

## **Symposium**

### **L2 English Writing Instruction in the Asian Context: Theory, Methodology and Evaluation**

#### **Symposium Summary**

The purpose of this symposium is firstly, to share the present states of writing instruction in different Asian countries in order to learn from each other. To be specific, we will discuss the positive results and various problems faced as the requirements of English as a Second Language education and writing instruction have gone through many changes, reflecting the changing milieu of English education in the world. Nowadays, the issues in writing instruction include how much local variation should be allowed in terms of different levels of language (vocabulary, grammar and discourse or rhetorical structures), and what kinds of genres should be taught at which level or in what kinds of courses. Thus, secondly, we would like to reconsider the theories, methodologies, and evaluation of writing with an eye toward constructing models that will work most effectively in the Asian context. Of course, there will be some variations depending on each country's situation, with an overall aim to produce more global citizens who can effectively communicate Asian interests with the world on an equal footing.

With the advancement of ICT technologies, the boundary of writing and speaking has become blurred in the age of multi-modal literacy, which actually has resulted in teaching and evaluating an increased number of writing genres. At the same time, genre-specific teaching and evaluation have become even more important. In some cases, our instructional methods have not caught up with the ever-changing forms of electronic message exchanges while on the other hand, the ability to produce proper formal writing required for special purposes has probably become more valued for professionals working in the globalizing world.

Although the panelists are based in Japan and Hong Kong, a study on different Asian countries' writing instruction will be presented by Professor Kyoko Oi and the discussant, Professor Ken Hyland has a wide knowledge and rich experience with the writing instruction of different countries in other areas. We very much hope to hear from the audience about successful aspects of and/or problems with the writing instruction in your countries during the discussion part that follows the presentations.

#### **L2 English Writing Instruction in Hong Kong: Approaches and Challenges**

Dr. Barley Mak (The Chinese University of Hong Kong)

The Curriculum Development Council (CDC), an advisory body providing recommendations to the Hong Kong SAR Government upon the curriculum development and school syllabus across the whole education system in Hong Kong, puts forth an English education curriculum framework which sets the overall direction for both the education and curriculum development in regard to the learning and teaching of English language. The English Language Curriculum Guides for Primary 1 - Secondary 3 (CDC, 2002) and Primary 1 – 6 (CDC, 2004), as well as the English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guide for Secondary 4 – 6 (CDC, 2007) stipulate the learning targets and objectives for Key Stages 1 to 4 as well as the pedagogical principles and recommendations for teaching

English as a second language, together with guidelines, teaching ideas, suggestions, exemplars and assessment practices that help schools to plan, develop and implement their school-based English language curriculum. In this regard, both the primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong set their writing topics and text types with reference to the suggestions in these curriculum guides. With reference to the assessment scoring guides of Hong Kong Examination and Assessment Authority (HKEAA) for Territory-wide Assessment (TSA) for Key Stages 1 to 3, and the Hong Kong Diploma of Secondary Education Examination (HKDSE), teachers marked students' writing in accordance with the assessment criteria set by HKEAA. In short, the English Language curriculum guides published by CDC show schools and teachers the direction for the English Language curriculum and text types to be covered in the syllabus, whereas the scoring guides of HKEAA have wash-back effects on the marking of students' written work.

To report on how L2 English writing is taught in Hong Kong, the presentation starts with some background information about public assessment requirements as well as learning targets and writing skills in Hong Kong for Key Stages 1-4, covering both the primary and secondary English Language curriculum. For public assessment requirements, samples of writing papers and marking schemes of TSA at the end of Key Stages 1 – 3 and HKDSE at the end of Key Stage 4 are first introduced. They are all criterion-referenced assessments of which the marking schemes, with holistic description for each assessment criterion under different domains including content, language and organisation, are provided for both teachers and students to refer to when doing markings and evaluation. For expected learning targets and writing skills, relevant information stated in the English Language Curriculum and Assessment Guides (CDC, 2007) is then referred to. A comparison among the four Key Stages is also provided.

Against this background, the presentation focuses on the discussion of five approaches of teaching writing currently adopted by the majority of English teachers in both primary and secondary schools in Hong Kong, namely, modelled writing, guided writing, independent writing, process writing and genre-based process writing. Each approach is illustrated with theory, methodology and evaluation. Modelled writing aims to guide students to think and develop ideas following the model provided by teacher; guided writing focuses on helping students scaffold ideas and enable them to plan, organise ideas, draft, revise and edit in the writing process; independent writing encourages students write their own piece with very little support from the teacher. Evaluation of students' works is usually done after teacher's marking. However, for process writing and genre-based process writing, evaluation is conducted at various stages to help students keep polishing their work. The former engages students in pre-writing, while-writing and post-writing stages together with peer review, whereas the latter helps students to familiarise themselves with the text organisation before they start writing and go through the procedures of pre-writing, writing, editing, doing final draft and publication.

