Development of A Process-Oriented Writing Instructional Framework for Chinese EFL Higher Education Context

Ting Huang

School of English Studies, Zhejiang Yuexiu University, Shaoxing 312000, China.

20102018@zyufl.edu.cn

Abstract

This paper presents a process-oriented writing instructional framework designed for Chinese EFL higher education, aiming to enhance undergraduate students' English writing abilities. The framework, based on Tribble's (1996) model, incorporates four stages: pre-writing, composing, revising, and editing. It emphasizes student-centered learning, explicit instruction, and the use of peer and teacher feedback. The pre-writing stage includes warm-up activities, explicit instruction on topic-related vocabulary, and brainstorming to generate ideas. In the composing stage, students independently write their first drafts, focusing on content rather than accuracy. The revising stage involves peer feedback, teacher feedback, and the use of AI tools to provide additional suggestions. Finally, in the editing stage, students refine their drafts based on the feedback received. The framework aims to reduce writing anxiety, improve writing performance, and align with the Chinese EFL context's educational goals. Empirical evidence suggests that this approach can significantly enhance students' writing skills and motivation.

Keywords

Process-oriented writing instruction, Chinese EFL higher education, writing anxiety.

1. Introduction

According to the language policy in China, students should learn English as a compulsory course from the third year of primary school to university (Li, 2016). Furthermore, the recent "Double-First Class" initiative in China aims to build world-class universities and disciplines, requiring Chinese students to improve their English writing abilities to publish influential articles in international journals (Zhang, 2018). Considering the importance of English, especially English writing, in China, this instructional framework is designed for undergraduate courses related to English-language writing instructions in the Chinese EFL context.

This is an undergraduate English writing instructional framework based on the process approach, and it lasts for 90 minutes. The writing topic of "exercise" is selected for presenting this framework in a practical manner, and this lesson fits well into the English Syllabus for English Majors in Colleges and Universities in China, which specifies that students should be able to write a composition of 100 words within 20 minutes without serious grammar mistakes (Higher Education Foreign Language Teaching Committee, 2000). They should be trained how to provide feedback to others' compositions in semester 1 through weekly workshops, which aim to improve learners' skills to give feedback and ensure the effectiveness of peer feedback (Schillings et al., 2020), which could ensure most of the learners are able to offer constructive feedback to others

It is assumed that every learner has known some knowledge about "exercise" because this is a frequently discussed topic. Nevertheless, some of them cannot express their ideas about "exercise" in English, and thus explicit instruction and translanguaging strategy are designed to

solve this problem. Overall, this lesson has four teaching objectives. By the end of the lesson, students should be able to:

(1) learn some new words and phrases related to the topic "exercise"

(e.g., increase lung capacity, delay aging, and sprain one's ankle)

(2) confidently express their opinions on "exercise" with others

(3) work together and give constructive feedback to others' compositions within their groups

(4) independently write argumentative writing on the topic "Do the advantages of taking exercise outweigh its disadvantages?" within the given time.

2. Rationale

2.1. Teaching Objectives

This lesson aims to realize four teaching objectives. The first objective is to teach words and phrases related to "exercise", which can be realized in explicit instruction and is the building block of the following activities. Objective 2 aims to enable learners to exchange their ideas about "exercise" to help them have a better understanding of "exercise" and produce the first draft with more scientific and convincing arguments. The third objective is to ask learners to work together to give feedback to others and solve difficulties together. Objective 4 is to improve learners' ability to discuss "exercise" in writing, which can be realized through the engagement of this lesson.

2.2. Process Approach and Its Instructional Model

The framework of process approach is used to design this instructional model, and the rationales behind adopting this approach are illustrated below. Writing involves cognitive processes in learners' minds, and writing should be process-oriented instead of product-oriented (Flower & Hays, 1981). Moreover, the writing process can be interpreted as a cyclical and recursive process rather than a direct and linear process (White & Ardat, 1991). Regarding the teacher-student relationships in the process approach, learners are at the center of the writing process, while the teacher acts as the organizer and facilitator (Bayat, 2014). In other words, students are offered the opportunity to fully realize what they want to express in the writing process, and the teacher's role is to help them realize their goals. Recent empirical research has shown that the process approach could significantly improve EFL learners' writing performance in many contexts (Hassan et al., 2020; Dokchandra, 2018; Sarhady, 2015). More importantly, most teachers and learners show positive attitudes to the process approach (Ghobadi, 2021). From the psychological perspective, EFL writing anxiety could implicitly influence learners' writing performance (Liu & Ni, 2015). Given the fact that this instructional framework is designed for Chinese EFL learners, and many of them have high writing anxiety (Yin, 2016), this process-oriented instructional model can be utilized as an effective response to such phenomenon since many studies have suggested that the process approach might be an effective approach to alleviate EFL learners' writing anxiety (Kadmiry, 2022; Hassan et al., 2020).

