


英语写作的 自我调控研究

赵江葵 著

Self-Regulation in EFL Writing:
A Strategy-Focused Instruction Perspective


 华中师范大学出版社

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Introduction

Self-regulated learning (SRL) has developed with a paradigm shift in research and has regarded learners as active participants in the learning process (Dignath, Buettner, & Langfeldt, 2008). It concerns not only effective learning in which learners' metacognitive, cognitive, behavioural, contextual and motivational processes count (Pintrich, 2000b, 2004; Wolters, 1999; Zimmerman, 2000a), but also effective instruction (Butler, 2002; Boekaerts & Corno, 2005; Schunk & Zimmerman, 1998). Convergent empirical evidence has indicated that SRL has a positive effect on students' motivation to learn (Graham, Harris, & Mason, 2005; Pintrich, 1999), their use of learning strategies (Wolters & Pintrich, 1998; Zimmerman, 1990; Zimmerman & Martinez-Pons, 1990) and academic achievement (Schunk & Swartz, 1993; Zimmerman, 2001; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994).

Writing is a particularly challenging task for students because of the complexity and self-regulatory nature of composing (Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997). Writing is perhaps most in need of self-regulation as "writing activities are usually self-planned, self-initiated and self-sustained" (Zimmerman & Risemberg, 1997, p. 76). In the process of writing, writers have to activate knowledge about specific genre conventions, orchestrate various mental processes in a simultaneous and recursive manner by the application of self-regulatory strategies with persistent effort and self-discipline, and then make necessary revisions to achieve their personal standards of quality (Da La Paz & Graham, 2002; Flower & Hayes, 1981; Garcia & Fidalgo, 2008; Graham & Harris, 2000). To ensure the effectiveness and high quality of the written text, a writer has to set goals for mastery, to value and feel efficacious for the writing

tasks (Pajares, Britner, & Valiante, 2000; Pajares & Cheong, 2003; Pajares & Valiante, 2006; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). In order to tackle motivational setbacks or problems such as low confidence, anxiety or waning motivation in EFL writing, students need to self-regulate not only their cognition, behaviours and contexts but, equally important, their motivation (Pintrich, 2004).

It is generally agreed that the development of writing expertise is shaped by changes in both strategy use and domain-specific knowledge (Alexander, Graham, & Harris, 1998; Alexander & Judy, 1998). Since the 1980s, writing instruction has shifted from emphasis on writing product to that on writing process (Galbraith & Rijlaarsdam, 1999). One of the important goals in writing instruction is to help student writers develop, sharpen and enhance their self-regulatory mechanism in writing and to provide effective strategies for completing writing tasks so that they would be more resourceful, self-reflective and goal-oriented (Graham & Harris, 1997; Scardamalia & Bereiter, 1985). Some of the recommendations for improving writing include strategy-focused instruction, that is, directly teaching students the writing processes, the writing strategies, and the knowledge underlying effective writing as well as the ways to coordinate and regulate their application (De La Paz & Graham, 2002) and developing students' motivation for writing (Bruning & Horn, 2000; Zimmerman & Bandura, 1994). Key instructional models in writing instruction include the Self-Regulated Strategy Development Model (Graham & Harris, 2003; Harris & Graham, 1996), the Social Cognitive Strategy Model of Sequential Skill Acquisition (Zimmerman & Kitsantas, 1999, 2002), the Cognitive Strategy Instruction (Englert et al., 1991; Englert et al., 1988), and Strategy Content Learning Instruction (Butler, 1998, 1993). Findings from studies based upon these and other models have yielded strong evidence for the positive impact of strategy-focused instruction on students' writing performance, writing process and motivation.

