

# **Cultural Thinking and Discourse Organizational Patterns Influencing Writing Skills in a Chinese English-as-a-Foreign-Language (EFL) Learner**

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## **Abstract**

Writing patterns of a Chinese English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) learner were analyzed as a case study from linguistic, pragmatic, and psycholinguistic perspectives. Alternative assessments were used by American pre-service teachers and a Taiwanese EFL instructor for rating linguistic developmental problems referring to format, style, syntax, and grammar. In addition, researchers conducted deeper linguistic analyses of discourse organization and cultural thinking styles. The case study also presents patterns found, some conclusions, and theoretical and practical educational implications.

## **Objectives and Purpose**

This is a psycholinguistic case study of writing skills of an English-as-a-foreign-language (EFL) undergraduate student, who comes from a Chinese background, speaks Mandarin as a first language, and majors in English at a Taiwanese university. The objective of the case study is to understand from a cognitive perspective the role of linguistic, cultural, and educational factors influencing writing patterns in an EFL adult learner. It is the theoretical purpose of this paper to contribute to the conceptual understanding of cognitive developmental processes reflected in cultural thinking and discourse organization patterns in Chinese EFL writers.

The three co-authors were instructors for a junior-level course on second language learning and development at a large research-based state university in the Southwest region of the United States. As such, the researchers also had as their applied purpose the integration of educational technology (i.e., electronic mail) to content training, and practical experience in English-as-a-

second-language (ESL) literacy instruction for pre-service American teachers. Pre-service teachers need to be exposed to real-life interactions with learners of culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. In addition, researchers need to study the effect of teacher's feedback (i.e., assessment) on the EFL student's literacy skills. Providing this virtual contact with EFL learners can help pre-service ESL teachers understand ESL/EFL content at higher levels by linking theory to practice, particularly in interactions with second language students to whom they have had little prior exposure. Thus, this study explores some educational implications for training pre-service teachers in ESL content, as well as linking assessment with instruction for improving Chinese adult students' writing skills in an EFL context modified by virtual contact with future ESL American teachers.

### **Research Questions**

In reviewing the literature, the co-authors found that most studies have analyzed Chinese ESL/EFL writing from a linguistic perspective, focusing mainly on analyzing the essays as a product (descriptive and qualitative analysis of syntactic and grammatical patterns). Instead, our interest in this topic comes from a cognitive, developmental, and constructivist perspective. The researchers aim to shed some light on some heuristic research questions with respect to the Chinese EFL student in this qualitative study: What linguistic patterns are found by American pre-service teachers in the Chinese EFL learner's essays? What linguistic patterns are found by the authors in the same Chinese EFL learner's essays? How are underlying cultural thinking and discourse patterns revealed in the linguistic aspects of the Chinese EFL learner's essays? How does instructional feedback provided by the pre-service American teachers compare to the Taiwanese English instructor's feedback and to the researchers' psycholinguistic analysis of the same Chinese EFL learner's essays?

### **Critical Literature Review and Statement of the Problem**

#### **Linguistic and Cultural Factors Influencing Thinking Patterns in ESL/EFL Learners**

Kaplan (1966) was the first author to develop a deterministic hypothesis, suggesting that people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds organize discourse differently, as a reflection of their native language and culture. Since then, numerous authors (e.g., Hing, 1993; Mohan & Lo, 1985; Qi, 1998; Yu, 1996; Wang, 1994) have explained the influence of cultural thinking patterns on the world views, values, behaviors, and language use of ESL/EFL learners. These cultural thinking patterns are called contrastive rhetoric. Kaplan (1967) defined rhetoric as "a method of organizing syntactic units into larger patterns" (p. 5) at the sentence level by learning how to use

grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. Based on the interpretation of the first author of this paper, contrastive rhetoric implies a comparison between cultural ways of thinking in first and second languages that are expressed through the use of cultural conventions in written and oral language. Kaplan (1972, 1987) later revised his deterministic hypothesis of culture's effect on language use and offered a weaker version. The revision suggests that all the different rhetorical ways of thinking may be possible in any written language, but that one cultural thought pattern is preferred due to social, cultural, and linguistic constraints. Although these deterministic and revised hypotheses initiated a new line of thinking in how second-language literacy development was approached by researchers since the 1960s, it was not a revolutionary idea. In the view of the first author of this paper, these hypotheses stated by Kaplan transferred the traditional Sapir-Whorf hypotheses from the broader area of second-language learning into the specific application of literacy development.

Other authors, such as Mohan and Lo (1985) have suggested the occurrence of both positive and negative transfer when analyzing ESL/EFL essays at the sentence level. They considered problems with grammar, syntax, and vocabulary as a developmental process showing similarities to the ESL/EFL learners' first language, as well as to native language skills in monolinguals. They also considered that discourse organization develops late and can be influenced by appropriate composition practices in the native language, as well as by educational experience and academic knowledge gained. Finally, they explained negative transfer as a result of the interference of the culture-specific rhetorical organization of the writer's native language. However, sometimes some positive transference can occur due to the existence of universal thinking patterns present in writing conventions, which are present beyond the surface level of syntax and grammar structures. That is, universal thinking patterns can be considered a form of underlying structures of academic knowledge, such as common components of cognitive or academic language proficiency.

Mohan and Lo (1985) also proposed that, besides negative transfer explanations for errors in ESL/EFL learners' writing products, other possible explanations need to be examined, such as: (a) inadequate knowledge and English skills for expressing or articulating complex and abstract ideas; (b) unfamiliarity with the cultural components of a topic; (c) heavier focus on grammar and syntax level than on the communication of meaning or ideas; and (d) unfamiliarity with the cultural conventions of expository writing in the target or native language. Yu (1998) has also proposed that some metalinguistic factors may explain writing products in Chinese second language learners, such as the psychological perception of language distance between the linguistic features of the native and target languages.

