexts etc. These factors are all interacted and interrelated. The relationship among these factors is dynamic rather than static in the way that the traditional contrastive rhetoric or studies on contrastive rhetoric outlined. These studies showed that socio-cultural context shapes the writer’s ideology and the writer’s sense of self. The socio-cultural context also shaped the idea of the individual writer in what to write, how to write and what rhetorical

conventions are available to be used, as well as what text types are preferred in the different situations.

7. Impact on Teaching Writing to native Chinese speakers

As the results of both the Theme analysis and Biber's full linguistic features analysis (as a confirmation) have revealed, English writing by native Chinese speakers cannot be described as simply based on one single factor. It is much more complex and complicated. The shape of the texts depends on multiple factors: topic, the writer's freedom to choose and their variation in different topics and their stance in different topics and their positioning in relation to different topics, culture, and social and cultural contexts.

The present study has shown that topics influence the texts produced and a combination of the writer's variation in different topics, their freedom to choose and their space in making decisions in different topics all interact in shaping the texts that are written. Each group handles the texts differently for all the topics. The texts created by the each group have variations across the topics depending on the writers' understanding of their purpose, the topic they are writing about, and the cultural context in which they are writing. The writers have preferences but these preferences vary according to the topics, the purpose, the cultural contexts and the writer's positioning and stance in relation to the different topics and in different contexts. It is the writer who coordinates these factors and culture and social contexts indirectly shape the writer and their responses to topics and consequently the writer's stance and position.

This suggests, in terms of teaching Chinese students to write English, that a conventional method or a step-by-step approach to teaching and learning is not a sufficient answer. To think that writers can transfer their knowledge of Chinese literacy to learning

English assumes that language learning is little more than becoming familiar with the phonetics, vocabulary and grammar of the target language.

Earlier studies demonstrate that the factors that shape the texts are multiple, interacting and interrelated, topic being most influential. The writer's variations in making decisions and having the freedom to choose what to write and how to write are also contributing factors. Culture and social contexts play significant roles underlying all these factors and contribute to what the texts are. If writers are to be truly proficient, they must engage with the culture of the target language. Without doing this, they cannot place themselves in the appropriate genre used by native speakers and, consequently, their writing will always appear somewhat non-standard to native English speakers. However, part of their cultural positioning is also as second language writers and, therefore, the engagement with the culture of the target language cannot be equated with total embedding within it.

Therefore, if language teaching and learning is to be effective, it must incorporate, even in an EFL environment, as much of the culture of the target language as possible, as well as an understanding of how underlying cultural values of both the first and the second culture relate to one another. In this way, the learners can discover how to position themselves both within and between the two cultures with which they are engaging.

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