English composition writing is rated the most difficult English language skill by both English teachers and EFL learners in China, and even with repeated practice, improvement is limited (Qin, 2009; Qu, 2008). In spite of the changes in writing theories and pedagogy in the past two decades, product-

oriented approach still dominates the college EFL writing instruction in China (Hou, 2007; Wang, Xuan, & Chen, 2006). Under product-oriented instruction, the majority of the students lack confidence in their capacity of EFL writing and think that they do not make much improvement even after taking the writing course. In addition, the instruction of writing strategies offered to students is far from adequate (Zhang, 2006). Wu and Liu (2004) found that teachers failing to teach the writing strategies, teachers not providing feedback about students' writing and students having inadequate knowledge about writing strategies are the top three causes for college students' poor writing performance.

And for these reasons, many Chinese teachers and researchers have called for integration of process-oriented EFL writing instruction for students (Jiang, 2003; Li, 2000; Zuo, 2002). Nevertheless, the process instructional components in previous studies on Chinese EFL students were restricted to a limited number of process components in the instructional intervention such as multiple drafting through pre-writing, drafting and peer-reviewing and revising activities and procedures based upon peer-conference, peer or teacher feedback. None of these studies have integrated systematically other process components that have been found effective to promote students writing in literature, particularly EFL writing strategy instruction, in their instructional intervention.

Many Chinese teachers have also taken a skeptical and even resistant attitude towards more process-oriented instruction in EFL writing instruction, contending that the limited time for EFL writing course, the crammed instructional coverage prescribed in the syllabus and examination-orientation of the EFL writing course are constant constraints for the implementation of more process-oriented writing instruction (e.g. Luo & Li, 2003). Since the 1980s, typical process approach has been questioned by some scholars because of its deficits. These deficits include its negligence of the cultural differences between ESL and EFL learning, the separation of writing from its context of language use (Atkinson, 2003; Hyland, 2003), inadequate target language input for students (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996), and oversimplification of the multifacet nature of writing (Matsuda, 2003). Given the arguments about the

feasibility of process approach in Chinese college EFL writing instruction, more studies are needed that extend beyond typical process approach to integrate more components that have been found effective to promote students' writing performance, self-regulation and motivation in literature, particular self-regulatory writing strategy training, goal instruction and self-evaluation. Such exploration may shed light on what process components or what combination of process components could promote writing performance, self-regulation and motivation for Chinese college student writers.

Understanding of self-regulated writing of Chinese EFL student writers, particularly the impact of the instruction on students' motivation, motivational and cognitive regulation and students' writing performance is essential for educational practitioners and researchers because such understanding may provide specific information for teachers in designing courses that will be more efficient to enhance both self-regulation and motivation in EFL writing.

The current study aims to examine the effectiveness of a strategy-focused EFL writing instruction on Chinese English majors' writing performance, motivation, motivational regulation and writing process, using a matched experimental-control group design. Two stages are involved in the current study with each stage using independent samples. The first is the scale development stage at which the scales used in the study are validated mainly through internal consistency examination and exploratory factor analysis. An EFL writing strategic training programme has been conducted to the participants to explore whether an EFL writing strategic training programme embedded in normal course curriculum would have any impact on the students' motivational beliefs, motivational regulation, cognitive regulation and EFL writing performance.

This book is composed of three parts. Part I is composed of three chapters that set the theoretical framework and briefs the review of related research for strategy-focused instruction. Chapter 1 introduces key theories of SRL. Chapter 2 focuses on self-regulated writing, covering key models of writing, strategies in writing and motivational influences on writing. Chapter 3 presents the key models for strategy-focused instruction and a literature review of previous studies that examine the effectiveness of strategy-focused

instruction on students' self-regulation in writing. Part II presents an empirical study aiming to investigate the effectiveness of a strategy-focused instruction in college EFL writing on students' self-regulated writing, particularly on their motivation, self-regulation and performance in EFL writing. It is composed of five chapters. Chapter 4 presents the research methods of the study. Chapter 5 introduces the instructional design and implementation of the strategy-focused instruction. Chapter 6 briefs the procedures to develop and validate the scales used in the study. Chapter 7 presents the results about the effectiveness of the strategy-focused EFL writing instruction on students' writing outcomes, writing process, motivation and motivational and cognitive regulation. Chapter 8 is the discussion of the main findings for the strategic instruction. Part III contains two chapters. Chapter 9 makes an analysis of the current EFL writing in Chinese colleges and universities. Chapter 10 proposes an instructional framework for college EFL writing teaching. The conclusions and prospects section reviews the major issues discussed in the book, and makes some suggestions for future research in the field of self-regulated learning and strategy-focused instruction.

