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Narrative Genre in Composition: Explicit Instruction for Chinese ESL Students

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Abstract

This multiple case study of mixed methods focused on 12 Chinese 1+2+1 and 2+2 Sino-American Dual Degree Program students facing Western sociocultural and pedagogical aspects of narratives in their U.S. first-year English composition classes. The theme of individualism in the narrative genre is in direct contrast with collectivism in Eastern cultures; also, U.S. pedagogy follows teaching writing as a process, not the product approach commonly practiced in China. These sociocultural and pedagogical differences have impeded Chinese L2 students' progress in their required composition classes and their ability to enter academic discourse. Explicit instruction of the personal narrative and the literary essay was content-based, including authentic texts, supplementary materials, and scaffolding to provide the conceptual framework so that students were able to write required essays, developing and maintaining their academic voice. Qualitative data, triangulated from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and students' portfolios, revealed Chinese students' views of instruction of the narrative genre while quantitative data compiled from expert inter-raters' rankings of content, organization and style measured the impact of explicit instruction with score gains with p values <.05 and <. 01. Using explicit instruction, U.S. instructors bridged the sociocultural and pedagogical gaps between the East and West.

Keywords: narrative genre, composition, narrative essays, pedagogy, 1+2+1 Chinese students

The largest group of English as a Second Language (ESL) or Second Language (L2) college students in the United States of America has been Chinese students (Bauer & Picciotto, 2013; Lawrick, 2013; Ozturgut, 2012; Xu, 2012), and one of their greatest struggles, regardless of their academic major or classification, has been writing academic essays (Cargill, O'Connor, & Li, 2011; Phakiti & Li, 2011; Thompson, Morton, & Storch, 2013; You & You, 2013). Because of the desire of Chinese students to study in the U.S., universities have developed affordable two-year programs (Lawrick, 2013), including the 1+2+1 and 2+2 Sino-American Dual Enrollment Programs (Redden, 2008). According to the website for American Association of State Colleges and Universities (2023), the Sino-Us 1+2+1 Cooperation on Higher Education and Professional Development (CHEPD) has been quite successful. Yet, neither all Chinese students nor all instructors have prepared to bridge sociocultural and pedagogical gaps evident in first-year English composition classes (Bauer & Picciotto, 2013; Matsuda, Saenkhum, & Accardi, 2013).

Literature Review

Research revealed Chinese students struggle in U.S. composition classes. Chinese English as Foreign Language (EFL) students have studied to pass standardized tests, but not to write essays (Guan & Jones, 2011; Ma, 2012; Mo, 2012; Muir & Xu, 2011). Chinese universities have neither encouraged non-English majors to study English composition nor to read authentic literature to improve writing skills (Mo, 2012; Phakiti & Li, 2011; Xu, 2012). Thus, they have not acquired sociocultural aspects from literature (Tso, 2014), aspects needed to write narrative essays with the theme of the importance of the individual. Moreover, Western individualism is in direct contrast with the Eastern worldview of collectivism (Chang, 2011; Zhao & Coombs, 2012).

Furthermore, there are differences in U.S. and Chinese pedagogies interfering with Chinese students' academic progress (Xu, 2012; You & You, 2013; A. Yu, 2012; Zhao & Coombs, 2012). Little attention had been given to changing the embedded thesis in Confucian pedagogy (Ji, 2011; You, 2010) until researchers touted instruction of authentic literature in EFL classes (Cao, 2012; Tso, 2014) and composition of linear narrative essays (Bauer & Picciotto, 2013; Jiang, 2011; Xu, 2012; A. Yu, 2012; Zhao & Coombs, 2012), even blogs (Zhou 2015), for those planning to enter U.S. classes. U.S. composition instructors have not focused on teaching L2 students since the separation of disciplines of L2 and English Composition in 1998 (Matsuda & Cox, 2011; Matsuda, Saenkhum, & Accardi, 2013); moreover, first-year composition instructors may not teach how to write the narrative because U.S. students have written narratives, required by the National Assessment Governing Board (2010). Instructors have not addressed pedagogical and sociocultural differences (Ji, 2011; Ruecker, 2011; Zhao & Coombs, 2012); consequently, there has been a negative impact on Chinese students because of the differences in their perceptions and instructors' expectations (Bauer & Picciotto, 2013; Ozturgut, 2012). It appears that universities have prepared to become global universities without instructors' embracing some pedagogical changes necessary for international students to experience success.

Method and Materials

Context

Chinese students from over 60 different Chinese universities have been enrolled in the 1+2+1 and 2+2 Sino-American Dual Degree Programs at a public university in the Southeastern United States. Since this small university has been recognized as establishing the 1+2+1 model in the United States (Redden, 2008), it was an appropriate site for this mixed-methods study during a 16-week semester.

