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Second language writing and literary reading in university: three empirical studies

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IMPLICATIONS

For English teaching pedagogy, language research and theory development

1. THE CONTEXT OF SECOND LANGUAGE WRITING AND READING INTERVENTIONS

In Vietnam, most students start to learn English in secondary education. In higher education, most universities set the standard that a bachelor must be able to read and write academically in English. However, the standard is not met in general at the moment (quality assessment at the Vietnam conference on carrying out a project to improve the quality of teaching and learning English at the university level on 23-12-2011¹⁰). There are many cultural background-related issues involved in the process of learning English of Vietnamese people. If the English teaching pedagogy is not tailored and not sensitive to the students' specific traits, the effects of instruction devices might be not far-reaching, or even negligible. For example, the learning activities originated from the Anglophone pedagogy that encourages autonomy, personal voice, and individual perspectives of learners pose a challenge for Vietnamese students. It is not because the students do not have their own individualized voice or ideas or are not autonomous. It is just that they have a different notion of stance taking, voice expression, and the role of individual, as a student in learning and as a member of the Vietnamese society.

In the position of second language teachers and researchers who have worked with the Vietnamese students for many years, we feel the need to take into account the students' specific problems in facilitating them to meet the requirements in L2 academic writing and reading in Global English (see also the introduction of context of usage, participants of Global English in Rijlaarsdam et al., 2011). Based on the problems that we will elaborate below and the learning advantages reported from reading and writing research literature, we designed three experiments to test interventions for idea generation and voice stimulation in writing argumentatively in English and for engagement stimulation in reading English-written literary fictions for Vietnamese students. In general, the three experiments give positive results.

Obviously, to create a meaningful discourse in English in the global world, Vietnamese students, on one hand, need to keep their own self-value. However, on the other hand, they also need to make themselves understood in a new context of communication in Global English. In reference to what we understand about the students' own experience in learning like demonstrating the mastery of reproductive

¹⁰ *The assessment was noted in the national newspaper review of the conference. Retrieved from <http://tuoitre.vn/Giao-duc/470754/Ngoai-ngu-day-mai-sinh-vien-van-kem.html>*

knowledge, respecting common values required by the society, we identify the pressing problems confronted by the students in writing and reading in English. We reply to the problems by exploring the research topics of idea generation and voice expression in argumentative writing, and engaged reading stimulation. Dealing with the specific problems of Asian/Vietnamese students will contribute to our understanding of an effective and meaningful pedagogy for teaching and learning second language writing and reading in higher education in the Vietnamese context. It might also contribute to the validity of L1 Western teaching pedagogy by providing insights of the application of the pedagogy in students whose English is not a native language. The research designs and the newly-created measures for each of the three experiments might also contribute to the theory and methodology of writing and literary reading research. We clarify in this chapter the three experiments with respect to the context of each study, the educational interventions, the main findings and their contribution to teaching pedagogy, to language research and theory development.

2. EXPERIMENT 1: IDEA GENERATION

Vietnamese students have a different notion of writing from that of Anglophone cultures, of the position of each individual in communication, and of experiences in learning English. In collectivism cultures, students' learning to write is to show how much they have internalized the transmittable traditions of their cultures, rather than to present an original, strong individual self (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999).

For Vietnamese, first, their notion of writing is oriented to moral and traditional values. Writing in Vietnamese lessons is a means for Vietnamese students to show, and for teachers to examine, to what extent the students have internalized the transmittable traditions and values of their culture in a literary work and rearticulate them in a traditional writing form (see further discussions of Phan, 2011, on Vietnamese writing). Academic writing in Vietnam is not a subject per se; it is, instead, embedded in literary teaching. From lower secondary school there is no subject named writing. But students read Vietnamese (80 percent in the secondary program) or foreign literary stories and write about the stories. For example, the two writing tasks were elicited from the Vietnamese National Exam of Secondary Education Graduation in June-2011: Task 1: Analyzing character *Trang* in the short story *Vo Nhat* [The Gathered Wife¹¹] of writer Kim Lan; Task 2: Analysing the character *Fishing Village Woman* in the literary work *Chiec Thuyen Ngoai Xa* [The Far Boat¹²] of writer Nguyen Minh Chau. With the two tasks students are expected to express a mastery of the knowledge and human values embedded in the story. Students are supported by their teachers to master the theme-driven, factual, and moral knowledge of a literary text. Like elsewhere in EFL Asian students, writing is about *what to write*. Students are really sure of the *writing content* before writing it

¹¹ The extract of the story located in the 12th Grade Advanced Literature, Book Part II, Vietnam Education Publishing House-2008.