In relation to metalinguistic factors, some studies have demonstrated that the use of thinking-aloud protocols helps to explain underlying cognitive transfer and generates developmental explanations for ESL/EFL students'

interlanguage. For instance, González and collaborators (i.e., González, Schallert, de Rivera, Flores, & Perrodin, 1999; González & de Rivera, 1999) conducted studies of second-language learners using thinking-aloud protocols, in which they interviewed EFL learners about the mental processes they went through for concept formation in the target language. These EFL learners had English as the first language and were learning Spanish as a foreign language in the United States. Arndt (1987) suggested that using thinking-aloud protocols for teaching ESL/EFL students to monitor or edit their own essays is a valuable self-assessment and instructional tool to improve their writing skills. As pointed out by Arndt (1987), thinking-aloud protocols can be a valuable methodology to measure underlying thinking processes involved in writing tasks. Hence, the use of metalinguistic tools, such as thinking-aloud protocols, helps us gain understanding of the ESL/EFL learning and instructional process from a cognitive developmental perspective, an approach that is key to develop educational implications to improve ESL/EFL interlanguage. In this study, some attempt to apply this methodology is done by analyzing how EFL learners think when writing, and what kind of feedback second language instructors give when rating EFL essays.

Two examples that can be provided to exemplify how characteristics of the Chinese language contribute to specific rhetorical patterns in writing are: (a) the use of metaphors in the form of set phrases for conveying abstract ideas, and (b) the syntactic organization of discourse following a modifier-modified unit. Regarding the first example, the written symbols of Chinese represent concepts; however, iconic or concrete signs are used to represent these abstract meanings. Then, by relating characters to concrete objects, Chinese makes the communication of abstract ideas difficult. This is why the use of set phrases is so popular in Chinese, since the use of figures of speech help to develop abstract ideas while still using concrete signs. Thus, “the Chinese are always forced by the very nature of the language to resort to concrete expression for abstract concepts” (Wang, 1991, p. 220). The advantage of using metaphorical writing is that the reader can freely associate a subjective interpretation, which is based on idiosyncratic social and linguistic prior experience.

In reference to the second example, Kirkpatrick (1993) explained that the sequence of modifier-modified in Mandarin extends beyond word pairs (e.g., adjective and noun) to sentences with complex clauses, and also as a principle of discourse organization at the text level. For instance, as explained by Kirkpatrick (1993), this sequencing occurs in clauses following a because-therefore order and constitutes an illustration of how cultural conventions used with the native language can transfer negatively to the written discourse of the second language. As discussed below, these linguistic and cultural factors are also related to educational factors that influence thinking patterns in Chinese EFL learners.

## Educational Factors Influencing Thinking Patterns in Chinese EFL Learners

As explained by Wang (1991), some traditional educational factors affect the thinking patterns of Chinese EFL learners. The emphasis on memorization of set phrases in Chinese schools is related to the oral cultural tradition of the Mandarin language. According to Wang (1991), oral cultures have thought and expression patterns based on traditional structures and patterns, such as metaphors (i.e., meaning is conveyed by comparisons to a different conceptual domain) and proverbs (i.e., words of wisdom, warning, or advice from which moral or philosophical lessons are derived). Chinese schooling emphasizes the preservation of the oral culture by requiring children to memorize set phrases and to think in mnemonic patterns. Even though it is believed that the Chinese invented paper, and enjoy four thousand years of writing history, they still have preserved the rhetorical organization of oral tradition.

Chinese has an additive oral style, comprised of expressions of formulaic styling. That is, terms and phrases come in clusters to develop and implement memory. Thus, an oral culture becomes traditionalist because of the need to repeat conceptualized knowledge as an effort to preserve it. That is why elders enjoy high prestige and occupy a high social status in a traditionalist culture. Furthermore, teachers also enjoy a high social status and deserve respect, following traditional Confucian principles of ethics (Jones, 1979).

As explained by Jones (1979) and Wang (1991), the preservation of these rhetorical patterns results in cultural and educational homogeneity of the Chinese civilization. Traditional values are also preserved through these set phrases, such as respect for tradition and social harmony. Chinese set phrases come from classical sources such as fables, historical anecdotes, novels and drama, and classical poetry; all are considered “gems” of Chinese culture. Learning about the classics represents a class of highly educated people. Thus, using set phrases signals social power and prestige.

Educational values are also based on cultural philosophies of learning. Chinese believe that knowledge leads to a meaningful life, that words carry power, and that knowledge acquisition equals the memorization of facts. According to Wang (1991), Chinese believe that the more one person knows facts, the more society considers him or her as knowledgeable. For instance, schooling at every level (i.e., elementary, secondary, and higher education) requires extensive memorization of important facts. For example, Chinese students are required to memorize almost all of the classic essays that are included in the textbook.

Actually, it is our own opinion that memory skills are valued by the Chinese culture because they are required to learn the written language. The syllabic structure of Chinese requires memorization of at least three thousand characters to be literate. A lengthy process of six years is needed for learning the linguistic content included in a standard national syllabus for primary school. In addition,

the meaning of a Chinese character changes according to context; therefore, characters represent stems of words.

In contrast, English rhetorical conventions represent the values of individualism and freedom by emphasizing creativity and originality in writing. Writers need to express their own feelings and ideas and voice their opinions and meanings. Furthermore, most of the set phrases in Chinese are idiomatic; thus, when attempts are made to translate them literally into English, the proper cultural meaning is lost. The art of translating Chinese documents into English is thus based on the ability of the translator to identify set phrases, and to be able to reconstruct the appropriate cultural connotation of the metaphor or proverbial figure based on prior cultural knowledge. These rhetorical aspects of language are culture specific and are part of the oral literary tradition of the Mandarin language.

Second language learners may think of using the cultural rhetoric patterns of their first language, which may result in using appropriate English syntax and structure, but with the problematic presence of rhetorical functions of written Chinese discourse. Wong (1992) noted that, besides transferring cultural thought patterns used in the first language to the second language, other developmental problems of discourse organization are related to instructional factors (i.e., the emphasis of accuracy only at the syntactic and grammatical levels). Thus, this case study investigates the degree to which educational factors of first language literacy development affect the cultural thinking patterns and the writing skills in the target language of an EFL Chinese learner.

## **Method**

### **Design**

This case study analyzes two essays written by a female Chinese EFL learner from a psycholinguistic perspective. The co-authors analyzed the Chinese cultural thinking patterns reflected in the discourse organization of the EFL student's native language, revealed through a psycholinguistic coding of her two English essays. In addition, the researchers wanted to learn how cultural background and training could affect American undergraduate students' and Taiwanese EFL instructors' perceptions of the same essays produced by the selected Chinese EFL learner. With that purpose, the researchers compared their own linguistic and psycholinguistic analysis of the Chinese EFL learner's essays with the perceptions of pre-service American undergraduate teacher majors, who were acting as online tutors.

