Review of *Developing Writing Competence in L2 Chinese Classrooms: Research and Application*

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Learners' interactions in and through text influence their L2 acquisition (Lam, 2000). Specifically, writing facilitates the attainment of L2 competence through reinforcing other language skills. Learners can focus more easily on forms in writing than in speaking, allowing them to draw on their explicit knowledge while composing (e.g., Polio 2017; William 2012). In the past decades, writing's instrumental role in the acquisition of a second language has garnered significant research attention; however, the majority of the research on L2 writing development has been done in the field of teaching English as a second or foreign language (Polio, 2017). Studies about how learners develop writing skills in Chinese, a character-based language, are still in an emerging stage. More work needs to be done to advance the theoretical knowledge and pedagogical practices related to writing in L2 Chinese classrooms. *Developing Writing Competence in L2 Chinese Classrooms: Research and Application,* a book edited by Li Yang and Laura Valentín-Rivera and published by Multilingual Matters (2023), is one such effort intended to further the understanding on L2 Chinese writing. It aims to provide readers with "cutting-edge empirical research and insightful teaching methods and strategies for effectively developing L2 writing competence in L2 Chinese classroom contexts" (per the book cover).

Developing Writing Competence in L2 Chinese Classrooms: Research and Application comprises eight chapters encompassing the following main areas: understanding the impact of learners' linguistic upbringing (heritage vs. foreign language learner) on their writing; comprehending writing as a social endeavor (collaborative writing vs. individual writing); identifying the strategies used in L2 Chinese writing; investigating learner development in terms of nominal structure and connective usage in writing; assessing the effectiveness of teachers' corrective feedback; and exploring the role of social media in L2 writing as well as how instructors adapt to online learning under pandemic conditions. All the chapters follow a similar organizational style. Each chapter

starts with an introduction section, providing an overview of the research on the topic of focus and identifying the research gap that serves as the purpose of the study. The introduction section is followed by a literature review of previous studies on the topic, research design, data analysis, results, discussion, and pedagogical implications.

Chapter 1, "Writing processes and products of Chinese as heritage and foreign language learners" by S. Yang, reports on a comparison between the writing process and products of low-intermediate-level Chinese Heritage language learners (CHLLs) and foreign language learners (CFLLs). The study found that CHLLs and CFLLs went through similar writing stages, with both devoting most time to the formulation stage, but with differences between the groups in terms of time spent on macro- vs. micro-level issues. For writing products, CHLLs' texts were overall syntactically more complex; however, CHLLs did not outperform CFLLs in using conjunctions per clause. Regarding lexical complexity, CHLLs' texts exhibited higher sophistication, containing more low-frequency words. The findings of the study shed light on how CHLLs and CFLLs differ in terms of their writing process and writing products, providing abundant resources for instructors to adjust their instruction to better suit the needs of CHLLs and CFLLs. Researchers examining writing process and product will also find this study helpful, as the study employed several instruments to measure learners' syntactical and lexical complexity, and clear descriptions of these instruments were provided. Although the pedagogical strategies proposed are practical and appear to be straightforward for instructors to incorporate into the classroom to address learner deficiencies in writing, it would have been useful if the authors had proposed specific strategies for developing students' ability in connecting sentences with appropriate connective devices, a skill found to be lacking in both CHLLs and CFLLs.

Chapter 2, "Collaborative writing in a tertiary Chinese as a foreign language classroom: Processes and products" by B. Olovson and S. Huang, delves into the realm of collaborative writing by examining the impact of collaborative writing in a college-level writing course. Specifically, the researchers assessed the types and frequency of language-related episodes (LREs), instances where the participants negotiated their linguistic choices while writing collaboratively. Additionally, a comparison was made between collaboratively written texts and individually written texts in terms of complexity, accuracy, and fluency. The results of the study revealed that lexical LREs represented the most frequent type, while syntactic and discourse LREs were the least frequent. Compared to the individually produced texts, the collaborative texts were found to be longer, lexically more accurate, and syntactically of greater quality in terms of mean sentence length. Chapter 2 provides useful scaffolding activities, such as including a video to model successful collaboration that resulted in a high number of resolved LREs. It would be interesting to replicate the study with students at the beginning level to assess whether collaborative writing impacts them in a similar way.

Chapter 3, "Learners' writing strategies in L2 Chinese: A cross-sectional study" by L. Yang and Z. Zhao, reports on a cross-sectional approach to examine CFL learners' writing strategies and the relationship between their strategy frequency and text quality. The findings showed that the while-writing strategies were more frequently used than the pre- and post-writing ones. No statistically significant relationship was found between the strategy frequency and text quality.

The findings of Chapter 3 enhance understanding of how learners use strategies when composing Chinese texts and how teachers can facilitate the writing process through strategy training. Data for Chapter 3 was collected using a questionnaire, which, as the authors pointed out, may impact the validity of the findings due to limitations inherent to self-reporting. It is recommended that future studies supplement questionnaires with the think-aloud protocol. Additionally, future researchers should consider allocating more time for participants to complete the writing task. In Chapter 3, participants were given only 30 minutes for the writing task, possibly contributing to reporting not using pre- or post- strategies.