¹² The extract in the 12th Grade Advanced Literature, Book Part II, Vietnam Education Publishing House-2009.

down on a paper and, therefore, the first drafts are often the last drafts (Harris et al., 2008).

Second, in communication, Vietnamese are expected to avoid expressing directly and strongly the *I* attitude, intentions and positions, but seek conformity to other people and to what is socially shared (Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Kim et al., 1996).

Third, the secondary English program in secondary school is grammar-oriented and how to write a meaningful discourse is not included in learning and testing in secondary education.

In summary, the specific experience with L1 literature-embedded writing class and Vietnamese communication conventions of de-emphasizing the *individual* voice in communication might cause significant challenges for Vietnamese students in writing argumentatively in English, as the subject requires a personal voice and self-generation of supporting ideas. Therefore, for an open two-sided issue like Capital Punishment in their Anglophone-oriented course book that requires their stance towards the issue and a self-authority of supporting arguments, Vietnamese students face challenges. They are not used to setting up their own stance in a writing issue and to creating and supporting their stance with their own arguments. Writing pedagogy that requires writers' incorporation of their personal exploration of an issue with their personal voice causes serious troubles for L2 learners (Carson & Nelson, 1994; Hyland, 2003). Free writing in Asian/Vietnamese setting is such a pedagogy and, therefore, is usually ignored by both teachers and students.

2.1 Intervention to stimulate stance taking and idea generation in argumentative writing

The concept of writing has changed from writing as merely a tool to express an author's ideas to writing as a learning tool: writing is also the very process of discovery. It is not only transcription but more importantly the process of writing is the process of invention ó the writers work out the meaning of what they are writing about in the process of writing (Berlin, 1987). Writing is a kind of becoming: only writing itself will generate more writing (Colyar, 2009; Klein, 1999). Composition pedagogy has, accordingly, changed into the direction of emphasizing written brainstorming and free writing (Knepler, 1984; Taylor 1981). Writers should start writing at the very beginning ó before they know what they are writing (Elbow, 1973). We take the advantages of (free) writing as a prewriting activity to encourage the knowledge personally embedded in each student as a unique individual (see the discussion of Rijlaarsdam et al., 2012, on function of writing as a learning and explorative activity). This written brainstorming activity might propel stance taking and idea generation for an argumentative composition. However, with a different concept of writing Vietnamese students usually delay this activity or are not really committed to the kind of writing.

To facilitate students to start with free writing for stance taking and idea generation, we assumed that they should be introduced to the specific genre and how an argumentative topic could be approached. This might answer the questions students

have, such as what an argumentative text looks like, what other people did with the writing, and what the function of this writing could be. We want to examine whether this understanding might empower students to move their writing block and start free writing. Introducing students to what the end writing product should look like might help to prepare the students for their own independent construction of text (Graham & Perin, 2007). We assumed that genre awareness could function as a framework for fostering the free writing.

First, in connection to the students' background, argumentative writing is a new genre. We thought that before activating the free writing as an idea generation stage for argumentative composition, students needed to be aware of the function and goal of the writing genre via a joint analysis of the function, goal, and approach of a sample text. Moreover, we expected this analysis could function as a framework to support writers in selecting strategically ideas from the informal writing for setting up their own viewpoint. The hypothesis corresponds to the bonding tendency of text-pattern knowledge and its efficacy in probing ideas and structuring text organization (Dymock, 2005; Englert & Hiebert, 1984; Reynolds & Perin, 2009). Building an awareness of genre before free writing might not take a lot of instruction time in the case of one short sample text for analysis. The result of including two sub-stages in the prewriting stage, genre awareness and written brainstorming, might enlarge our understanding of how genre awareness might help students to overcome the resistance to free writing on a controversial issue.