Participants

A convenience sample of 12, ages 19-22, 1+2+1 and 2 + 2 Sino-American Dual Degree Program students from eight Chinese universities from different regions with varying Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) or International English Language Testing System (IELTS) scores were registered in the Center of International Programs by the Coordinator of Special International Initiatives Mid-semester they gave consent to participate in the study with translators present. The instructor and the researcher were present to assure students that the study would not affect their grades. Fourteen participants signed an informed consent form in Chinese and were given a code name to maintain their confidentiality and anonymity; however, only 12 students completed the study. The primary researcher followed all IRB guidelines and assumed the role of researcher only.

Measures

The purpose of this multiple case study was to explore how 1+2+1 and 2+2 Chinese students viewed narrative assignments and how explicit instruction (see Appendix A) impacted their personal narratives and literary essays in their first-year composition class. Qualitative data were triangulated from classroom observations (see Appendix E), semi-structured interviews (see Appendix F), and documents (students' portfolios with journals and drafts of essays). Developed by the researcher, the classroom-observation form included common behavior in an interactive classroom (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012; Walker, 2011; Zhao, 2010) while semi-structured interviews were adapted from Hu's (2009) qualitative study. Triangulation of data revealed the convergence of themes. Quantitative data were compiled from inter-raters' rankings of the essays' content, organization, and style, based on the first-year composition rubrics (omitting grammar-mechanics): the field-tested Personal Narrative Rubric (see Appendix B) and the First-year English Composition Rubric (see Appendix C). Using SPSS and 10 archived Chinese student essays, the researcher found the inter-raters reliable with a value of .722 with rating content, organization, and style, according to Kappa statistics.

Limitations

The limitations in this case study using mixed methods were minimized due to normal protocol in the natural setting. The limitation of convenience sampling, allowing the students to select their classes with the Coordinator of Special International Initiatives at registration and to make the decision to participate in the study after mid-semester, may prove more important than data gained from another study with random sampling. Other factors involved the Chinese students' saving face (Cortazzi, Pilcher, & Jin, 2011; Walker, 2011), as well as showing respect. These concepts could have been misread as being passive; however, the checklist for observations and semi-structured interviews noted these whereas in a quantitative study these could have been masked. A quantitative limitation was the raters' consistency in ranking the students' essays; however, Kappa statistics revealed reliability. Furthermore, each of the raters had over 10 years of experience teaching first-year composition.

Results

This research project included three qualitative questions and one quantitative question with hypotheses designed to measure the impact of explicit instruction.

> **Q1**. *How do 1+2+1 and 2+2 students enrolled in traditional first-year composition classes perceive the themes and describe their first reading of narratives?*

Participants revealed they had trouble reading and understanding themes of the assigned narratives because the topics were different from traditional Chinese topics; moreover, they struggled recognizing themes in contrast with morals. However, at the end of the study, four participants stated they liked narratives, and all except three agreed that assigned readings helped them understand how to write a personal narrative.

Q2. *How do 1+2+1 and 2+2 students view and describe their attempts writing their personal narratives?* Participants viewed writing the personal narrative essay as an unimportant assignment; since the personal narrative was required, most expressed frustration while trying to find a personal topic not too face-threatening. Once the peer review was removed, participants were able to write a personal narrative with scaffolding, developing their voice.

> **Q3**. *How do 1+2+1 and 2+2 students view and describe how explicit instruction could help them learn to read and to write about the narrative genre?*

Participants struggled with analyzing and writing about narratives because of sociocultural differences in themes, yet they benefitted from explicit instruction with the instructor's verbal and written scaffolding. Nevertheless, data revealed some participants' reliance on Internet essays.

Q4. *To what extent, if any, does explicit instruction impact 1+2+1 and 2+2 students' performance scores in writing required essays in and about the narrative genre in first-year composition?*

> ***Hypothesis 1o: Explicit instruction of the narrative genre will not impact 1+2+1 and 2+2 students' performance scores on their narrative essays in the composition context.***
>
> ***Hypothesis 1a: Explicit instruction of the narrative genre significantly increases 1+2+1 and 2+2 students' performance scores on the narrative assessment rubrics.***

From descriptive and inferential statistics, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Qualitative Findings

Qualitative data were gathered and triangulated from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and students' documents. The interview questions were divided into two sets so that students' first responses about personal narratives could be verified in the second session before questioning about writing the literature essay. The qualitative data were triangulated to answer the research questions revealing the following themes: sociocultural confusion and chronological organization, saving face and developing voice, and literary elements and scaffolding.