By doing this first comparison, the objective was to learn at what level pre-service American teachers responded to the training of assessment of EFL writing skills. The researchers aimed to explore the perceptions of pre-service American teachers of the selected EFL Chinese student's essays, and whether or not could train them to uncover the negative transfer of cultural thinking and discourse organization patterns from first to second language in EFL

essays. The researchers aimed to generate applications of educational technology for developing new training strategies that could stimulate pre-service American teachers to learn how to: (a) provide feedback to EFL learners beyond the linguistic level (i.e., syntax, grammar, and vocabulary), generating pragmatic and psycholinguistic feedback; and (b) stimulate EFL learners to develop native-level English cultural and discourse organization patterns by linking assessment with ESL instruction at the conceptual level.

Finally, the researchers also conducted a second comparison of the Taiwanese English instructors' feedback to the American tutors' feedback, and to the authors' psycholinguistic analysis of the Chinese EFL learner's essays. By doing this second comparative analysis, the researchers wanted to learn: (a) how instructors' different cultural backgrounds may affect their perceptions of the same EFL essays, and (b) what kind of feedback (and therefore training) was being provided by Taiwanese EFL instructors.

### Participants

The subject for this case study consisted of a Chinese EFL learner who was tutored on-line by a pair of pre-service American teachers. The undergraduate American students were majoring in education at a large state university in the Southwest region of the United States. These American students were asked to tutor the Taiwanese student on-line as part of their requirements for a junior-level course of second-language learning and development. The American students were asked to work with a classmate as a partner in order to achieve interrater reliability of their EFL essays' ratings. American students were paired at random with an EFL tutee, and they were asked to communicate with the tutee via e-mail at least once a week for a 10-week period. The purpose of their electronic communication was for the American students to provide feedback to the EFL learner at the linguistic (i.e., vocabulary, grammar, and syntax), pragmatic (i.e., format and style), and psycholinguistic (i.e., cognitive strategies) levels. The EFL learner needed to submit electronically two essays and edit some problematic clauses online.

The EFL student spoke Mandarin as her first language and was an undergraduate student majoring in English at a national university in Taipei. This Taiwanese student was taking an English composition course as preparation to take the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) writing exam, with the goal of coming to an American university as a graduate international student. The EFL Taiwanese instructor agreed to participate in the study with the goal of providing her students with exposure to English native speakers' feedback.

Lucy Marie is the pseudonym of the Taiwanese student selected for this case study. This student was selected because: (a) she had completed all the electronic communication requirements for this study, and (b) her essays were representative of the patterns found in Chinese ESL/EFL students' writing skills. Representation was established based on the presence of examples of

the nominal categories in Lucy Marie's two essays. As explained in the instruments section below, these nominal categories were developed based on available literature and on content represented in the pool of EFL students' essays collected as data.

Lucy Marie had been born and raised in Taipei and was from a Chinese background. She explained that she had a Chinese name, but that she had chosen an English name for herself. She reported that she could speak Mandarin and Taiwanese and that she considered the former as her first language because it was used as a mainstream language in school. She considered Taiwanese as her second language and mainly used it to communicate with her grandparents.

In terms of her EFL learning history, Lucy Marie had been learning English for more than 10 years by the time this study was conducted. However, she considered English to be a foreign language for her. She reported that she started to learn English when she was 9 years old attending third grade. In an introductory essay, she explained that she was intrinsically motivated to learn English because of "its smooth sound." She reported that at the age of 9, she asked her parents to enroll her in English classes, but as time went by, her "original passion for English became less and less." She reported that her school grades in English were excellent in comparison to her peers, but that the emphasis on testing negatively affected her motivation for learning English. Even though she had started learning English while she was in third grade, she considered that she had learned most of her English in high school and at the university level. She reported that English had been used as a method of instruction, as a tool for delivering content, in high school and at the university level. She said that she was studying English at the university due to personal interest, with the purpose of self-improvement. She also reported that she had an interest in travelling and studying abroad and communicating with speakers of English. She also noted that learning English would make her more competitive.

As to Lucy Marie's background in academic writing in Mandarin and English, she had received formal instruction in how to write in Mandarin while attending high school, and in English at the university level. In terms of her familiarity with the English language culture, she reported that she had traveled twice to the United States, staying for less than a month during each visit. When asked to self-rate her ability to communicate in English and behave in a culturally appropriate manner during her visits to the United States (including gender behaviors, idiomatic expressions, real-life situations, cultural concepts, dressing code, social behaviors, greetings, gestures, etc.), Lucy Marie chose the "poorly" category on the Likert scale. She considered that she had sometimes experienced miscommunication in English due to her unfamiliarity with U.S. linguistic and cultural conventions.

When asked about her present use of English, Lucy Marie reported using English sometimes in real-life situations (e.g., using her e-mail with friends overseas) as well as in school (in a more formal environment). She chose the “sometimes” category for rating the frequency of opportunities to communicate in English for writing to a pen pal, or talking to a tutor or instructor. She reported having more opportunities to do writing and listening activities in English than to engage in speaking and reading activities. Lucy Marie self-rated her listening comprehension skills in English as “extremely good,” her speaking skills as “good,” and her reading and writing abilities as “satisfactory.” She considered that she learned English best by engaging in listening activities, followed by reading, speaking, and writing tasks (in descending order). She preferred to watch TV, read newspapers and magazines, and engage in talking and writing as activities conducive to improving her English skills.

## Procedure, Instruments, and Data Analysis Design

### *Electronic communication*

For the 10-week email connection the pre-service American teachers and the Chinese EFL students were required to communicate via e-mail at least once a week and were asked to initiate their communication with a self-introduction essay. Chinese EFL learners needed to send two essays via email to the American pre-service teachers. With the agreement of Taiwanese English instructors, the authors provided a list of more than 50 topics for essays, organized in three categories: persuasive, narrative, and descriptive. Some of these essay topics were adapted from the topics suggested in the guidelines of the TOEFL written exam. The Chinese student had to choose two topics from this list and produce two essays within a selected category. In addition, these two essays had to comply, in terms of length and purpose, with the requirements of the EFL composition class that the Chinese student was taking.

### *Access to project Web pages*

Aside from the completion of the tasks associated with the EFL essays, all participants were asked to exchange some information in their weekly email communication about their native cultures and especially about their experiences in the college cultures in Taiwan and the United States. In order to provide a scaffold to initiate their email communication with increased mutual understanding, Web pages were created for the project. Thus, all participants had online access to a common virtual environment. Information about the requirements for participation, the syllabus for both the U.S. and Taiwanese courses, and all the instruments used were available on a Web page. In addition, another Web page displayed the pictures of all participants, including the instructor. These Web pages were linked to the Web pages of the participating American and Taiwanese departments, colleges, and universities.