2.2 Main findings

We found that supporting students' awareness of function and goals of argumentative writing via a short analysis of a text of that genre affected the generation of ideas in the prewriting stage. We also found a consistent pattern of improvement of students in idea generation for all three indicators: (i) length of free writing created, (ii) the perceived usefulness of ideas in the free-writing text, and (iii) the actual use of these ideas in the students' final texts. This finding consolidates two functional benefits of genre awareness: a framework to help students to boost the self-expressive free writing, and to manipulate and capture strategically the free writing as a valuable source material for text composition. An integration of a short text analysis to introduce writer learners explicitly to what is required and what a good writing is seems to be a meaningful pedagogical tool for activating the idea generation process. In short, we suggest using text analysis in EFL writing programs.

3. EXPERIMENT 2: PERSONAL VOICE

In line with the above experiment on stance taking and idea generation, the question on voice expression of students in argumentative writing is the second important issue. Argumentative writing requires beyond representations of objective knowledge, but mainly judgments, opinions, beliefs, desires, and all subjective preferences of writers (Coirier, Andriessen, & Chanquoy, 1999). Students need to show their own perspective in the issue at stake. That must be a challenge for Asian-

Vietnamese students because to give opinions is one especially difficult task for students in Asia (Biggs, Lai, Tang, & Lavelle, 1999, p. 301). Research on Asian language learners pointed out that the learners' language behaviors in this culture were determined, contingent on, and organized by what they perceived to be thoughts, feelings, and actions of others in the context they are communicating (Ramanathan & Atkinson, 1999). In Asian communication settings, an individual must be connected, related, and adjusted to other people of the community (Kim et al., 1996; Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Communicators must adapt to their addressees (with respect to age, sex, relative social position of and relationship to the addressees).

As an example from Vietnam, compared to the only one *I/i* for self-reference in English, there are more than 11 first-person singular subject pronouns in Vietnamese communication. In communication between students and teachers, for instance, Vietnamese students use the first-person singular pronoun *em* (first-person singular pronoun used in the case a speaker addresses themselves as in a lower position than their interlocutor); the students will never use the first-person singular pronoun *tôi* (pronoun equal to *I/i* in English). The notion of voice, in Vietnam, is expected to be a voice of *us*, instead of a voice of an individual self. Communicators, in general, follow the values that are highly respected in the group and fear being ostracized personally (see more analyses of collectivism-culture communication behavior in Adler, 1997; Bosley, 1993; Kim et al., 1996; Meyer, 2003). It does not mean that communicators in collectivist-cultural setting do not have their own voice and their own judgment, but that the voice and the judgment should be related and closely attached to what their group emphasizes. This notion of voice can be observed in a comparative study of Vietnamese and English writing of Phan (2001, 2011). L1 Vietnamese writers were characterized with indirect approach, writing from a distance towards a topic, an intention of being less straightforward and more sophisticated, whereas Anglophone emphasized being clear in statement, theme-driven reasoning and a strong sense of authority (Phan, 2011).

To conclude, the above differences might account for the problems that Vietnamese learners in EFL writing face in finding their own voice in performing an L2 writing task that requires their self-authority towards a controversial issue. The question of how to facilitate the students' construction of text authority effectively challenges EFL-teachers in Vietnamese universities.

How voice is revealed in L2 writing has received special attention of (second) writing researchers. Hyland (2011) examined how scholars carved a sense of their self within disciplined discourse in writing academic homepages. Hyland (2010) compared the frequency of language features representing voice of two leading researchers in applied linguistics, Cameron and Swales, to trace back to their identity construction. Ivanic (1998) and Ivanic and Camps (2001) reported how voice of an author, e.g., self-confidence, certainty or depersonalization, was revealed through analyzing lexis, generic reference, evaluative lexis, and syntax of students' texts. Tardy and Matsuda (2009) reported clues, e.g., breadth or depth of knowledge (or lack thereof), choice of topic, author's representation of a field, description of a re-

search setting, that journal reviewers in a blind review process used in guessing who an author of an academic paper is (e.g., guessing the level of author's experience in a field, author's language background or author's nationality). Other researchers compared how L1 and L2 writers were different in the usage of rhetorical and linguistic features such as first person singular, transitivity, lexical choice, or deductive versus inductive organization (Helms-Park & Stapleton, 2003; Hinkel, 1999, 2002; Hyland, 2001, 2002b; Tang & John, 1999; Wu & Rubin, 2001). Although the studies reveal what voice is and how voice could be found in texts, it is unclear how authentic classroom practices may stimulate voice expression of second language novice writers in a learning context where they are mostly assumed to possess a different perspective on voice in their L1 native writing.