Part I Theoretical Framework and Insights from Literature

Chapter 1 Theories of Self-Regulated Learning

In this chapter, key theories and influential models of SRL are briefed and compared. These theories discuss SRL from information processing, social cognitive, and constructivist approach. Then some key models of SRL are introduced, focusing on those models proposed by Winne and Hadwin (1998), Boekaerts (1992), Boekaerts and Niemivirta (2000), Zimmerman (2000a), and Pintrich (2000b). Then motivational influences such as self-efficacy, academic goal orientations and task value on SRL are introduced. Motivational self-regulation is then introduced, focusing on motivational awareness and motivational regulatory strategies. Lastly, theories of writing process are introduced.

1.1 Theories of SRL

Theories of SRL emerged in the mid-1980s with attempt to address the fundamental question how students take an active control of their academic learning (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). Students are self-regulated if they are motivationally, cognitively and behaviourally active participants in their goal-directed learning (Pintrich, 2004). The emergence of self-regulated theories is related to the changing view of the cause of student learning and academic learning. Different from theories that view students as playing a reactive role depending on the role of teachers and educators to adapt instruction to their

needs, SRL theories believe that students can use metacognitive, cognitive and motivational strategies to improve their learning, that students can actively structure and create their learning environment. SRL has been approached from different perspectives: information processing, social cognitive, and constructivist. A number of models have also been proposed accounting for key components and processes in SRL.

1.1.1 Information processing approach to SRL

1) Overview

Information processing theory is concerned with how information is processed through the cognitive system (Miller, 1993). The basic unit in self-regulation is the recursive feedback loop assumed to be a TOTE sequence (Test-Operate-Test-Exit). The information input is first tested against criteria. If a mismatch is detected, the input is operated on and retested. This process goes on until information matches the criteria. It will then exit as an output. The source of self-regulation is the negative feedback loop indicating a discrepancy between one's performance and the standards. The mismatch of the current performance and the standards will compel the learner to minimize the gap. If the adaptation is successful, self-regulation stops. Carver and Scheier (1990) suggest the embedding of motoric control loops within a general control loop in cognitive function such as writing. These hierarchical control loops include goals or standards and feedback on these standards. For example, if the feedback gives input to a higher level in the hierarchy such as construction of a sentence, this construction in turn provides feedback to a higher level of the hierarchy to write paragraphs.

Self-regulation from an information processing perspective is viewed in relation to metacognition, where a distinction is made between metacognitive knowledge and the regulation of cognition (Flavell, 1987). Metacognitive knowledge includes knowledge about oneself as a learner and one's own knowledge, knowledge about the purpose and task requirements, and procedural knowledge such as how, when, and where to use the cognitive knowledge.

2) Instructional programmes

The most valuable point in information processing approach to SRL lies in

its description of self-monitoring in the feedback loops (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2001). It describes self-regulation in terms of the self-evaluation, self-monitoring relative to criteria, and the adjustment or modification to reduce the discrepancies between the outcomes and the criteria. The feedback loops are hierarchical to allow self-evaluation of subordinate feedback loops that are controlled by superordinate ones so that the self-regulatory system may improve itself.

The important role of metacognitive knowledge in SRL has led to many instructional programmes to improve academic learning by enlarging the learners' metacognitive knowledge. Four kinds of knowledge are common components in these training programmes: action knowledge, conditional knowledge, knowledge that encourages students to use this knowledge, and domain-specific and task-specific knowledge.