### *Linguistic assessment training*

The American pre-service teachers, acting as ESL tutors, were asked to complete training on an alternative assessment process of second language writing skills at the linguistic level. This process involved a 4-week training period in the valid and reliable use of three procedures:

1. Rating the format, style, vocabulary, and syntax of two ESL essays using a holistic 7-point rating scale adapted from the TOEFL criteria.
2. Rating the syntax, grammar, and vocabulary developmental levels achieved (criteria developed by the authors).
3. Identifying problematic clauses in EFL essays and providing feedback of the self-corrections made by EFL Chinese learners (González et al., 1999; González & de Rivera, 1999).

### *Adaptation of the TOEFL criteria*

This training was aimed at modeling for the pre-service teachers the use of a holistic 7-point rating scale of the format, style, vocabulary, and syntax of ESL essays. This scale was adapted from the TOEFL criteria for rating essays. The training provided practice with criteria used across five different areas: (a) how the EFL writer was able to address and develop the topic, (b) overall organization of ideas, (c) support of thesis and ideas through detail, (d) facility in the use of vocabulary, and (e) syntactic variety. A graphic representation of the summary of ratings was also provided, and American pre-service teachers needed to provide a holistic average of ratings across the five areas per EFL essay.

The first step of the training process required American pre-service teachers to produce some essays following the same requirements set for EFL students. Students were asked to voluntarily select a classmate as a partner, with the purpose of exchanging their essays and helping each other as judges for providing training in the TOEFL criteria. Through this process of evaluating peers' essays the researchers trained them in how to achieve agreement in their holistic ratings using the TOEFL criteria, in order to increase validity and reliability. Then, the researchers had the students rate independently the same Chinese EFL essays, and then compare ratings between judges until high reliability was achieved (i.e.,  $r = .88$ ).

### *Syntax, grammar, and vocabulary rating scale*

This scale was designed by the authors for providing a more in-depth analysis of the holistic ratings made by American pre-service teachers with the TOEFL criteria. The researchers developed a 6-point rating scale with the criteria and descriptors across three areas of point assignments: (a) vocabulary, (b) language use, and (c) mechanics. The criteria provide four categories of ratings: (a) very poor (score of 0), (b) fair to poor (score of 1 to 2), (c) good to average (score of 3 to 4), and (d) excellent to very good (score of 5 to 6). The researchers also provided a descriptor, defining operationally the

terminology used in the criteria, and a list of questions for the raters to judge the quality of the essay across the three areas of point assignments.

For the purpose of this training, American pre-service teachers were also asked to work in pairs, in order to identify problematic clauses in the Chinese EFL essays and achieve high reliability in the coding of vocabulary, syntax, and grammar skills through the use of a rating scale. For this purpose of achieving high validity and reliability, two procedures were followed: (a) operational definitions of all the criteria and descriptors were provided; and (b) students, working in pairs, needed to achieve agreement on separating the text in clauses, prior to coding them based on the criteria. For this latter purpose the researchers also provided operational definitions and training on how to identify clauses. A clause was defined as a unit consisting of a beginning, development, and end of an idea (e.g., the description and her own experiences of how people make use of private transportation in Los Angeles, as opposed to public transportation in her home country).

#### *Identification of problematic clauses and self-corrections*

As a last step in the alternative assessment process, American pre-service teachers were trained in identifying problematic clauses, with some developmental errors. As defined above, a clause was considered a unit consisting of a beginning, development, and end of an idea. The researchers asked the tutors to mark both the beginning and the end of the clause containing errors. The researchers also asked them to send the identified problematic clauses via email, asking the Chinese EFL student to self-correct the “errors.” Finally, tutors were asked to send qualitative or descriptive feedback based on the three alternative assessment procedures, but not the actual ratings, to the EFL learners. This qualitative feedback provided examples of their most common patterns of “errors” or developmental problems, and some suggestions on second-language-learning strategies for improving their writing skills.

#### Linguistic Analysis of Chinese EFL Developmental Patterns

At the sentence level, the researchers developed some categories of error analysis for EFL learners with Mandarin as their first language. The co-authors of this paper considered that EFL students’ errors represented a developmental process in which a specific interlanguage (set of characteristic linguistic patterns) would merge. The researchers wanted to analyze similarities and differences between linguistic patterns of the first and second languages in the areas of syntax, grammar, and vocabulary from a developmental process and contrastive linguistics perspective. The researchers conducted this analysis by using contrastive linguistic categories derived from the errors found in the essays, which were validated using expert judges, and also by using some interlanguage Chinese-English contrasts provided by Taborck and Adamowski (1995). The researchers used 15 contrastive linguistic sub-categories nested within four main categories: (a) syntax (word order, and subject and object

pronouns), (b) grammar (verb, verb form, subject-verb agreement, tense, adjective, adverb, noun, preposition, article “the”, and preposition), (c) vocabulary (nouns), and (d) format (punctuation and rhetorical connection).

## Cultural Thinking and Discourse Organization Analysis of Chinese EFL Patterns

The researchers used some nominal categories representing cultural writing patterns in Chinese and English, which were representing some underlying discourse organizational and thinking style categories. By conducting this second contrastive analysis, the researchers tried to go deeper than the surface level of direct versus indirect cultural thinking styles. The co-authors of this paper tried to analyze the conceptual ways of thinking represented in linguistic patterns and styles used in writing cultural conventions. The researchers tried to describe the interlanguage developmental process reflected in the Chinese EFL learner’s essays.

In this study the researchers modified some cultural thought patterns influencing Chinese speakers learning EFL identified by Hing (1993). Based on Hing’s descriptions, in this study the researchers use a modification of these cultural rhetoric patterns, called cultural distinctive features. These modified cultural rhetoric patterns, which were used as nominal categories for analyzing the essays of the Chinese EFL learner, are:

1. Direct or linear, and indirect or circular, expression of ideas reflecting underlying cultural values expressed through rhetoric patterns in writing and speaking conventions (e.g., the values of individualism and cooperation are reflected in the preference of the use of *I* in English versus use of *we* in Chinese);
2. Use of set phrases in the form of metaphorical or proverbial figures.