3.1 Intervention to stimulate voice expression

A main argument in the past decade or so has been that the principles and practices of developing an authorial voice laden with the Western ideology of individualism are problematic for L2 writers, especially those with a cultural background that is collectively oriented (Zhao & Llosa, 2008, p. 155).

We set up two prewriting conditions for facilitating voice expression: Free-writing and Group-discussion. In a Vietnamese context, the two activities might not only affect the number and quality of ideas, but also the stance of an author towards his addressees. Effect of free writing was assumed to be different from group discussion on writing voice. We assumed that free writing might facilitate writers to seek their own voice (Elbow, 1973), however decreased the writers' confidence in putting forwards the arguments concerning a controversial issue. Meanwhile group discussion might soften writers' personal voice in addressing an issue at stake because, as connected to the introduction above, de-emphasis of personal ideas and stance and respect of group values are conventional behaviors in Vietnamese communication. Group discussion might also encourage a higher confidence in the writing content.

3.2 Main findings

The effect of the two different types of content generation activity, free writing versus group discussion on *personal voice* was confirmed. In two subsequent experiments, students who worked in individual free-writing condition showed a higher level of personal voice expression in their argumentative texts than students who discussed an argumentative topic in a small group before writing on that topic. The indicators of personal voice including intensifiers (e.g., extremely, absolutely, terribly) and first-person singular pronouns (I, me, my, myself, mine) were found significantly more often in the writings of students in individual free-writing condition than in those of students in group discussion. The effect on the second voice dimension, *indirectness*, was also observed in the experiment. The two results on two voice dimensions mean that discussion about an issue at stake in group before writing individually about that will increase writers' self-confidence about content, however, result in a less personal voice in argumentative texts. Conversely, free

writing about an issue for idea generation will enhance writers' individualized voice, however might lower their self-confidence about content.

4. EXPERIMENT 3: PERSONAL RESPONSE TO LITERARY TEXTS

The third experiment dealt with a practical issue of engagement with fiction reading in higher education in Vietnam. EFL students in undergraduate training in Vietnam have to read and respond to fiction stories in English. However, investment for full understanding in literary reading has not been observed in the students.

Students read but did not understand; most read and understood parts- not all. In brief, they mostly stopped at the surface, not the deep meanings of the [literary] work, commented a teacher who has taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in higher education in Vietnam for 20 years and Introduction to EFL Literature course for the recent 3 years. The students she refers to are undergraduate EFL students who are sufficiently proficient in English language to read the stories selected in their program. From the students' side, the common question to their teacher is "Why don't you tell me what I should grasp, what the main contents of the story [L2 story] are?" (interview material, October, 2011). This attitude reflects the present status of foreign language literary reading at university level. Vietnamese students prefer to seek a "right" answer from the teacher as well as are not willing to invest in exploring deeper layers of literary texts, something which might be similar for students in other places. Testing consists of questions about basic characteristics of a story like time, place setting of the story, intentions of characters, etc., and a writing task in which students write about 250-300 words responding to the story they read. For example, students are required to stand in a character's situation and figure out what they are going to do or students must interpret the global theme of a story, stating what they learned from the story. Moral education, which is a primary focus in Vietnamese literature education, is also a focal point in foreign language literary reading. Assessment for the written text responding to a story refers to students' quality of interpretation of the story, whether it is more or less valid and reasonable. Language use and language expression are also considered for the global assessment of the text. This means that something has to be done to facilitate Vietnamese students' process of finding meanings of literary fictions for themselves.

We assumed, at this level of reading and life experience of students, a learning approach encouraging reader-based processing in foreign language literary reading might positively affect cognitive and affective engagement of the readers.