Themes of sociocultural confusion and chronological organization.

Three anthologized narratives, Orwell's "A Hanging," Chopin's "The Story of an Hour," and Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" were selected for the study. In addition to modeling and teaching literary elements, the instructor annotated these stories, following the guidelines of explicit instruction after the students had written a reader-response journal on each. The instructor gave oral and written feedback on these journals. Seven students wrote the reader-response journal on "A Hanging" while eight responded to "The Story of an Hour." All wrote the in-class journal on "The Tell-Tale Heart." From classroom observations, interviews, and papers, participants struggled to write a short response (one page) before receiving instruction.

The semi-structured interviews, held individually in the researcher's office with a translator present, revealed participants had trouble understanding narratives, not only because of the vocabulary but also because of the differences in topics or themes. Students explained: "We have different topics—war, family, and personal development, guide[s] for life—educational." One added, "Chinese students do not like narratives . . . read it five times . . . understand the theme and the moral . . . still don't understand." Others proclaimed that they did not have time—"Have major homework to do," while two saw the reading assignments as "actual American entertainment."

All agreed that explicit instruction with the instructor's marks on their journals, discussions in class, and notes on the board helped. From observations, all but three students took notes from the board. During the interviews, five students revealed their total reliance on the Internet to help them understand and write their reader-response journals while most of the others agreed that Chinese students would struggle without the Internet summaries. However, two and three students understood the theme of "A Hanging" and "The Story of an Hour" before searching the Internet; noteworthy is these students explained they "had felt it [the theme] first," meaning they understood the theme.'

Most agreed that the reader-response journals helped them understand the story; however, one saw journals as "a waste of time." Nevertheless, eight students agreed that these journals helped them learn to write a personal narrative, especially organizing it chronologically.

Themes of saving face and emerging voice in writing the personal narrative.

After students had received feedback on their reader-response journals, they started pre-writing their narrative with the following journal prompt: "Focus on 30 seconds of your life when something happened that was important to you. Tell what happened." During interviews, six explained they had written a narrative in elementary or middle school, and three had earlier in the U.S. Two had never written a narrative, and one had memorized a narrative for a test. Participants were unsure of how to write a personal narrative; in fact, one student expressed her concern during the consent process in Chinese to the translator: "But Chinese don't know how to write narrative [essays]." In interviews, eight stated that the argument was the only essay they needed to learn. Two other students gave the following reasons: "Narrative—not important—need to write argument when we have the exam [in China]" and "[Chinese] write arguments to focus on career and job."

Indeed, participants struggled to write their personal narrative while the U.S. students finished early. All but four participants were disengaged or frustrated, looking at their books or partially hidden phones—not using Chinese-English dictionaries. Four students wrote over a page; however, only two were personal narratives. The other essays consisted of five to seven sentences: illustrative, descriptive, or cause and effect passages.

This prewriting activity, along with feedback from the instructor, guided participants into selecting another topic for the personal narrative during the next class. They understood that they had to choose a real event that had happened to them. Then they completed a graphic organizer on that event, wrote at least two paragraphs, and finished the next class. These papers served as pre-tests.

Choosing a topic was difficult for these participants, and sociocultural aspects were evident in the interviews, although the researcher had not read the drafts. Comments included the students' desires "to keep private—share, but not too much" and to find a topic that was "important, but not most important." In short, one said, "Chinese would not think it [topic] important," while another explained, "It is hard to find something that has happened to you." Nevertheless, two students commented that they wanted "to share . . . feelings and hope [others] can understand" while one added, "That story I had never told to someone else. I felt I wanted others to read—weakness from my heart—kind of."

As the interviews continued, participants volunteered they had used words and sentences found online, as well as imaginary details to develop their essays: "Chinese memorize sentences and use it in any essay." Another offered this explanation: "I don't remember details; I wrote it. I was telling a story not important to me. I couldn't think of a good story; I didn't think of anything. I knew my essay—there were some problems." Two who had written personal journals and narratives changed their topics to "buying a car in America" to save face. One added, "Make up easier to impress," affirming research.

Participants responded to the open-ended questions about writing essays in the U.S. One student's response captured the struggle: "American teaching [is] American thinking. Even grammar sentences are American way: Start with *I*." When questioned, she gave the following example: "I went to the park last Sunday. Chinese way—Sunday we go to the park." She noted the changes in the sentence structure, pronoun, and verb tense. Then she added: "We know it, but it is hard to remember."