## Results and Discussion

Lucy Marie produced two 150-word essays. The first one was a comparison and contrast essay titled, “The Summer Vacation in Japan and the United States.” The second was a descriptive or narrative essay titled, “The Fantastic Wonderland.”

### First Research Question: Linguistic Patterns Found by American Pre-service Teachers

#### *Adapted scale of TOEFL criteria*

Table 1 summarizes how American pre-service teachers rated Lucy Marie’s essays titled “The Fantastic Wonderland” and “The Summer Vacation in Japan and the United States.” American pre-service teachers recommended to Lucy Marie that she revise her verb conjugations (e.g., “Meanwhile, no matter how old you are, the entrance of Disneyland is always opening for

you”), avoid using a lot of questions instead of statements, and avoid using contractions. Further, they recognized that the content of Lucy Marie’s essays revealed very good ideas, but that she needed to revise her essay in terms of syntax, grammar, and style.

Table 1

*Adapted Scale of TOEFL Criteria: American Pre-Service Teachers’ Ratings of EFL Learner Essays*

"The Fantastic Wonderland"				
Address Topic	Organization	Support Details Thesis	Use of Language/ Word Choice	Variety Syntax
5 Effective	5 Well developed	5 Effective	4 Adequate but inconsistent	4 Some errors
Overall Score 5				
"The Summer Vacation in Japan and the United States"				
Address Topic	Organization	Support Details Thesis	Use of Language/ Word Choice	Variety Syntax
4 Adequate	4 Adequate	5 Effective	2 Inappropriate	2 Serious & frequent errors
Overall score 3				

### *Linguistic ratings*

The American pre-service teachers’ ratings for Lucy Marie’s essay titled “The Summer Vacation in Japan and the United States” appear in Table 2. The tutors gave Lucy Marie an overall rating of 4 for the syntax and grammar criteria. They suggested that she revised her use of articles, especially “the,” and gave her some examples of when they are needed and when she could omit them. They provided as examples, “When you write ‘United States,’ you need to always put ‘the’ in front of it. If you were to write ‘America’ you would not have to use it.”

Table 2

*Linguistic Ratings: American Pre-Service Teachers' Ratings of EFL Learner Essays*

"The Summer Vacation in Japan and the United States"		
Vocabulary	Language Use	Mechanics
4 Average to Good: Adequate rate; Occasional errors of words or idiom form, but meaning is not obscured.	4 Poor to Fair: Major problems in simple structure; Frequent errors of negation, agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions, but meaning is seldom obscured.	4 Average to Good: Occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, and paragraphing; but meaning is not obscured.

Tutors also recommended that Lucy Marie be careful when using the auxiliary “does” in questions (e.g., “And do you know how much a hamburger does cost in the United States?”). A final recommendation made by the tutors was to appropriately place adverbs and to use a consistent tense throughout a narration. The tutors suggested, “Make sure that when you start writing in the past tense, you do not switch to the present tense.”

*Communication of feedback*

Some examples of feedback sent by the American tutors to Lucy Marie’s essay titled “The Summer Vacation in Japan and the United States” will be provided. These examples were selected for illustrating how tutors identified some problematic clauses and suggested some questions leading Lucy Marie into trying to solve the specific problems found in them. For instance, tutors asked Lucy Marie, “Is there a way that these two sentences could be combined?” referring to “The living space here is bigger than that in Taiwan. The road is wider than Taiwan’s.” To this suggestion, Lucy Marie replied with a revision of these sentences, proposing: “The living space and the road were wider than those in Taiwan.” Another question provided by tutors was “Can you revise the order of words in this sentence?” in reference to “In United States, I hardly saw public transportation in L.A.” Lucy Marie replied with the following revision: “When I stayed in Los Angeles, I hardly saw the public transportation.” As shown by these examples, Lucy Marie could accomplish some self-corrections based on the help provided by the tutors in their scaffolding role of pointing out needed areas of improvement and providing suggestions.

Table 3

*Linguistic Analysis of EFL Developmental Patterns*

"The Summer Vacation in Japan and the United States"											
Syntax	Frequency	%	Grammar	Frequency	%	Vocabulary	Frequency	%	Format	Frequency	%
*Word Order	4	11	*Verb	0	0	Nouns	0	0	*Punctuation	5	13
*Sub & Ob; Pronouns	5	13	*S-V agree *V. Tense *Adj. *Adverb *Noun *Prep. *Art. (the)	4 5 2 0 0 2 6	11 13 5 0 0 5 16		0		*Rhetorical Connection	5	13
	9	24		19	50		0	0		10	26
"The Fantastic Wonderland"											
Syntax	Frequency	%	Grammar	Frequency	%	Vocabulary	Frequency	%	Format	Frequency	%
*Word Order	2	5	*Verb	1	2	Nouns	2	5	*Punctuation	8	13
*Sub & Ob; Pronouns	5	13	*Verb form *S-V agree *V. Tense *Adj. *Adverb *Noun *Prep. *Art. (the)	1 3 5 9 1 2 3 14	2 5 13 14 2 5 5 22		2		*Rhetorical Connection	9	14
	8	18		39	70		2	5		17	27

## Second Research Question: Linguistic Analysis of EFL Developmental Patterns

Frequencies and percentages of linguistic developmental problems are provided for both EFL essays in Table 3. Percentages were calculated in relation to the total number of linguistic developmental problems present in the EFL essays. A higher number of developmental problems were found in Lucy Marie's essay titled "The Fantastic Wonderland" (a total of 70% in grammar and 18% in syntax). In contrast, the essay titled "The Summer Vacation in Japan and the United States" contained only about 2/3 the number of errors in the category of comparative and contrast, as shown in Table 3 (50% for grammar and 24% for syntax, with the category of format showing equal percentage across both essays). It seems that the particular cultural topic knowledge influenced the writing ability showed by Lucy Marie in each essay. When Lucy Marie was writing about her own cultural experiences during her trips to Japan and the United States, she was able to show a higher linguistic developmental level. In addition, the first essay was shorter than the second one, so perhaps length also influenced the linguistic developmental level attained.

As researchers trying to interpret their results, we will attempt to explain the reason why these linguistic developmental problems are present in a Chinese EFL learner. In reference to the first category of syntax, the rules of word order in the Chinese sentence are so varied that they cause noticeable interference in the order of subject and object pronouns that Chinese EFL learners produce. That is, word order shows connection of words in Chinese. For example, a descriptive word before a noun is an adjective; if it follows the noun it becomes a predicate. Moreover, there are also differences in the second category of grammar leading to confusion of the appropriate gender and number inflection for subject and object pronouns. This results in confusing "he with she" and "him with her," or vice versa.