The presentation concludes with some discussions on the limitations and challenges of different approaches, for example, time constraint, teachers' workload and multitasking, as experienced by English teachers in Hong Kong.

**The New Possibilities of and Problems with Writing Assessment in the Context of Integrated-skills Teaching**

Dr. Kahoko Matsumoto (Tokai University)

As secondary and university classes in Japan have become more skills-integrative, the need for integrated-skills assessment has gradually increased. This reflects the requirements of the so-called “21st Century Skills” and the increasing trend of teaching meaningful contents in English or any other foreign language, notably in CLIL (Content and Language Integrated Learning). In the past, assessment of the writing produced by a research project involving various skill sets has been done in many EAP and ESP classes, but little systematic attention has been paid to the assessment of writing as a product of such integrated-skills teaching.

As a general rule, effective assessment aligns with both the class contents and the teaching method, namely, what is being taught and how it is taught. Because teaching and assessment are the two sides of a coin, teachers who want to make an effective connection between input and output should learn how to make valid, reliable, and feasible integrated-skills tests or do more long-term project-based, portfolio-type assessment. This in turn will allow the students’ progress and the effectiveness of the teaching to be evaluated. An academic group to which the researcher belongs has been giving annual workshops on integrated-skills teaching and related test creation for prospective and in-service teachers with an eye toward raising Japanese English teachers’ Assessment Literacy (Taylor, 2009), where some typical difficulties with integrated-skills teaching and assessment have been observed. At the same time, researchers themselves have been experiencing the problems with reliable assessment in the age of multi-mode literacy. However, the biggest challenge facing us is how we can incorporate this kind of authentic, real-life oriented assessment into the existing rigid entrance examination system in Japan.

In this presentation, the new possibilities of using and assessing writing in various integrated-skills courses will be reported on while the problems and/or difficulties related to the writing resulting from the project-based, communicative tasks which are frequently involved in such courses will be shared. In doing so, the results of studies and perspectives of authorities in this area such as Plakans (2013 & 2015) and Cummings (2013) will be referred to in the analysis of the data collected by the researcher.

Finally, several examples of test specifications and rubrics for a valid and reliable integrated-skills assessment through writing will be proposed including typical test items from TOEFL®-iBT. The presenter is looking for constructive input from the floor.

**Comparison of EFL writing Practices Perceived through a Students’ Survey between Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong**

Dr. Kyoko Oi (Seisen University)

The aim of this presentation is to report the findings from a study that investigated the way English writing is taught in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan and Hong Kong from the students’ point of view. In order to investigate this, we conducted a survey to investigate the way writing is taught and evaluated in these four countries/regions. The main areas we aimed to investigate were: (1) What kinds of writing tasks and genres do students experience in

high school English classes? (2) What kinds of feedback on writing do students receive from teachers in high school English classes? (3) To what extent do students experience L1 writing activities in high school L1 classes? (4) What kinds of writing tasks and genres do students experience in university English classes? (5) How do students evaluate their own writing skills when they complete their college writing courses? In total, we collected 1,356 responses from undergraduate students who had experience of being enrolled in EFL writing courses at universities in Japan, South Korea, Taiwan, and Hong Kong. The results revealed both similarities and differences between the four countries/regions.

The findings indicated that although common trends were manifest in the four countries' approach to teaching writing, there were also differences in students' perceptions of the types of writing tasks and the amount of writing they experienced in instructional contexts. From the results, it seems to be clear that there is a greater focus on writing in Hong Kong than in the other places in the study. Another thing that can be inferred from the results is that greater emphasis is placed on writing in Taiwan than in Korea and Japan. A possible explanation for this is that writing is included in the university entrance examinations in Taiwan, which are compulsory for all applicants whereas this is not the case in Korea or Japan.

There are also common features across the countries/regions. First, essays and summaries are commonly used genres in the classroom across the four countries/regions. Another common point is in the lack of consistency of how much feedback is given.

Overall it seems that students in Hong Kong seem to do more advanced writing activities at the high school level in terms of content, length and organization of their texts. Students in Japan and Korea tend to spend more time on grammar-based activities and sentence level translation than on writing larger assignments, and their introduction to different genres of writing may come much later. As mentioned above, the difference in the case of Taiwan can be largely attributed to the role that writing plays in university entrance examinations, so teachers have to prepare students for these tests. An analysis of the supplementary data indicated that these differences might be caused by each country's unique language policy and exam-oriented educational culture. Detailed results will be presented at the symposium.