4.1 Intervention to response to literature

Theories of literary reading proposed that self-questioning while reading was a natural response to story reading that helps readers make sense of that story (Graesser, Singer, & Trabasso, 1994; Rosenblatt, 1978; Schraw, Dunkle, & Bendixen, 1995). Research reported effects of self-questioning while reading, rather than teacher-posed questions, on students' comprehension and appreciation of literature

(Commeyras & Sumner, 1998; Janssen, Braaksma, & Couzijn, 2009; Singer & Donlan, 1982). However, still little is known about how self-questioning might influence students' engagement with fiction reading. We designed a literary reading intervention study based on the theories. Self-generation of questions and exploring the questions with peers or individually formed the principal part of the intervention. The results found in the current study might stimulate a changing pedagogy of reading Global English fictions in a Vietnamese context.

4.2 Main findings

The results showed that reading fiction stories and generating questions while reading, compared to reading with teachers' questions does affect students' level of engagement positively. The engagement was measured by students' written responses to works of fiction and an inventory of perceived engagement in literary reading. From the response texts, students who generated questions themselves while reading made more valid inferences about characters in the fictions, showed wider variation in responses towards the fictions and produced longer response texts. Additionally, self-questioning seemed to particularly enhance engagement in literary reading of students who initially showed little engagement; although, low-engaged students also benefitted from teacher-questions.

5. IMPLICATIONS FOR TEACHING

5.1 Experiment 1: Personal ideas

The finding that genre awareness could result in richer self-expressive free writing and effective translation of the self-expressive materials into a final text composition contributes to our understanding of an appropriate pedagogy for facilitating idea generation. The prewriting stage for personal idea generation should include the two sub-processes: genre awareness via a short analysis of function and approach of a sample text and free writing.

This finding consolidates two functional benefits of text analysis: a framework to help students boost the self-expressive free writing, and to manipulate and capture strategically the free writing as a valuable source material for composing a more formal end text. This finding is especially meaningful for the students who are not getting used to expressing their personal ideas explicitly. In short, introducing students explicitly to the function and approach of a target genre via a short analysis of a sample text might facilitate students to brainstorm more ideas for an independent composition. In other words, integration of a short class discussion of the common questions of a specific genre such as what is required in the target genre, what its function is and what a good writing is via a sample text analysis might stimulate free writing.

5.2 Experiment 2: Personal voice

For novice EFL writer students when there is a change in classroom activity, individual exploration or group work, in writing classroom, we might expect to see clearly a change in the students' personal voice. The personal voice (I-You relation in a written text) will be the most expressive when students do not work with other peers, but the least expressive when they are in a group, like what they are expected in their culture with *ōmyō* voice, rather than *ōmyō* voice. In other words, EFL classroom practice that encourages students to brainstorm personally about a controversial topic before writing on that topic will increase the presence of writers as personal authors in their writings. Meanwhile, the level of authorial presence in texts will be reduced if the students share their different viewpoints around a topic in groups. This result might be interesting in the Vietnamese/Asian context because, as exposed in the introduction, in social communication the communicators in this context are expected to respect a group voice and de-emphasize a personal voice. We also found a lower *Indirectness* voice in writing as an effect of discussion in groups. This result corresponds to what we understand about Asian/Vietnamese students who might feel more confident in representing a group's ideas, rather than an individual's ideas. Therefore, when organizing idea generation (prewriting) activities for students, teachers should be alert to how their pedagogy aligns with, or strengthens the cultural norms of the students they teach.

5.3 Experiment 3: Personal response

The aim towards a literary reading classroom encouraging autonomy of readers in seeking out meanings for themselves from what they themselves had lived through is a common aim for all researchers and practitioners in the field, no matter what language (L1 or L2) readers read (see discussions on an effective literary reading classroom of Agee, 2000; Janssen, Braaksma, & Couzijn, 2009; Rosenblatt, 1978). The finding of positive effects of self-questioning on students' cognitive and affective engagement might be interesting for fiction reading pedagogy. Students' higher level of cognitive and affective engagement in reading might be expected in fiction reading classroom when teachers encourage students' responsibility for their reading process with their self-perpetuation of questions and bring the questions to group discussions. It also makes clear to the self-questioning approach that *self-questioning* could be combined successfully with two different types of exploration, group discussion or individual free writing. This might mean that the use of self-questioning is quite a robust option of instruction, no matter how it is combined with other instructional activities.