In the authors' opinions, the almost completely uninflected nature of Chinese leads to several "errors" in verb conjugations in EFL learners in reference to person, number, tense, mood, or agency. This includes omitting the copula (e.g., producing "I better now," instead of "I am better now"). Chinese verbs name actions; thus, verbs (omitting subjects) may serve as grammatically complete sentences, and not just commands as in English. In addition, most passive constructions do not exist in Chinese, because verbs often have identical passive and active voices. Hence, the Chinese EFL learner can be expected to make negative transfers in all these aspects of conjugation, because in Chinese all these characteristics can be gathered by the context or indicated by markers.

The co-authors of this paper consider that English, as most Indo-European languages, matches verb conjugations according to subject pronoun and time reference (i.e., present, past, and future). In contrast, Chinese does not

differentiate between singular and plural verb forms and uses adverbs (e.g., always, yesterday) to identify time frame. That is, the stem form of the verb remains unchanged always, with no reference at all to the number of subjects; a specific reference to time in the sentence will mark the time frame. For instance, literal translations from Chinese into English, showing cultural Chinese patterns in their syntactic and semantic organization, would read: “She eat cookies” (lack of subject verb agreement), and “I eat cookies yesterday” (lacking tense systems). The correct English forms, “She eats cookies,” and “I ate cookies yesterday” would be considered redundant from a Chinese way of thinking, because there is no gain of meaning by changing a complex verb form.

Furthermore, in terms of syntax, Chinese uses a different sequential order for describing, which go from “the general to the specific, from the common to the unique, and from the whole to the individual or smaller units” (Hing, 1993, p. 39). This preference to emphasize the whole first, when organizing a description, is used when referring to: time order (i.e., year, month, date, day of the week, and time), describing spatial arrangements (i.e., an address is given by naming first the country, city, name of the street, and number), and order for names (i.e., first the family name, then the individual name). Thus, as explained by Hing (1993), the syntactic characteristics of Chinese influence speakers to think from larger to smaller semantic categories, and to arrange the linguistic units from the more general to the more specific.

In contrast, native English speakers’ cultural thinking patterns are influenced by the conventions to order their syntactic and semantic categories from “the more specific to the more general, from what is unique to what is common, and from the individual units to the whole” (Hing, 1993, p. 38). For instance, English descriptions always follow the order of specific to general when referring to: time order (i.e., time, day, date, month, and year), spatial arrangements (i.e., addresses note number, street name, city, and country), and names (i.e., first and last name).

A second case of grammatical negative transfer is the use of reduplication when using nouns, which is a common practice in Chinese, but indicates redundancy in English. A third case is that Chinese nouns, adjectives, and adverbs do not show suffixes as they do in English (e.g., “happy” can be an adjective, adverb, or noun in Chinese). Fourth and fifth cases of grammatical negative transfer is that, in Chinese, verbs and adverbs are not differentiated in form, and nouns do not have a marker for singular and plural forms. Finally, there is no lexical equivalent of the definite article (“the”) in Chinese. Even though Chinese uses position as a grammatical device to indicate specific nouns, it has no specific linguistic marker as in English.

In reference to the third category of vocabulary use, Chinese does not have an equal number of abstract terms in comparison to English. Thus, Chinese EFL learners may have difficulty in expressing abstract concepts in

English. In relation to the fourth category of format, Chinese uses double transitions, which are considered a case of rhetorical connection or redundancy in English. For instance, in Chinese, *because* and *therefore*, *although* and *yet*, and *although* and *but* would be used in the same sentence (e.g., 'Because John is English, therefore he can speak English'). In terms of punctuation errors, the presence of multisyllabic words in English causes confusion to Chinese EFL learners, because Chinese words tend to have one morpheme and sentences are rather short.

### Third Research Question: Cultural Thinking and Discourse Organization Patterns

Based on the modified cultural rhetoric patterns, originally developed by Hing (1993), two patterns were found. The first pattern reflects direct or linear, and indirect or circular, expression of ideas for English and Chinese, respectively. These cultural rhetoric patterns reflect underlying cultural values expressed through rhetoric patterns in writing and speaking conventions (e.g., the values of individualism and cooperation are reflected in the preference of the use of *I* in English versus use of *we* in Chinese). The second pattern reflects the use of set phrases in the form of metaphorical or proverbial figures.

In reference to the first pattern, in the essay titled "The Summer Vacation in Japan and the United States," Lucy Marie was not consistent in the linear presentation of her ideas regarding the differences related to living space, transportation, weather, and living expenses. Her comparison between Japan and the United States was presented arbitrarily, with no coherent plan of following a logical lineal sequence of parallel contrast of both countries across areas of comparison. For instance, she described public transportation in Los Angeles but then did not offer any comparison to the situation in Japan, or her country Taiwan.

In reference to the second pattern, Lucy Marie used several metaphors to present and explain her ideas. For instance, in "The Summer Vacation," she stated, "Therefore if you can not drive in United States, *you may just like the one who don't have feet to walk.*" Through the literal translation into English of this Chinese metaphor, she attempted to convey that owning a personal means of transportation was a basic necessity in the United States. Her metaphor made a figural comparison of not having a car with a handicapping condition. However, the cultural connotation of this Chinese metaphor is lost in the literal translation into English, which does not represent this cultural convention. In this same essay, she also stated, "No matter they are good or not, *we can take them as our mirror*, to see what we can improve and what we can keep." The metaphorical use of this phrase attempted to convey that we learn vicariously from other people's actions. However, the English-speaking reader would have to do several transformations in order to understand the meaning conveyed, because this metaphor is not readily used as a cultural convention among English speakers.

We also think that the first pattern of direct and indirect expressions of ideas in English and Chinese also relates deeply to cultural patterns of thinking. English thinking patterns are characterized by a direct or linear pattern of paragraph development. In contrast, Chinese has an indirect or circular thinking pattern, in which writers comment about the subject in a variety of tangential ways. According to Hinds (1990), inductive writing refers to the logical order of presentation of ideas or information in expository writing, such as order of time and space; these, in turn, are related to the linguistic (syntactic and grammatical) characteristics. In Chinese, each different tangential reference to the topic presents the idea from a different indirect perspective; however, the topic is never presented directly in the text or in the conclusion. In Chinese, an indirect or implicit way of thinking is conveyed in writing, allowing the reader to consider observations made by the writer. Chinese cultural values conveying persuasive messages in an indirect manner offer some hints for readers to use their imagination. When using an inductive pattern of writing, the purpose of the article is only implicitly revealed in the final paragraph, but no final conclusion is offered to the reader.