Other participants touted the benefits of explicit instruction: "I never learned before how to write a narrative in English, and I learned details in grammar," and "If I write own story, own sentences, I learn." Another explained, "Now I speak and think English, I wrote my own thoughts" while one exclaimed, " I can express own ideas, but I just can't form my own style, but I am improving." These are expressions of the emerging theme of students' finding their voice through the study of the personal narrative.

Themes of literary elements and scaffolding in writing analysis of literature.

Next, the instructor assigned "The Tell-Tale Heart" in Chinese and in English and collected the in-class reader-response journals which revealed that five participants had understood the story. Using "Writing about Literature" within the textbook, the instructor presented the elements of the short story, modeled theses, and discussed choices of literary devices that Poe uses to create the theme of horror. Three students completed a traditional outline—no one wrote a thesis, although a model was on the board. Students showed signs of stress during this class.

During the next class, the instructor modeled theses with literary devices on the board, annotated the text, and led a discussion; moreover, the instructor used think-alouds to lead the students into thinking how Poe developed his theme.

The second interviews revealed the struggle of understanding Poe's theme of horror; only three understood the theme and how a theme and moral differ. Their comments captured the confusion: "Theme ends with a moral in China. Moral is popular in China." Others stated the theme is "do the right thing," and "don't rent a room from a crazy person."

Likewise, there was confusion about the difference in writing a summary and writing about literature; however, four students described a summary as "simple" and "narrow" and the "whole content," but a literature essay as "long" with a "personal opinion—new discovery" about a "specific scene about character, plot and narrator."

When questioned about using Internet while writing, five had not, but the majority had.
One explained: "Cultural gap makes it hard to find proper topic to write about." Thus, when faced with a difficult assignment, most participants used the Internet, yet one explained: "[Have] own ideas, but look at model on Internet—not use the whole, but one or two paragraphs." These responses affirmed the struggles of writing about narrative literature.

After drafts were returned with written scaffolding and models of using annotated passages, students made corrections and participated in a peer-review before submitting their paper to CANVAS via turnitin.com as the final essay (post-test). All participants distrusted peer-reviews; they preferred the instructor's comments, a major theme in the findings. With scaffolding throughout the process, many found their academic voice and were able to write literature essays meeting Western expectations.

Quantitative Findings

The quantitative data were compiled from experienced instructors using the Personal Narrative Rubric and the First-year English Composition Rubric. The quantitative data were measured by pre- and post-tests in paired samples *t*-tests. Data from all components, along with overall totals showed score gains with p values $< .05$ and $< .01$.

The greatest score gain in the personal narrative essay was in style (voice) with a mean change of 2.08, *p* value < .001, followed by content (thesis) with a mean change of 1.83 and then organization with a mean change of 1.17 with *p* values < .05 (see Table 1).

Table 1
Pre-and Post-Instruction of the Personal Narrative

Components	Mean		SD		Mean change	*p* value
	Pre-	Post	Pre-	Post		
Content/Thesis	3.25	5.08	1.55	2.42	1.83	.032*
Organization	3.92	5.08	1.17	2.07	1.17	.041*
Style/Voice	4.50	6.58	1.17	1.31	2.08	.001**
Overall	11.67	16.75	3.28	5.19	5.03	.005**

*p<.05; **p<.01

The greatest score gains in the literature essay were in content (thesis) and style (voice) with mean changes at 1.92 and *p* values <.01 while the mean change in organization was 1.75*, p* value <.05 (see Table 2).

Table 2
Pre-and Post-Instruction of the Essay about Literature

Components	Mean		SD		Mean change	*p* value
	Pre-	Post	Pre-	Post		
Content/Thesis	2.33	4.25	1.67	1.36	1.92	.001**
Organization	2.50	4.25	1.88	1.36	1.75	.012*
Style/Voice	2.67	4.58	1.83	1.62	1.92	.008**
Overall	7.50	12.92	5.28	3.90	5.42	.004**

*p<.05; **p<.01

From descriptive and inferential statistics, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted. Therefore, the quantitative data from paired *t*-tests affirmed the qualitative data, triangulated from classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, and students' portfolios. Explicit instruction benefited the participants as they wrote their required narrative essays.

Discussion

Overall, the participants experienced difficulties writing narrative essays as previous researchers had documented (Bauer & Picciotto, 2013; Mo, 2012; Xu, 2012), especially the personal narrative because of the concept of saving face (Cortazzi, Pilcher, & Jin, 2011; Walker, 2011). Since this genre has been integral to academic success (Fernsten & Reda, 2011; Phakiti & Li, 2011; Zhao & Coombs, 2012), narrative essays have been used to develop personal voice in academic discourse (Fernsten & Reda, 2011; Jeffery, Kieffer, & Matsuda, 2012; Pomerantz & Kearney, 2012; You & You, 2013) point of view, critical thinking, and schemata (Zhao & Coombs, 2012).