With respect to the application of the process approach in educational practices, different models are proposed, placing learners at the center of writing activities (Tribble, 1996; Raimes, 1991; Flower & Hayes, 1981), among which one of the most explicit and practicable models is designed by Tribble (1996). This model contains four stages, namely pre-writing, composing/drafting, revising, and editing. (1) Pre-writing is the first stage of the process approach, aiming to equip learners with sufficient knowledge related to the following writing through many activities such as brainstorming, group discussion, and reading relevant texts (Tribble, 1996). (2) After the preparation of the pre-writing stage, learners would move on to the composing stage, during which they need to compose the first draft according to the

knowledge obtained from the previous stage as well as thinking occurring in the drafting process (Tribble, 1996). (3) The third procedure of the process approach is revising. During this period, learners could receive feedback (e.g., guidance and suggestions) from others' perspectives to revise and improve the first draft (Tribble, 1996). (4) At the last stage of editing, teachers would give learners enough time to complete the final draft based on the feedback obtained (Tribble, 1996).

2.3.   Teaching Procedures Based on Process Approach Model

Teaching activities in this instructional model are designed according to Tribble's (1996) process instructional model, and the rationales behind each stage and each activity are explained below.

2.3.1. Pre-writing

The pre-writing stage consists of three teaching activities: warm-up activity, explicit instruction, and brainstorming. Warm-up activities refer to tasks that attract learners' attention from the outside to the classroom (Estalkhbijari & Khodareza, 2012). In the warm-up activity (see Table 1), the teacher asks learners to review what they have learned in last week's lesson. Then, the question "is taking exercise the best way to keep fit?" are proposed for learners to consider, but they do not need to give a comprehensive answer. These warm-up activities are designed to make learners ready for subsequent learning activities (Estalkhbijari & Khodareza, 2012).

Table 1 Pre-writing of Process-oriented Writing Instructional Framework

Time/stage	Procedure/ Activity	Interaction	Academic Skills & Discourse
Stage 1: Pre-writing (25mins)			
Task 1: Warm-up Activity (5mins)	Teacher asks students to review what they have learned in their last week's lesson. Then, teacher asks the question below, but students do not need to give a correct answer: Is taking exercise the best way to keep fit?	Ss	Reflection on previous learning; preparing to learn know knowledge
Task 2: Explicit Instruction (10mins)	Teacher analyzes and explains the frequently found errors in students' final drafts submitted last week. Then, teacher teaches many words and phrases related to the writing topic: taking exercise.	T-Ss	Learning linguistic knowledge.
Task 3: Brainstorming (10mins)	Teacher organizes brainstorming and encourages everyone to engage. Ss can share their opinions on the questions below, and teacher tells Ss	Ss-Ss	Critical thinking; sharing personal ideas; listening to

the correctness of their answers is not important before sharing ideas.	others' ideas
Is taking exercise important? Why?	
What are the benefits of taking exercise? Why?	
What could be the possible injuries from excessive exercise?	
How to reduce the possible injuries from exercise?	

The second activity is explicit instruction. The teacher begins to spend about 10 minutes teaching relevant explicit knowledge. Norris and Ortega (2000) point out that explicit instruction has two types: direct teaching about rules and guiding students to specific grammatical structures and language forms. In this lesson, the teacher carefully analyses and explains the frequently found errors in students' final drafts submitted last week. Then, many words and phrases related to "exercise" are taught, which could equip learners with the necessary knowledge to express their views in English in the following activities. During explicit instruction, both well-performed learners and those who struggle with EFL writing could improve their writing skills from grammatical and/or content aspects, which is corroborated by Pessoa et al.'s (2018) findings.

