



The Application of Task-based Approach to Writing Course for English Majors in China

Rationale

- **Importance of English writing for English majors in China:**
 - Reflecting language proficiency
 - Test for English Majors Band 4 and 8
- **Problems in English writing and possible reasons:**
 - Little grammatical errors, but lacking in idiomatic expressions, logical thinking or coherence
 - Traditional approaches not in conformity with current demands
- **The positive roles of task-based approach:**
 - Improving writing ability
 - Promoting learning motivation
- **Current studies on TBA:**
 - Theoretical: theoretical basis, history of development, definition, classification, characteristics...
 - Empirical: how TBA can be applied different language teaching contexts
 - **Gap:** studies on the application of TBA to adult teaching and learning in China still in need
- **Significance:**
 - Theoretical: deeper understanding of TBA related factors and theories
 - Practical: pedagogical implications; further research



Aims

1. Is task-based approach (TBA) more effective in improving **writing ability** than presentation, practice, production (PPP) for English majors in China?
2. Is TBA more effective in promoting **learning motivation** for writing than PPP for English majors in China?
3. What are the **attitudes** of English majors in China towards the application of TBA to writing course?

Settings

- Two intact natural classes in a Chinese college; 30 participants in one class, the total 60; third-year English majors; similar English proficiency
- One experimental class (EC) - TBA; one control class (CC) - PPP; one semester

Instrument and Evidence

- **Quantitative data:**
 - Test: pre-test to ensure the similarity; post-test to see the effectiveness and difference of EC and CC (→ **compositions and scores**)
 - Questionnaire: pre-questionnaire and post-questionnaire to see the change of motivation; questionnaire for attitudes towards TBA (→ **copies of questionnaires**)
- **Qualitative data:**
 - Interview: face-to-face group interview with the EC for attitudes towards TBA (→ **recordings and transcription**)

Data Analysis

- **Quantitative data:**
 - **SPSS 25.0** to see whether there are significant differences between the EC and the CC ($p \leq 0.05$)
- **Qualitative data:**
 - **Thematic analysis:** identifying initial categories, coding data, reviewing codes and emerging themes, identifying findings
 - **Possible themes:** class centre, affection, motivation, interaction, construction

Ethical Issues

- **Be open and honest with:**
 - Participants (voluntary informed consent, right to withdraw)
 - College and department leaders (permission)
 - Relevant teachers (permission)
- **Treatment of the data:** confidential and anonymous
- **Storage and use of the data:** legal and secure
- **Outcomes of the research:** reports for participants
- **Treatment of the CC after the study:** if TBA proved to be more effective



Main Conceptual Themes

- **TBA:**
 - Definition: a language teaching approach based on tasks for convey communicative purposes
 - Framework: pre-task, task cycle, language focus (Willis, 1996)
- **PPP:** presentation, practice, product
- **Social construction:** all cognitive functions originate in social interactions; “zone of proximal development” (Vygotsky, 1978)
- **Cognition Hypothesis:** cognitive demands; a framework of task complexity, task conditions and task difficulty (Robinson, 2003)
- **Adulthood in language learnign:** characteristics of adult learners (Knowles, 1990)

Pre-task	subjects, expressions
Task cycle	task, planning, report
Language focus	analysis, practice

References

- Knowles, M. S. (1990) *The adult learner: a neglected species*. Houston, TX.: Gulf Publishing Company.
- Robinson, P. (2003) ‘The cognitive hypothesis, task design, and adult task-based language learning’, *Second Language Studies*, 21(2), pp. 45-105.
- Vygotsky, L. S. (1978) *Mind in society: the development of higher psychological processes*. Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press.
- Willis, J. (1996) *A framework for task-based learning*. Harlow: Longman.

Timetable for the Proposed Project