Since learning contexts include pedagogical and sociopolitical aspects (Lightbown & Spada, 2013), there have been differences in accepted theories and pedagogy. When EFL students have come to the U.S. to study, they have experienced not only culture shock but also "study shock" (Hung & Hyan, 2010, p .146) due to the differences in pedagogy and their schemata. Since rhetorical strategies have not transferred from first to second language acquisition, especially organization and coherence (Liu, 2011*),* many researchers have suggested instruction of chronological arrangement of the English narrative (Romova & Andrew, 2011). Thus, this body of research was the rationale for the development of explicit instruction.

This research project affirmed differences in Eastern teacher-fronted pedagogy and interactive, content-based Western education. Participants struggled in the classroom where they were expected to interact with the instructor and peers in the writing process of five-paragraph essays, not three-paragraph essays or a few sentences, used in preparation for standardized tests (Lei & Hu, 2014b; Ma, 2012).

All agreed that the major difference in English classes in China and in the U.S. was the lack of grammar and vocabulary for tests but more on writing original essays, confirming existing research (Guan & Jones, 2011; L. Li, 2012; Mo, 2012; Muir & Xu, 2011).

Participants confirmed Xu's 2012 findings that Chinese instructors included the argument essay for assessments, but only English majors wrote English essays (Mo, 2012; Xu, 2012). Regarding the organization and location of the thesis in the first paragraph, only three students knew the structure from their home university. A. Yu (2012) asserted that Chinese ESL students may not be able to develop an essay due to the differences in thought patterns which have not been direct and linear; however, after explicit instruction all students revealed in their second interview that they had learned the location of the thesis and organization required in Western essays.

Moreover, the research study found participants had never experienced writing as a process, the focus in English composition (L.Li, 2012; Ma, 2012; Romova & Andrew, 2011; Walker, 2011; A. Yu, 2012). Participants' responses confirmed research that Chinese instructors have used the product approach—one paper at the end of the semester with no feedback (Cao, 2012; Liu, 2011). One student analyzed the major difference in pedagogy was that the U.S. instructor "focused on every stage." All affirmed instructor-led think-alouds and brainstorming helped them. All except one stated that they had never talked with their Chinese instructor about writing a paper, but they agreed they had learned from conferences with their U.S. instructor. Furthermore, they valued the instructor's scaffolding in the form of written comments on their journals and rough drafts within the process as Nurmukhamedov and Kim (2010) had found in their study.

This research study also confirmed the lack of value of peer scaffolding (Cheng, 2014) and even disregarded it (Arumugam, Rafik-Galea, de Mello, & Dass, 2013; Guan & Jones, 2011; Ma, 2012). In fact, the peer review for the personal narrative was canceled because of students' responses in the first semi-structured interview. Participants preferred their instructor's feedback (Liu & Lee, 2014; Zhou, 2015).

In addition, the participants verified research on the importance of memorization of sentences, as well as essays, within Chinese pedagogy (Guan & Jones, 2011; Ji, 2011; Shi, 2017; X. Yu, 2013), especially memorizing model essays for standardized tests (Hartse & Dong, 2015; You & You, 2013). Likewise, seven students echoed Zhao and Coombs' 2012 description of students adding "artistic" sentences, rather than developing their voice (p. 248). Nevertheless, participants found their voice while writing the personal narrative, yet they struggled establishing their academic voice when writing about literature, as Cotterall had found (2011). The research findings also revealed that literature essays contained memorized or copied sentences or paragraphs in the final draft, resulting in essays "lacking individual voice and personal reflection" (You & You, 2013, p. 265). Noteworthy was that the inter-raters discovered the loss of voice and recognized plagiarism by Western standards—not always noted by Chinese instructors (Lei & Hu, 2014a).

Other factors must be considered rather than describing all copying or memorization as plagiarism. Often, students are not guilty of plagiarism, *per se*, but they have copied key words to have a better understanding without acknowledging that source, resulting in careless plagiarism or *patchwriting* (Li & Casanave, 2012). Other times, students have memorized essays (Guan & Jones, 2011; Hartse & Dong, 2015; Ji, 2011; You & You, 2013; X. Yu, 2013), revealing their deep reverence for texts as authority (Guan & Jones, 2011; Shi, 2017). This reverence may have led participants to write memorized passages. Researchers have suggested this reverence for texts has interfered with Chinese students' evaluating texts; moreover, they have not been encouraged to develop critical thinking skills required to analyze literature (Huang, 2014; Zhao & Coombs, 2012) and to express their viewpoints in English (Z. Wang, 2011; Zhao & Coombs, 2012). Ultimately, this research project revealed the deep-rooted reverence for texts and participants' struggle to express original thoughts necessary to analyze narrative literature.