Then, teachers and learners will engage in brainstorming. Brainstorming is regarded as an activity that can offer learners opportunities to exchange opinions and ideas on a certain issue and then propose solutions to tackle the issue (Ibnian, 2011). During this process, students can share their opinions on many questions regarding "exercise", and they are told that the correctness of their answers is not important. The purpose is to make a wide range of ideas about "exercise" come together to help learners generate their arguments at the composing stage. This activity also could stimulate and motivate learners' previous knowledge related to the topic (Rao, 2007), make them more independent in subsequent writing (Maghsoudi & Haririan, 2013), and eventually lead to the improvement in writing performance (Abedianpour & Omidvari, 2018; Amoush, 2015).

However, given that some students might have difficulties discussing "exercise" through English only, translanguaging can be applied in this situation. Translanguaging means bilingual or multilingual individuals use their full linguistic capacity to convey information without limitation on specific languages (García, 2009). Therefore, learners are allowed to use their mother tongue to communicate with others and convey information more clearly, and this may help learners have a higher engagement in the activity (David, 2022). This may improve students' learning motivation and their engagement could be enhanced further (Huang & Wu, 2022). Although Liu and Fang (2022) argue that translanguaging might lead to learners' reliance upon L1, this could be relieved in this lesson because the teacher mentions that L1 should mainly be used to help them convey information clearly rather than replace English.

2.3.2. Composing

At this stage, students need to independently write the first draft on the topic "Do the advantages of taking exercise outweigh its disadvantages?" within 20 minutes (see Table 2). According to Tribble's (1996) descriptions, they need to put more emphasis on content rather than accuracy, which means writers' creativity and imagination could be protected to a large extent.

Table 2 Composing of Process-oriented Writing Instructional Framework

Time/stage	Procedure/ Activity	Interaction	Academic Skills & Discourse
Stage 2: Composing (20mins)			
Task 1: Independently Write First Draft	Teacher asks Ss to independently write the first draft on the topic below within 20 minutes. Do the advantages of taking exercise outweigh its disadvantages? Ss are told that they should put more emphasis on content rather than accuracy.	T-Ss	Independently write an argumentative writing

2.3.3. Revising

At revising stage, learners receive feedback from both peers and teachers. In this instructional model, peer feedback is defined as a kind of educational activity where learners can become a "reviewer" to make suggestions for revisions to other peers' first drafts (Iswandari & Jiang, 2020; Wu et al., 2023), while teacher feedback is regarded as the comments and suggestions made from teachers to improve the quality of learners' writing (Hattie & Clarke, 2019). To be specific, in this lesson (see Table 3), after learners complete their first drafts, they would exchange their first drafts with other peers within the group (4-5 students a group) and make their comments or suggestions on drafts from many aspects (e.g., error correction, idea-sharing, writing structure, choices of words). During this process, they could think from others' points of view and obtain "reader awareness", which might implicitly enhance their writing competence (Johns, 1996; Daiute & Dalton, 1993).

Table 3 Revising of Process-oriented Writing Instructional Framework

Time/stage	Procedure/ Activity	Interaction	Academic Skills & Discourse
Stage 3: Revising (25mins)			
Task 1: Peer Feedback and AI feedback	Ss are divided into several groups with 4 to 5 students each, Ss exchange their first drafts with each other within the group. Then, Ss give their comments or suggestions for revision on their peers' drafts from many aspects (e.g., error correction, idea-sharing, writing structure, choices of words). Then, AI tools such as ChatGPT should be used to generate more feedback on their written products further.	Ss-Ss	Working collaboratively; evaluating of others' writing
Task 2: Teacher Feedback		S-Ss	Seeking help from others.
	Teacher provides professional		

> feedback to Ss to help them solve
> difficult problems that cannot be
> solved within the group.

Research findings indicate that both peer feedback and teacher feedback could enhance EFL learners' writing performance (Huisman et al., 2019; Ghani & Asgher, 2012; Ismail, 2008; Yang, 2006; Wu et al., 2023). However, the effect and focus of peer feedback and teacher feedback might be different, which is found by Ruegg's (2015) research. In other words, students might achieve more significant improvement in writing if they can receive both peer feedback and teacher feedback in the meantime. Unfortunately, Cui (2021) argues that teachers in higher education institutes are less likely to give in-depth feedback to every learner in most cases due to the excessive amount of teaching and research work. And SISU experiences the same issue. In this instructional model, another option is designed to relieve this issue. Learners should first try to tackle problems collaboratively within the group. However, if they meet some difficult points that cannot be solved within the group, they can raise their hands and obtain professional feedback from the teacher. In this case, teacher feedback is utilized as a complement to peer feedback, and the purpose is to maximize learners' development of EFL writing by receiving feedback from both the teacher and peers. Furthermore, give that it is time-consuming for teachers to give feedback on all students' writing products, Generative AI tools (GenAI) could also be applied to help them in generating feedback since recent studies have indicated the positive impacts of GenAI tools on learners' learning and teachers' teaching practices (Moorhouse et al., 2025; Moorhouse et al., 2024; Zhang et al., 2025).