6. CRITICAL EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH METHODS

6.1 Replications as part of the research design

A pre-test post-test control group design with switching replications (Shadish, Cook, & Campbell, 2002) was used to examine the intervention effects in the three experiments. Although in the second experiment a slightly different research design was used, the method of research allows us to test the same intervention in two different experimental panels. In the first panel, experimental group will receive the intervention while the control group is in a regular learning condition. In the second panel, both groups swapped in which experimental group in the first panel will become control group in the second panel and control group in the first panel will become experimental group in the second panel. With this method we could test three issues: (1) test a hypothesis twice, (2) test within-group effects, and (3) test a maintenance effect of the intervention for the experimental group in the first panel.

However, the replication of effects found in this way also poses a dilemma for evaluating the results reported because the control condition in the second panel might be different from the control condition in the first panel as participants in the control condition in the second panel already experienced the experimental intervention in the first panel. The question could be whether there is an interaction effect of condition and time in panel 2.

After the three experiments, we get a better insight into determining the intervention effects in repeated measures. If we would have set up one-panel experiments without the second repeated measures, in all cases, more effects of experimental conditions on dependent variables were observed. Specifically, in experiment 1, the effect of text analysis on written brainstorming was found in all three dependent variables in one time of testing. However, in repeated measures, the effect was reduced to two out of the three variables. In experiment 2, the intervention of free writing and group discussion for voice was found effective for the two dependent variables, *personal voice* and *indirectness*, in one time of testing. However, when tested two times, only one variable was affected by condition. In experiment 3, four out of six variables of reading engagement were found influenced by the intervention of self-questioning, but three out of the four were reported in the second repeated measures. If there was just one time of testing, we might have come to different conclusions, which triggered the question of reliability of conclusions that were based on one-time test.

Moreover, all the three studies in the research project were in the form of a training course. We think it would be ethical if all students could have received the same preferential treatments, albeit in different sequences.

6.2 Replication versus generalization

Topic is a question for generalizability of experiment one and two because the same identical topic is attached to one identical condition. For the two experiments, we opted to replicate the findings as fair as possible: both experimental groups (in pan-

els 1 and 2) were measured with the same writing task and same writing topic, and, similarly, both control groups (in panels 1 and 2) were measured with the same writing task and same writing topic. This choice for replication might be at the cost of generalization. Although the assignment of topics to condition was done randomly, we cannot exclude that a part of the experimental effect was due to topic. Further study must confirm the generalizability of the findings in our study. One counter indicator that topic did not bring about the effects on idea generation and on voice is that global scores of argumentative text quality were not different for both topics in all the post-tests of experiment one and both topics in all the post-tests of experiment two.

In experiment 3, the stories were counterbalanced and therefore not one specific story was nested in one specific condition. We assumed students might prefer one story in one condition more than another story in another condition which might lead to the question that the effect found was not by condition but by stories/content effect. To avoid text-based bias, four texts were used in a counterbalanced design in the four learning phases, as five other texts were used in a counterbalanced design in the five measurement occasions. Therefore, replication as part of the research design in this study did not have negative consequences for the generalizability of the results.

6.3 *Measurements*

To measure how effective the interventions in the three studies on personal idea generation, personal voice expression in academic writing, and engagement with literary reading, we developed measures of usefulness of idea generation activity, of personal voice in academic writing, and of cognitive and affective engagement with literary reading. The below part will summarise our concepts underlying the construction of the measures, advantages and disadvantages experienced in applying the measures.

6.3.1 *Measurement of idea generation in experiment 1*

Most of the studies on prewriting activities focus on exploring the causal relation of the activities and effects on global text quality. What we tried to assess is the effect of genre awareness on the quality of the activity of idea generation, not the effect on global text quality. Although in the literature on free writing, usefulness of ideas generated in expressive free writing is not a main issue, free writing is suggested in (second language) writing pedagogy as a learning activity to prepare writers for idea generation for text composition. If a student selects from the free writing for their text composition just one out of twenty ideas, but a very rich/good one, we might see the free-writing activity as an effective idea generation activity. Coming from a cultural context with a different notion of writing, with the habit of the first draft being also the last draft, Asian/Vietnamese students think of free writing as an irrelevant and useless activity. Therefore, our concept of the measure of effectiveness of

idea generation activity in classroom is framed in the students' self-evaluation of the usefulness of the ideas they generated in their free writing for their text composition. In other words, if genre awareness leads to better free writing, in our definition, there should be more ideas generated and more ideas perceived as useful by writer students in their free-writing activity. From the concept of free writing as an idea generation activity for text composition, we measured the quality of free-writing text with three indicators: (1) Length of free writing created, (2) Number of ideas highlighted in the free-writing text, and (3) Number of ideas that were highlighted and came back in writer's end text.