In addition, Western literature has extremely different themes from Eastern literature. The participants described major differences in the interviews; for example, many were searching for morals found in Eastern literature, which has been described as didactic (Tao, 2012). There was a "mismatch of schemata," resulting in participants' misunderstanding of themes and the assignment, just as researchers had found (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012, p. 55). Thus, students needed to be taught how to read critically and how to analyze literature (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012; Haley & Austin, 2013; Tso, 2014).

This study explored Chinese 1+2+1 and 2+2 students' views on writing in and about the narrative genre, a genre that captures major sociocultural and sociopolitical differences in Eastern and Western conceptual frameworks with the different themes of collectivism and individualism (Chang, 2011). Participants had not studied the narrative with its Western themes, especially the importance of the individual (Zhang & Zeegers, 2010; Zhao & Coombs, 2012). In fact, C. Wang (2012) and You (2010) explained the history of the struggle with Western themes of individualism. Nevertheless, as proposed by Brown (2007), theories of language learning and culture cannot be separated (Gan, 2014; Mitchell, Myles, & Marsden, 2013; Muir & Xu, 2011). Therefore, content-based instruction with authentic literature allowed students to acquire sociocultural aspects (Haley & Austin, 2013; Muir & Xu, 2011; Tso, 2014) required to understand the theme.

Through quantitative data in the form of paired samples *t*-tests, this research study revealed the positive impact of explicit instruction, confirming researchers' findings that ESL students have benefitted from instructor scaffolding, written and verbal, and made the cultural connections within authentic literature (Echevarria, Vogt, & Short, 2012; Matsuda, Cox, Jordan, & Ortmeier-Hooper, 2011). All participants revealed their struggle understanding the selected stories in their interviews, as well as throughout their portfolios including pre- and post-tests. Through the writing process with instructor feedback, both oral and written, participants showed a significant increase in their scores in content (thesis), organization, and style (voice) in their post-tests with the exception of two outliers.

Conclusion

This mixed-methods research study, conducted within a first-year English composition class with 12 Chinese students participating, confirmed current existing research on the struggles of Chinese Program students reading and writing narrative essays, both personal narratives and literature essays. Moreover, this study revealed the positive impact of explicit instruction of the narrative with the U.S. instructor providing sociocultural aspects while teaching writing as a process.

Appendix A: Explicit Instruction

Explicit instruction involved presenting the goals of a lesson clearly, modeling the reading and writing processes, providing scaffolding, and requiring practice.

Personal Narrative

- The teacher (T) modeled think-alouds on the board.
- Students (Ss) practiced writing journals and received teacher feedback on content and grammar (i.e., a narrative requires the pronouns *I* and *We* (Zhao & Coombs, 2012) and past tense verbs).
- Ss edited and revised their journals from instructor's scaffolding on marked, ungraded journals. Ss logged the corrected sentence (Appendix D) with the grammar rule (Van Horn, 2010, p. 99), using *A Writer's Reference*.
- T used handouts, power-point presentations, annotated models, and authentic professional narratives for sociocultural aspects.
- T guided think-alouds to teach the thesis, topic sentences, and conclusion, as well as setting, sensuous details, and chronological transition words.
- T assigned journal responses to professional narratives, Chopin's "The Story of an Hour" and Orwell's "A Hanging."
- Ss wrote journal responses with instructor feedback.
- T led discussions about the plot, details, and characters (e.g., why the author chose a particular plot, setting, character, point of view, theme, or social context) (Hacker & Sommers, 2011).
- T stated the theme and gave necessary background (Nurmukhamedov & Kim, 2010).
- T contrasted the importance of individuals in a narrative (e.g., Ji, Peng & Nisbett's 2000 study of how Westerners and Easterners viewed the focal point in a landscape painting).
- Ss completed graphic organizers of one personal event.
- T began with a think aloud: "Focus on 30 seconds of your life when something happened that was important to you. Tell what happened."

Personal Narrative Graphic Organizer

Topic for Narrative:
"So What?"
Thesis:
First body paragraph (First episode):
Second body paragraph (Second episode):
Third body paragraph (Third episode):
Conclusion:

- T checked the graphic organizer and provided feedback, (i.e., "This event happened; now answer 'so what?' to form your thesis.").
- T annotated sentences before the thesis in the introduction (e.g., setting, characters, background and social context).
- T added oral scaffolding. (In a conference, the teacher asked for an oral narrative and then students started writing.)