At the beginning, strategy training is conducted by explicit and direct instruction of the knowledge of the task, when, why and how to use the strategies. Later the instructional approach shifts, taking into consideration of classroom context and motivational factors in the training programmes (e. g. Paris & Oka, 1986). Currently, instructional programmes from this perspective typically involve extensive modelling, discussion and explanation and extensive practice in meaningful contexts (Butler, 1998; Palincsar & Klerk, 1993).

3) Comments

The information processing perspective to SRL has greatly enhanced our knowledge about the basic cognitive processes in learning, especially the important role of metacognition in self-regulation. However, information processing theories have been criticized as too mechanistic (e. g. Locke, 1991, 1994). When it comes to SRL, the criticism lies in the assumption that awareness of a discrepancy between existing knowledge and the actual learning situation will automatically lead to actions that are directed to minimizing this discrepancy. A closed feedback loop in which every action is directed to minimizing this match does not allow other alternatives and different possibilities when the discrepancy is detected.

Though the information processing perspective to SRL gives us a rather

precise picture of the basic cognitive processes in learning, it has been criticized for lack of a developmental component. For example, the information processing approach does not seem to discuss how the development of learners' metacognitive knowledge may influence their cognitive processes. Researchers from this perspective are not particularly interested in studying how the development of learners' basic cognitive processes has been related to their improvement in SRL.

In the past, the role of motivation has been given little attention by information processing theorists. Motivation has a place in some of the information processing models of self-regulation quite recently. For example, motivation is one of the components in the cognitive condition in Winne and Hadwin's (1998) model, which includes outcome expectations, judgement of efficacy, attribution and values. They are conceptualized as knowledge for accomplishing a learning goal derived from one's previous experiences and are processed in the same way as other information within the same recursive feedback loops. This conceptualization is quite limited as learners' willingness to exercise effort in a learning task may be due to positive past experience.

1.1.2 Constructivist approaches to SRL

1) Overview

Constructivist views of SRL involve many important concepts in the information processing perspective such as metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive strategies and closed feedback loops. The essential differences between the information processing perspective and the constructivist perspective lie in their conceptualization and acquisition of knowledge (Zimmerman & Schunk, 2007). From a constructivist point of view, knowledge is not seen as part of the static and objective reality existing outside of learners and can not be passed on to learners through direct instruction. Knowledge is constructed by learners through interaction with the environment and refined based on learners' existing knowledge. Knowledge is developmental, subjective and individually constructed. Researchers from this perspective assume that learners are self-directed, meaning-constructing and meaning-seeking individuals who act on their environment accordingly (Paris & Byrnes, 1989). Because the construction of knowledge is the result of

learners' interaction with the environment, learning is generally seen as a socially-situated activity that is enhanced in functional, meaningful and authentic contexts.

Researchers from this perspective differ in their view of the factors which influence an individual's construction of knowledge and self-regulation of learning. Cognitive constructivists view learning as a process of continuously restructuring of learners' existing knowledge to reduce the discrepancy between their learning, and their new experience and knowledge derived from their interaction with the environment. They emphasize on individual learners, the development of their cognition, past experiences, and how task interpretation influences their cognitive strategy use. Individuals are believed to construct idiosyncratic knowledge structure through the interaction with the environment. Knowledge structures are formed on the basis of existing knowledge, feeling, expectations, opinions and interpretations of everyday experience. Paris and Byrnes (1989) believe that learners have an overall theory of self-regulation about their academic competence, the nature of academic tasks and the usefulness of cognitive strategies. These personal theories are formed during their interactions in the classroom and they undergo further development as these theories are implicit and imprecise (Paris & Byrnes, 1989). These theories mediate students' actions and determine whether they choose to attempt to use the strategies that they have learned to self-regulate their academic learning.