We consider that, in contrast, thought patterns of native English speakers are characterized by a linear and sequential organization in expository writing. This logical pattern is deductive and is typically opened by a topic sentence in each paragraph (which are used to separate ideas), followed by supporting statements, helping to develop the main idea and to present related sub-topics. Precision, economy of language, and synthesis in communicating ideas also reflect the values of controlling and limiting the use of time (not only by writers, but also by readers). This cultural writing style reflects the lifestyle in America and may not fit other cultural realities, such as the Chinese emphasis on the artistic and literary aspects of writing.

We think that Chinese rhetoric conventions for writing prefer style rather than clarity. For instance, sentences are constructed in a repetitive way, in a parallel manner, leading into reduplication and redundancy. For instance, it is acceptable to say in Chinese: *full and complete, first and foremost*, by reduplicating meaning in several terms, and *stars moving and constellations changing*, for conveying the meaning of passing of night by using set phrases. These rhetorical demands of the Chinese language also serve to reinforce the meaning or image created earlier in the reader.

Chinese and English readers have set expectations of cultural rhetorical patterns that they want to see in writings. That is, individuals who are acculturated in a particular society have learned to use linguistic conventions to convey certain meanings and functions in writing. These rhetorical patterns used in written language are also reflected in communication conventions used in social relationships. For instance, Hing (1993), observed that “many Chinese speakers do not take credit for achievement, but attribute the success to someone else . . . [or] to the job responsibility or the notion of duty”

(p. 41). In contrast, English native speakers attribute success and achievement to effort, aptitude, and individual differences, attributions reflecting values of individualism. Thus, as we can see in this case study, linguistic features connect with cultural thinking patterns, which in turn connect with educational factors.

#### Fourth Research Question: Perceptions of Readers with Different Cultural and Educational Background

One of the most important patterns revealed by the case study selected was that different readers had unique perceptions of the same Chinese EFL essay. We consider that the different perceptions of Chinese writing come from the influence of different cultural expectations, value systems, and prior cultural experiences on the writer's and individual reader's thinking processes about a specific cultural topic. In addition, the readers' level of literacy in their first language will also influence their perceptions of EFL writer.

##### *Perceptions of American students*

When American graduate bilingual/ESL majors, who were English native speakers, read the Chinese EFL student's essays, their perception was that unity and coherence were lost. Furthermore, graduate American students perceived Chinese EFL writing as indirect and inductive, because topics were developed in an implicit manner (in terms of what they were not), and objectives and conclusions were never presented clearly in their narratives.

In contrast, when trained undergraduate American students read the same essays produced by the Chinese EFL learner, they disregarded the differences in the cultural thinking and discourse organizational patterns. The perceptions of these pre-service teacher majors were focused more on the surface linguistic level, providing Taiwanese students with feedback at the syntactic and grammatical level only. Even though we (instructors and authors of this paper) tried to train American undergraduate students to look for cultural and conceptual thinking patterns, their perception of EFL writing was focused upon discrete linguistic features, disregarding cultural content of ideas and rhetorical organizational aspects of writing.

##### *Perceptions of the Taiwanese English instructor*

Interestingly, the feedback provided by the EFL Taiwanese instructor was also focused on "errors" at the linguistic level. She focused on correcting grammar and syntax problems, such as subject-verb agreement, the appropriate use of articles (i.e., "the"), verb conjugation in reference to subject and tense, and pronoun, subject, and number and gender agreement in nouns. She also recommended that Lucy Marie check the meaning and correctness of spelling of some vocabulary used.

The EFL Taiwanese instructor provided some feedback about format and style, in reference to some discourse organization issues. For instance, she suggested that Lucy Marie "should try to make her audience see that her comparison came from her observations acquired from her own experience,"

revise her essays based on considering her intended audience and the purpose of her essay, and to “use some other transitions to give style variety.” She did recognize some organizational problems present in Lucy Marie’s essays, such as lack of organization of paragraphs and inappropriate development of topic ideas. She requested Lucy Marie to polish her draft and to generate more sophisticated ideas and organization. Thus, even though the English Taiwanese instructor did provide some general feedback about style and format, her recommendations focused primarily on the EFL traditional “fixing the linguistic errors” approach. She did not acknowledge explicitly that some of the difficulties experienced by Lucy Marie in her EFL writing could be a result of underlying differences in discourse organization and cultural thinking patterns between Chinese and English.

The Taiwanese EFL instructor also filled out the TOEFL essay rating criteria for “The Fantastic Wonderland” essay and gave Lucy Marie the following ratings: (a) addressing the topic (6, effectively addresses the writing task), (b) organization (5, uses details to support a thesis or illustrate an idea), (c) facility in the use of language and appropriate word choice (3, demonstrates some inappropriate choice of words), and (d) syntactic variety (4, may contain some errors that occasionally obscure meaning).

The Taiwanese EFL instructor also rated this same essay using the Syntax and Grammar Criteria: (a) vocabulary use (2: poor or fair; limited range; frequent errors of words/idiom form; meaning confused or obscured); (b) language use (3: average to good; effective but simple constructions; minor problems in complex constructions; several errors of agreement, tense, number, word order/function, articles, pronouns, prepositions; but meaning is seldom obscured); and (c) mechanics (4: average to good; occasional errors of spelling, punctuation, capitalization, paragraphing; but meaning is not obscured).

### *Psycholinguistic analysis carried out by researchers*

The fourth research question studied cultural writing patterns in Chinese and English from a psycholinguistic perspective. Thus, the researchers carried out an analysis focused on deep discourse level, aiming at understanding cultural organizational and thinking styles. The objective was to study from a cognitive perspective the role of linguistic, cultural, and educational factors on writings patterns in an EFL Chinese learner. Thus, we tried to go deeper than the surface level contrastive analysis of direct versus indirect cultural thinking patterns by analyzing the conceptual ways of thinking represented in linguistic patterns and styles used in writing conventions (rhetoric). In our psycholinguistic analysis, we emphasized the positive and negative transfer of rhetorical cultural conventions between native and foreign language, resulting in some interlanguage stages.