Chapter 4, "Investigating nominal structures in L2 Chinese writing: A systemic functional linguistics perspectives" by X. Pan, examines how L2 Chinese learners expand the forms of nominal structures (NSs) to construe meaning in writing, as well as the functions and the development of NSs in writing. The study found that, overall, participants used more NSs in the expository essay. Most NSs were formed through Epithet/Classifier, followed by an act clause as Head and Qualifier. The study also found that participants' use of NSs increased with their proficiency. Interestingly, the difference between Intermediate High and Advanced Low was not statistically significant, indicating that nominal structures likely remain stable when learners' proficiency reaches a certain level. Informed by Systematic Functional Linguistics, Chapter 4 illuminated the relationship of nominal structures to second language development in writing. The pedagogical suggestions proposed by the researchers are particularly informative for classroom instruction. Despite the aforementioned strengths of the study, readers without much research experience and a background in linguistics may find the article challenging to follow. Additionally, the examples provided in the article are in Pinyin without tone marks, making it difficult to understand a sentence without referring to the English translation. Including the Chinese characters to aid readers in processing the information would have been helpful.

Chapter 5, "Exploring L2 Chinese learners' connective usage in writing: An error analysis approach" by J. Lin and G. Gao, explores how instructors can help Chinese learners develop their skill in using appropriate connective devices to create coherent texts. The study found that learners had difficulty mastering the use of conditional and successive connectives. Another interesting finding is that the unpaired connectives within casual, progressive, and adversative categories were used more accurately than those in pairs. Chapter 5 provided in-depth knowledge on Chinese learners' acquisition of connectives in writing. Instructors are likely to find the pedagogical implications proposed by the researchers particularly helpful in designing activities to develop learners' skill of using appropriate connective devices to create coherent texts. It needs to be pointed out that the participants in the study are advanced-level students. It would be interesting to see whether the findings from the study hold true for both intermediate- or beginning-level students, which necessitates further examination of this topic by including participants of different proficiency levels. The study can be easily replicated, thanks to the detailed and clear explanation of data analysis process.

Both Chapter 6 and 7 explored learners' perceptions. Chapter 6, "Facebook as a mediator for L2 Chinese writing: Practices and perceptions" by L. Ye, investigates the facilitative role of Facebook-mediated social communication in L2 Chinese writing and the students' perception on the

usefulness of this social platform. The findings of the study showed that Facebook played a positive role in improving CFL students' writings. Interestingly, the study did not find Facebook to be an interactive platform as the earlier studies did (i.e., Wang & Vásquez, 2014; Paul & Friginal, 2019). This is mostly likely due to the writing task design that did not specifically require participants to comment on each other's posts. One limitation of the study is its small sample size. Out of nine participants, only five viewed Facebook writing tasks favorably. Additionally, even though seven out of nine participants produced more sentences at the end of the semester, it is possible that the improvement is a result of repeated writing practice rather than the facilitative role of Facebook. It would be interesting for future studies to include a control group that engages in the same type of writing but without using Facebook for comparison purposes. Despite its constraints in the scope of the study, as Yang and Valentín-Rivera summarized, this chapter "deepens our understanding of the application of Facebook in the CFL context and sheds light on the efficient incorporation of public and virtual spheres as an academic platform to promote written production" (Yang & Valentín -Rivera, 2023, p.14)

Chapter 7, "The efficacy of teachers' written corrective feedback in the L2 Chinese classroom: Learner perceptions and preferences" by L. Valentín-Rivera, examines learners' perceptions and expectations of teachers' written corrective feedback (WCF) in the L2 Chinese classroom, as well as their level of familiarity and preferences with different types of WCF. The results showed that all participants expected feedback from their teachers, and they generally perceived teachers' comments to be helpful. Although all participants reported being familiar with direct WCF, the majority preferred indirect comments because they believed that indirect WCF strengthened their linguistic connections. Chapter 7 provided further empirical evidence supporting the writing-to-learn approach (Manchón, 2011). Therefore, as the author of Chapter 7 recommended, writing should be emphasized as a vital part of students' learning experience. Even in a language program where writing is not assessed, regular writing practice should be utilized to facilitate learners' language development and develop their critical thinking skills. Other recommendations worth mentioning include providing metalinguistic feedback accompanied by examples to help learners achieve a greater level of processing, as well as exposing learners to excellent writing examples produced by their peers for peer modeling.

Chapter 8, "L2 writing under pandemic conditions: How do Chinese and Spanish instructors adapt" by D. Román-Zúñiga, I. Elola, and R. Vasseur, examines how Spanish and Chinese L2 writing instruction was affected by the transition from a face-to-face to an online modality as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The findings revealed that the instructors in this study in general were not familiar with digital tools that foster multiliteracies and there was a lack of training on developing writing tasks fitting online modalities. Distinctive approaches were found between the two language programs with the Spanish program incorporating a wider variety of writing assignments while the Chinese program offering limited types of assignments. Chapter 8 provides important considerations for L2 online writing pedagogy and serves as a guide for the design of future training on developing online L2 writing courses.

Overall, *Developing Writing Competence in L2 Chinese Classrooms* is an excellent resource for both researchers and language educators. It offers a solid foundation of empirical knowledge and

pedagogical recommendations to further the researching and teaching of writing in L2 Chinese classrooms. It is most likely to be beneficial for graduate students and scholars interested in conducting research in L2 Chinese writing. All the studies selected in the book followed a rigorous research process with a clear description of the research design, making it possible for future researchers to replicate the study in a different context. Moreover, the detailed introduction and explanation of the instruments used for assessing writing complexity, accuracy, and fluency provide future researchers much-needed tools to expand the scope of the research area and deepen the understanding of L2 Chinese writing. Language educators are also likely to find the information in the book informative. The pedagogical suggestions grounded in empirical data can help them make well-informed decisions on writing instruction in L2 Chinese classrooms and facilitate the implementation of writing-focused activities.

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