2.3.4. Editing

The last stage of the process approach is editing. In this lesson, learners need to write the final draft based on the feedback obtained from both teacher and peers and then submit it (see Table 4). During this process, learners are told that both content and accuracy should be taken into account while writing, which is based on Tribble's (1996) descriptions.

Table 4 Editing of Process-oriented Writing Instructional Framework

Time/stage	Procedure/ Activity	Interaction	Academic Skills & Discourse
Stage 4: Editing (20mins)			
Task 1: Independently Write Final Draft Based on Feedback	Ss write the final draft based on the feedback obtained from the teacher and peers. Teacher tells Ss that they should focus on both content and grammatical accuracy in this final draft.	T-Ss	Independently write an argumentative writing

3. Conclusion

This paper proposes a comprehensive process-oriented writing instructional framework specifically designed for Chinese EFL higher education, targeting the improvement of undergraduate students' English writing skills within the unique context of China's educational environment. The framework is grounded in the process approach to writing, which emphasizes the iterative and recursive nature of writing as opposed to a product-focused approach. It is structured around four core stages: pre-writing, composing, revising, and editing,

each with distinct activities and objectives aimed at fostering student engagement, enhancing writing proficiency, and reducing anxiety associated with EFL writing.

In the pre-writing stage, the framework incorporates warm-up activities to activate students' prior knowledge and focus their attention on the upcoming topic. Explicit instruction on relevant vocabulary and phrases related to the writing topic ("exercise" in this case) is provided to equip students with the necessary linguistic tools. Brainstorming activities follow, encouraging students to share ideas and perspectives freely, thereby generating a rich pool of content for their writing. This stage is crucial for building confidence and reducing anxiety by ensuring students feel prepared and supported.

The composing stage requires students to independently write their first drafts, emphasizing the importance of content over grammatical accuracy. This approach aims to protect students' creativity and imagination while allowing them to express their ideas without the immediate pressure of perfection. By focusing on content, students are encouraged to develop their arguments and structure their thoughts coherently.

The revising stage is a collaborative and interactive phase where students receive feedback from both peers and teachers. Peer feedback is facilitated through group activities where students exchange drafts, provide constructive criticism, and suggest improvements. This process not only enhances the quality of writing but also fosters a sense of community and shared learning. Teacher feedback, on the other hand, addresses more complex issues and provides professional guidance. Additionally, the framework incorporates the use of AI tools to generate further feedback, leveraging technology to provide more comprehensive and timely support.

The final stage, editing, involves students refining their drafts based on the feedback received. Here, students are encouraged to focus on both content and grammatical accuracy, producing a polished final draft that reflects their learning and improvement throughout the process. This stage reinforces the importance of revision and editing as essential components of effective writing.

Overall, the framework is designed to address the specific challenges faced by Chinese EFL learners, such as high levels of writing anxiety and limited opportunities for individualized feedback. By integrating student-centered learning, explicit instruction, collaborative feedback mechanisms, and technological support, the framework aims to significantly enhance students' writing performance and align with China's educational goals of fostering world-class academic capabilities. Empirical evidence suggests that this approach can effectively improve writing skills, reduce anxiety, and promote a more positive attitude towards EFL writing.

Furthermore, in order to effectively implement the proposed process-oriented writing instructional framework in Chinese EFL higher education, teachers should create a supportive and non-threatening classroom environment to reduce anxiety and foster student engagement. During pre-writing, diversify activities with visual aids and group discussions to cater to different learning styles. Scaffold the composing process by providing structured outlines and encouraging free writing to focus on content. Enhance peer feedback training with clear guidelines and modeling to ensure constructive criticism. Integrate AI tools thoughtfully, guiding students on how to interpret and utilize the feedback. Foster metacognitive awareness through self-assessment activities and reflection. Provide timely, individualized feedback in the editing stage, prioritizing critical areas for improvement. Finally, encourage continuous practice by connecting writing skills to real-world applications. These strategies will optimize the framework's effectiveness, improving students' writing proficiency, reducing anxiety, and promoting a positive attitude towards EFL writing.

Acknowledgements

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