Literary Essay

Model theses, outlines, essays, graphic organizers, and peer reviews provided scaffolding for the literary essay.

- Ss read Edgar Allan Poe's "The Tell-Tale Heart" in Chinese and in English.
- T provided a copy for students to annotate as the instructor modeled underlining the thesis, topic sentences, and passages to complete the outline.
- T illustrated the difference in a plot summary and literature essay.
- T led questioning the author (i.e., intended meanings of the setting, plot, and narrator) to complete a scaffolded outline.
- Ss wrote the thesis using the template: "In 'The Tell-Tale Heart,' Poe uses _____,_____, and ______ to create his theme of horror."
- Students typed their papers, and participated in a peer review with a partner of their choice (Walker, 2011).

Thus, explicit instruction included interaction with think-alouds, modeling, and discussions of sociocultural aspects in sample essays, in addition to written and verbal scaffolding with journal-responses, graphic organizers, outlines, rough drafts, and peer reviews. Moreover, students' portfolios provided a notebook of sociocultural aspects of the narrative genre (Q. Li, 2010; Romova & Andrew, 2011).

Appendix B: Personal Narrative Rubric

First-Year Composition Rubric for Personal Narrative Essay

Narrative Rubric	A=4 (attains excellence)	B=3 (attains mastery)	C=2 (meets minimum requirements)	D=1 (marginally below minimum requirements)	F=0 (not meeting minimum requirements)
Introduction Background Thesis	Well-developed; necessary background, plot, climax, setting, character(s), conclusion; engaging; clear thesis answering "so what"	Fairly developed; creates interest; has a thesis that reflects narrative development	Minimal development and interest; has a thesis reflecting narrative mode	Lacking in development and creating interest; thesis is not in the introduction; thesis does not clearly reflect narrative development	Little or no background and development or originality to create interest; has no thesis; does not follow narrative mode
Body Paragraphs and Organization	Good topic sentences; paragraphs developed with vivid sensory details and images "to show, not tell"; logical progression of ideas and effective transitions	Topic sentences; paragraphs developed with exact details and examples; effective imagery; logical flow of narrative ideas and somewhat effective transitions	Topic sentences; paragraphs developed with details and examples yet some areas lack clarity and effective imagery "to show" the event; tells without showing; organized yet lacking in effective transitions	Weak topic sentences; paragraphs not fully developed nor relevant to the thesis; some necessary details may be confusing; little or no imagery; lacking in thoughtful narrative organization; inappropriate transitions	Lacking topic sentences and development; details and examples are confusing or missing; lack of command of language to re-create one event; lack of chronological order and progression of narrative ideas; missing transitions
Style	Thoughtful, coherent, varied sentence structure; fluent and polished "voice"	Clear and varied sentence structure; fluent and "voice" is evident	Clear but simple, repetitive sentence patterns with overly casual expressions; shifts in "voice"	Unclear and lacking insight; mixed constructions; overly casual with slang expressions; lacking a clear sense of "voice"	Unclear and incomplete thoughts; omitted and misplaced words; slang; simple sentences; no "voice"

Note. Primarily developed by the researcher with adaptations from rcampus.com, http://www.rcampus.com/rubricshowc.cfm?code=N25W38&sp=true&

Appendix C: English Composition Rubric

First-year English Composition Rubric

	A=4 (attains excellence in all four areas)	**B=3** (attains a high level of mastery in all four areas)	**C=2** (must be at least competent in all four areas)	**D=1** (marginally below minimum college standards in any *one* of the four areas)	**F=0** (clearly well below minimum college standards in *at least one* of the four areas)
Content	Interesting topic handled with intelligence, originality, and depth; wealth of supporting material, smoothly integrated into the text; tone is evident and maintained throughout.	Content is above average; worthwhile topic; satisfactory depth of development; supporting details for the thesis, and topic sentences are specific, concrete, and plentiful.	Worthwhile topic; supporting material for thesis and topic sentences are general and abstract rather than specific and concrete.	Trivial subject; very few supporting details for the thesis and topic sentences.	Consists of unsupported generalities and/or the repetition of commonplace ideas; lacks originality and insight.
Organization	Material is unified and well-focused; organization is clear, logical and purposeful throughout the essay.	Material is unified and well-focused; pattern of organization is clear, logical, and well executed.	Organization is clear, logical, and coherent.	Not logically organized; no clear organizational pattern.	Does not follow the instructions given for the assignment; rambling, disorganized and incoherent.
Style	Thought is evident in the paper; text is clear and credible; purpose is obvious; richly varied sentence structure; text is fluid, polished, balanced, graceful, and energetic.	Fluent, clear, and forceful language use; varied sentence structure; smooth and logical transitions; "voice" is apparent.	Ideas are clear, but sentence patterns may be simplistic, overly repetitive, and/or lacking transition. Language is overly casual or colloquial.	Sentences lack clarity and grace; overly casual, colloquial, or grammatically substandard language; little variety in sentence patterns.	Composed primarily of simple sentences; no sentence pattern variety; little or no transition between sentences or paragraphs.