Cognitive constructivists view learning as a continuous process in which learners are constantly restructuring their existing knowledge. As students mature and gain more experience in learning, their personal theories about themselves as learners and their knowledge structures also undergo development. Their ability to make accurate judgements about themselves and their performances improves. So do their ability to articulate their beliefs and knowledge, and their ability to set feasible goals based on this information (Paris & Winograd, 1990).

Social constructivists' theories of SRL come from Vygotsky's social-historical perspective of learning (Vygotsky, 1962, 1978). They attach importance to the social aspects of knowledge acquisition and view learning as a

function of the individual's continuous interaction with others. From this perspective, knowledge is not transmitted but co-constructed by learners and teachers in the joint instructional activities (Henderson & Cunningham, 1994). The ability to self-regulate their learning is assumed to be one of the outcomes of this co-construction process.

When engaged in a new or difficult task, the teacher models the self-talk and vocabulary related to the cognitive processes while performing the act in the process (Englert, 1990). Gradually the teacher's scaffold withdraws and students are given more responsibility for the aspects of the dialogue they are able to control. With the internalization of the dialogue and the actions to complete the task, students begin to use inner speech (private speech) to monitor their own learning behaviour. Gradually students are given full responsibility for the cognitive processes of learning. Students' learning behaviours change from other-regulation to self-regulation when the externally verbalized speech becomes internalized (i. e. internal speech). Self-regulation is reached when students can independently use self-directed speech in planning, monitoring and evaluating their learning activities. It is important to give tasks that are challenging but not too challenging to self-regulated behaviours, the so-called Zone of Proximal Development of Vygotsky. For example, Diaz (1986) found private speech is not elicited from learners when the tasks are within their ability level or beyond their ability level.

2) Instructional programmes

Researchers from the cognitive constructivist perspective have conducted many strategy instruction programmes to investigate the impact of the strategy instruction on the development of learners' construction of the new theories and on enhancing their academic learning performances. These instructions include cognitive strategy instruction, scaffold instruction and guided discovery. Cognitive constructivists view interventions in terms of conceptual change, which takes place when learners realize their current ways of interpreting the tasks or experiences in the environment (Paris & Byrnes, 1989). Self-regulation takes place when students are aware of their misconceptions about the tasks and become intrinsically motivated to seek information that can reduce the discrepancy between the existing knowledge and the new tasks or new situations, and thus help develop new theories.

Generally these interventions are carried out with teachers' modelling and detailed explanations of the targeted strategies, opportunities to practice these strategies in authentic learning contexts with feedback, and repeated explanation if necessary (e. g. Englert, 1990; Graham & Harris, 1989; Graham, Harris, & Troia, 1998).

From a social constructivist perspective on classroom instruction, researchers attach importance to the introduction of the portfolio into classroom instruction as a more holistic assessment of learners' development of self-regulation. The use of the portfolio allows for a more contextualized view of learners' development over time. As a purposeful collection of students' learning experience, portfolios can display students' effort, progress achievement, and self-reflection in one or more areas (Paulson & Paulson, 1991). The portfolio as an assessment device was first introduced in writing instruction and it has been used in many disciplines now as both a instructional device and an assessment device.

3) Comments

Researchers from a cognitive constructivist perspective acknowledge individuals' construction of knowledge based on experiences and interaction with others. The investigation of learners' strategy use, their motivation and their knowledge development are embedded in their engagement in authentic domain-specific learning tasks. Researchers from the social constructivist perspective highlight the importance of self-directed speech that is learned through the interaction with others. Students are assumed to be intrinsically motivated to join in the authentic learning tasks in a social system. Social constructivists view cognition as the active process of problem solving without much emphasis on the acquisition of particular skills. Portfolios are highly recommended by social constructivists as a more holistic assessment tool and instructional tool to depict the development of learners' self-regulation, but they are limited to give more specific information of the learners' interpretation of tasks and their use of strategies in the tasks.

1. 1. 3 Social cognitive approach to SRL

1) Overview

Social cognitive model of SRL has developed from Bandura's social