We found that measuring the quality of self-expressive free writing with the three indicators showed an adequate level of reliability. The issue here is that with the measure, although we found positive results in the qualities of free writing, these qualities were not related to the global quality of final texts. So, in the preparation phase there was an effect of genre awareness on written brainstorming; however, not on the final text. This could be seen as discarding the contribution of free writing to text production. However, this might be not the case, provided that the whole writing process was supported by various activities between free writing and full text composition including rationale activation in which students are provided with a list of pro and contra statements/arguments on the issue at stake, state their level of agreement to the statements and reasons of their decision; and documentation when students read information sources and do reading tasks to elicit information.

6.3.2 *Measurement of self-efficacy in experiment 1*

Students' perceived self-efficacy for their academic achievement will influence the performance accomplishments both directly and indirectly through its influence on self-set goals (Bandura & Wood, 1989). In literature on self-efficacy measures, there are scales for measuring children's perceived efficacy for dimensions of self-regulation for academic achievements; for example, resisting distractions and motivating themselves to complete school work (Zimmerman, Bandura, & Martinez-Pons, 1992). In this study, we do not assess the direct effect of students' self-efficacy for their writing capacity on writing performance. We explore self-efficacy as a criterion variable, in the context of students who generally receive their capacity assessment from their teachers rather than from themselves. We are more interested to examine the causal role of classroom's self-explorative learning activities (expressive free writing) on students' self-efficacy for their capacity in second language writing. In sum, the questionnaire on self-efficacy for second language writing is to serve the purpose of measuring the effects of classroom writing instructions on self-efficacy for writing capacity.

We developed a questionnaire of self-efficacy for argumentative writing with 19 items, using a 10-point Likert-type scale with 0 = no confidence and 10 = high confidence. Some example items: "I think I could write an introduction in which I introduce the issue and my main points", "I think I could support my main points with strong supporting ideas", "I think I know characteristics of a good writing piece", "I

think I have developed the topic wellö, öI think I know the strategy for keeping the writing goingö, öI think I know the strategy for organizing contents of a written textö). The measure reached a satisfactory level of reliability through three measurement times (Cronbach's $\alpha > .96$). However, with this questionnaire, we only measured a general conception of self-efficacy for writing. It might be also useful to measure different aspects of self-efficacy, such self-efficacy for text structure, content, argumentation, and language use in argumentative writing.

6.3.3 Measurement of voice in experiment 2

Many studies on examining voice of (second language) student-writers or graduate writers have been reported. However, in general the studies are mostly descriptive studies: for example, comparison of language use of linguistics scholars (Hyland, 2010) or comparison of rhetorical and linguistic features of L1 and L2 writers (Helms-Park & Stapleton, 2003; Hyland, 2001, 2002). Therefore, we found it is necessary for an empirical study on recognizing voice features related to L2 writersö constructing voice and related to teaching instructions. Based on the concepts of linguistic features and their function, we listed four linguistic indicators that might involve personal voice expression: *First-person singular pronouns* (for example, *I, me, mine, my, myself*) which is defined as representing the confidence of a writer to speak personally and authoritatively (Hyland, 2001, p. 224; Hyland 2010, p. 175), *Intensifier* (for example, *very, really, absolutely, terribly, always*) with its function of strengthening authorsö claims (Crystal & David, 1980, p. 188; Hyland 2010, p. 177), *Hedges* (for example, *may, might, almost, to some extent*) functioning to soften writersö arguments, lessen their commitment to the certainty of the referential information they present in their writings (Hyland 2010, p. 177; Lakoff, 1972, p. 195), *Passive voice* functioning to save writers from mentioning agent(s) of an action in a statement (Dewart, 1979; Hyland, 1998).