Interestingly, the second author of this study is an ESL Taiwanese graduate student, and even for this fully bilingual Mandarin/English person, it took several readings of the EFL essays studied to understand the intention of the EFL Chinese writer. For instance, the essay titled “The Summer Vacation in

Japan and the United States” seemed incoherent to her during the first readings, because she first attempted to understand it from the English cultural thinking perspective. Even though no major syntactic and linguistic errors had been made by the Chinese EFL writer, and some rhetorical components of the English language were present (e.g., use of some topical sentences and transition words for beginning paragraphs), the Chinese rhetorical cultural thinking patterns were still being used. This was evidenced in the format and style used for presenting ideas (semantic level), as well as in the use of unidiomatic language not following cultural conventions of the English language (pragmatic level). It was not until several readings and hours later that she became aware of some underlying or implicit meanings conveyed by the EFL writer, and the essay started to make sense to her. Hence, it took her several hours to experience an insightful realization that the EFL writer was in fact using Chinese cultural patterns.

This practice of thinking in the first language, as evidenced by using Chinese rhetorical cultural thinking patterns, is the typical outcome of formal EFL instruction. As evidenced by the English Taiwanese instructor’s feedback, typically EFL teachers give feedback at the linguistic level, marking syntactic and grammatical errors. Interestingly, this is exactly the feedback that pre-service American teachers gave Taiwanese EFL learners—that is, identifying linguistic “errors” and delivering actual models of how to “correct” them. But these American undergraduate education students did not realize the effect of cultural thinking patterns on the discourse organizational patterns used by the Chinese EFL writers (even though some intensive 4-week training on criteria for its identification was provided by the authors). Most EFL learners, like the case studied, have command of the formal rules and apply automatically some theoretical information about organizational discourse patterns (e.g., use of specific transition words for opening paragraphs). However, most EFL learners, like Lucy Marie, are not yet able to apply information about rhetoric format and style in a culturally appropriate manner, as a native speaker would do.

In sum, even though Lucy Marie had been formally studying English for many years, she was still thinking about ideas or meanings in her native language, as evidenced by the use of native cultural thinking patterns in her essays. The two EFL essays produced by Lucy Marie showed very typical patterns found in the Chinese EFL learners’ compositions, including:

1. Stating the topic in a general manner in an opening sentence;
2. Not using a linear or logical sequencing of ideas, but focusing on the observations of the writer about some tangentially connected ideas (with no explicit statement of how these secondary ideas connected to the general topic stated at the opening sentence);
3. Connecting paragraphs very loosely or not connecting them at all;
4. Closing by offering another general statement with no explicit connection to the secondary ideas or the general topic.

## **Conclusions**

The same essays written by a Chinese EFL learner were perceived very differently by Chinese and English native speakers, from a logical thinking pattern for the former, to an incoherent writing for the latter. Chinese readers expect that a set of observations related loosely to the topic will be presented for the reader to sort and evaluate. That is, Chinese readers conceptualized the task in a different manner because they perceive that they need to be stimulated by the writer to contemplate issues, which they may not have previously considered, and develop their own interpretation of Chinese rhetoric.

In addition, American pre-service teachers, as well as the Taiwanese English instructors, merely focused on the grammar and syntax level when giving feedback to the Chinese EFL learner. Even though all of them tried also to provide some feedback about the organization of discourse and the format and style, their feedback was merely focused on correcting linguistic “errors.” No explicit reference was made to the possibility of negative transference because of the differences in cultural thinking styles between Chinese and English. A deeper psycholinguistic analysis conducted by the authors revealed a connection between the linguistic developmental problems presented by the Chinese EFL learner and underlying cultural thinking and discourse organizational patterns. In addition, the familiarity with the topic knowledge and the length of the essay also influenced the frequency of occurrence of linguistic developmental problems presented by the Chinese EFL learner.

## **Theoretical and Educational Implications**

One of the major theoretical and educational implications of this study follows on a line of research previously established (see González & de Rivera, 1999; González et al., 1999) and refers to the need for EFL learners to achieve a semantic level of learning. This higher level of learning is what we called “conceptual learning,” which is learning how native speakers think and use a specific set of social and cultural conventions (pragmatics: e.g., idiomatic expressions, adaptation to audience, and content knowledge domain). In order to achieve higher developmental levels in EFL learning, students need to understand conceptual uses of language within a particular cultural way of thinking. These kinds of semantic and pragmatic dimensions of EFL learning transcends the mere memorization of syntactic and grammatical rules and leads the learner to become bicultural and bilingual, and ultimately emerge as a fluent bilingual. This process of becoming a fluent bilingual will have effects on how the EFL learner thinks conceptually (i.e., bicultural), and also on his or her emotional and affective development, such as their personality traits and cultural identity. Thus, EFL learners need to develop a bicultural

identity in order to become fluent bilinguals, which results from modifying existing values and beliefs and incorporating new cultural ways of thinking from the target language and culture.

As a closing statement we will use Shen's remarks (1989), who very insightfully reflects upon his own EFL/ESL experience in relation to his bicultural identity, resulting from becoming a fluent Mandarin/English bilingual. He described how his Chinese identity had to become a bicultural identity in order for him to incorporate American ways of thinking about writing from an English conceptual and cultural perspective. He felt that learning how to write in English was a social and cultural experience. He perceived that "rules of English composition encapsulate values . . . of Anglo American society . . . [and that he had to] redefine some of the basic concepts and values . . . about himself, about society, and about the universe, values that have been imprinted and reinforced in his mind by his cultural background" (p. 460). As stated by Shen, "I had to create an English self and be that self . . . I had to accept the way a Westerner sees himself in relation to the universe and society" (p. 461). He continued explaining his process of identity change, by stating:

The new self helped me to remember and accept the different rules of Chinese and English composition and the values that underpin these rules [e.g., confidence, assertiveness]. In a way creating an English Self is a way of reconciling my old cultural values with the new values required by English writing, without losing the former. (p. 462)

In conclusion, this "new self" that Shen was referring to is what we mean by becoming bilingual, bicognitive, and bicultural. The intersection among linguistic, cognitive, and cultural factors affecting the process of EFL learning was the focus of this case study. This case study reveals that, by conducting and comparing a linguistic level of analysis (i.e., focusing on syntax, grammar, format, and style) to deeper levels of cultural thinking and discourse organization analysis of patterns, we can generate some interesting data to show the need to explicitly stimulate bicognitive and bicultural development in Chinese EFL learners.

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