Note. Adapted from Troy University's Freshman English Rubric, http://trojan.troy.edu/writingcenter/assets/documents/Microsoft%20Word%20-%20Grading%20the%20Rubric%20Way.pdf

Appendix D: Editing Log

Editing log Name________________

Original sentence:

Corrected sentence:

Rule applied:

Appendix E: Classroom Observation Checklist

Name_______________ at table__ **Date___________**

Behavior	Y/N/N/O	Comments
Attention		
Facial Expression/Body Language		
Annotating Text/Taking Notes		
Writing		
Planning		
Fluency/ Reliance on dictionary		
Corrections/Erasing		
Completion rate		
Participation		
Asking questions		
Answering questions/Wait Time		
Entering discussion		
Interacting with peers		

Notes:

Appendix F: Interview Guides

First Interview

1. How many classes are you taking this semester? How many will require essays? How many classes in China require English essays?
2. Have you or other Chinese students had any problems with essays in the U.S.? China?
3. Do you think Chinese students understand the expectations of English composition instructors? Have you understood the requirements of each written assignment? Have you had trouble summarizing? Paraphrasing?
4. Where did you write your essays in China—in the classroom? Do most Chinese students copy a model essay from a book? Or research the Internet? Explain.
5. Did you discuss your topic with your instructor in China? In the U.S.? With classmates—Chinese or American?
6. Do you think most Chinese students would understand the theme of the assigned personal narrative?
   a. Was the theme similar to themes in Chinese literature?
   b. If different, how? Explain.
7. Did you find the thesis in the assigned personal narrative essay? Where was it?
8. Do you think the assigned readings helped you write your personal narrative?
9. Have you ever written a personal narrative?
10. What kinds of essays do most Chinese students write at your university?
    a. Do Chinese students always research the Internet before they write? You?
    b. Did you write your own essay or did you use "collective intelligence"? Do you think many Chinese students memorize essays?
    c. Did you write a rough draft in China? What is the purpose of a rough draft?
11. In China, did you engage in any prewriting activities? Did you write a journal on your topic? Did you prepare an outline or complete a graphic organizer? Do you think these helped you in this class?
    a. How did you feel writing your personal journals in this class?
    b. Do you think Chinese students would think this assignment was important?
    c. How did you feel when you gave your journal to your instructor for her to read?
12. Did your instructor give you any feedback on your prewriting? Do you think her feedback helped?
13. How do you think most Chinese students would feel about writing a personal narrative? How did you feel while you were writing your personal narrative?
14. How did you decide on your topic for your personal narrative? Did you write about an important event in your life?
15. Did you think of your instructor as your audience? What about your classmates?
16. What do you and your classmates think a Peer Review? Do Chinese instructors set aside time for a Peer Review?
17. Have you discovered any differences in your English composition class here and your English class in China? What?

Second Interview

Review answers from first interview to clarify any details and update problems with essays.

1. Do you think most Chinese students would like narrative literature? Did you like narrative literature in this class?
2. Do you think Chinese students could read and understand your reading assignments in your composition class without using the Internet?
   a. How would most Chinese students describe the narratives you read? How would you?
   b. What was the author's purpose? (Why do you think he or she wrote it?)
   c. What are the themes?
3. Did you read any of these stories in Chinese? A full translation or a summary?
4. What is Poe's central idea or theme?
   a. Did you understand his theme?
   b. How is a theme different from a moral?
5. Did you read any research on Poe's story? From the Internet? Do most Chinese students use the Internet essays instead of writing their own opinions?
6. What is the difference in writing a summary and a literature essay?
7. What was your thesis of your literature essay? Where was it located in the essay?
8. Did your journals, outline and rough draft help you write about literature?
9. Did instructor feedback help?
10. Did you participate in a peer review? Was that helpful?
11. What have you learned about writing essays? How are U.S. essays different from Chinese essays? How are instructors' expectations different?

Note: Some questions were written in third plural to avoid a Face Threatening Act; also, other questions may be reformulated if the researcher perceives the student fears "losing face" (Cortazzi, Pilcher, & Jin, 2011).

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