With factor analysis (using principal components with varimax rotation), two dimensions of voice underlying these four voice indicators emerged clearly. The factor analysis resulted in two factors that explained 57% of the variance in the scores of post-test 1 and 67% of the variance in post-test 2. The first factor, including *Intensifier* and *First-person singular pronouns*, was interpreted as the extent to which students explicitly expressed their *personal voice*. The second including *Hedges* and *Passive voice* was interpreted as the extent to which students expressed their *indirectness* in their writing. The inter-rater reliability of measurement of voice dimensions was satisfactory, from .91 to .96.

A limitation is that voice was measured from a micro-linguistic perspective with four linguistic indicators. This might be not öglobalö enough to show the picture of voice in argumentative writing. We might think of another kind of measuring voice which should include more features. For example, we indicated öindirectnessö as a quality of voice with two indicators öpassive voiceö and öhedgesö. However, other indicators like öto beö and evaluative language (e.g., with adjectives) might also be

good indicators signaling assertiveness and directness of writers in proposing arguments (see the discussion of Hyland 2010 on function of *ōto beō* and evaluative language as authorial positioning assertiveness, p. 169). Nevertheless, the way we measured voice in the current study clearly formed two dimensions that showed to be sensitive to our treatments.

6.3.4 *Measurement of literary engagement in experiment 3*

Measures in reading research in general, not only specifically literary reading, needs necessary investment of researchers. Literary reading measures are known with single forms of reading comprehension questions; inference questions or questions of level of appreciation. Based on ideas about the construct of engagement (Fredricks, Blumenfeld, & Paris (2004), description of the attributes of an engaged reader of Guthrie, Wigfield, and You (2012) and cognitive strategies effective adolescent readers used in exploring literary texts (Duke & Pearson, 2002; Janssen, Braaksma, & Rijlaarsdam, 2006), a comprehensive form of testing literary reading engagement was developed in the study. We constructed a set of six indicators of reading engagement from students' written response text. The indicators include inference, emotions towards characters in a story, variety of response, global interpretation of theme, personal voice, and productivity of response text. In addition, we measured students' self-perceived engagement with an inventory of perceived engagement.

With the first measure, excluding productivity of response text, the other five indicators of reading engagement reached an appropriate level of reliability through five times of measurement. The second measure, the inventory of perceived engagement with 10 items, reached also a satisfactory level of reliability through five times.

Although we did find an effect of self-questioning on students' making more valid inferences about characters, showing a greater variety of responses, producing longer response texts, and expressing a higher level of self-perceived engagement in reading works of fiction, we did not find such an effect on students' empathy to characters, personal voice and global interpretation of theme. In this experiment, we defined emotions towards characters in fiction stories through explicit and *ōsurfacedō* expressions of emotions, like *excited*, *apprehensive*, *proud*, and *angry* or verbs like *admire*. However, there might be other indirect ways of expressing students' feelings about characters, for example, the statement *ōHe committed the crime, not because he was desperate for money of the old man. One more time, it is difficult to understand the human's nature.ō* (Student numbered 13, post-test 4). In this expression, we might infer a puzzlement of the student towards the criminal character. However, these indirect ways of expressing emotions towards characters in the story is not recorded in the present study. Similarly, the personal voice is based on two local-leveled linguistic features, first-person singular pronouns and intensifiers, located in the inference and emotion statements. Although these two features are the most explicit indicators of how personally a writer-reader revealed themselves in their response text, it might not be global enough to examine the *personal voice* of the author.

7. CONCLUSION

Vietnamese students with their Asian-oriented culture possess their own concepts of academic reading and writing in Vietnamese language which are different from what is expected in reading and writing in English. With this context-based research we expected to inform second language writing and reading pedagogy with empirical results found from the specific learning tools including model analysis, free writing, group discussion, and self-questioning. The results might also enhance the validity of first language theories of writing and reading by providing them with the practical application of the specific learning tools on learners whose English is a foreign language.

In sum, the pedagogy tools proved to address the students' real challenges and encourage the potential of students as individual learners. The effects found on more ideas generated in brainstorming stage, more personal voice expression in academic writing and more affective and cognitive engagement in reading fictions from the three interventions contributed to clarifying effective learning tools for Global English reading and writing in higher education in Asian cultures like Vietnam.