

“Three Dimensional” Model in the Teaching Design of College English Writing in China - A Case Study of “Memo”

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Abstract As an indispensable and most difficult part of language acquisition, writing teaching and learning has been long perplexing language teachers and learners even in the first language. Therefore, it is a consensus that the pursuit of efficiently improvement of students' English writing competence is widely regarded as one of the most difficult tasks in English teaching in China. Based on her own experience and practice in the aspect of teaching design, the author proposes the framework of a “three dimensional” model as well as its application in the teaching of EFL College English Writing so as to cultivate the learners' all-round writing skills. This study is devoted to reveal if “Three Dimensional” Model can serve as an effective countermeasure of learning dilemma based on empirical research. Result of contrastive analysis and survey shows: 1) it is helpful to cultivate the learner's comprehensive writing knowledge. 2) it can effectively enhance the learner's communicative writing competence. 3) it can greatly enhance the efficiency, validity and reliability of the assessment and feedback. 4) it can effectively reduce the teacher's workload and the student's writing anxiety.

Keywords: *three dimensional, teaching design, College English Writing, Memo*

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1. Introduction

1.1. College English Writing

College English /Integrated English /Advanced English is the essential English course for all kinds of non-major college students nearly in every college or institution or university in the mainland of China. Basic Requirements of College English Curriculum (hereinafter referred to as the "Basic Requirements") for various levels was issued by the Chinese Ministry of Education in 2000, 2004 and 2007 (Higher Education Department of the Ministry of Education, 2007), which pointed out that the teaching purpose of this Curriculum is to enable students to master certain basic knowledge and skills of English, and to possess certain ability of listening, speaking, reading, writing and translating. As a result, the students can read and translate relevant English materials with the help of some tools, as well as make simple oral and written communication in the cross-cultural environment; in addition, it can lay a solid foundation for the further improvement of the English communicative ability in the future. This statement shows manifestly that writing is an indispensable part of College English. Although its

teaching content and depth differs in various levels according to the level and position of its school, namely college school (higher vocational college, higher college) and undergraduate schools (under-second undergraduate university, ordinary university, key university), it shares some elementary components: the elementary knowledge and strategy of English Writing, Practical English Writing and academic English Writing. Of them, the Practical English Writing is a necessary part for all colleges and universities.

The Practical English Writing aims to cultivate the learner's competence on how to convey clear, concise messages and avoid verbosity or flowery on common forms of paperwork writing from letters, notes, notices, and memos to e-mails and other electronic communications. It has a diversity range of knowledge including specific paperwork (such as report, notice, memo, notes and bills etc.); various speeches (such as welcoming speech, thank-you speech, seeing-off speech etc.) and correspondence (ordinary letters) (see Table 1). The teaching content varies greatly owing to the students' previous learning situation, institutional option and time limitation. According to surveys, it is often provided in the first 2 semesters separately or as a part of College English. It usually occupies 28 classroom teaching periods or so per term, 2 periods per week for 14 weeks.

Table 1. The teaching content of Practical College English Writing in Hunan International Business Vocational College

Content
Part One Fundamentals of Modern Practical Writing
Chapter 1 General Principles of Writing
Chapter 2 How to Write Effectively
Part Two General Paperwork
Chapter 3 Notice
Chapter 4 Poster
Chapter 5 Notes
Chapter 6 Bills
Chapter 7 Memorandum
Chapter 8 Report
Chapter 9 Certificate
Chapter 10 Cards
Chapter 11 Speech
Part Three General Letter Writing
Chapter 12 Formats of Letters
Chapter 13 Useful Expressions of Letters
Chapter 14 Letter of Introduction
Chapter 15 Letter of Job-getting
Chapter 16 Letter of emotions
Chapter 17 Invitations and Replies
Chapter 18 Resume

1.2 The present teaching dilemma

Writing is widely acknowledged as an “intricate” and complex task as well as the “most difficult of the language abilities to acquire” [1]. As a means of communicating and a tool of learning a language” [2], writing is a complex process even in the first language. Undoubtedly, it is more complicated to write in a foreign language. Therefore, the practical English writing still remains the most difficult skill for the majority of Chinese college students owing to its complexity compared to the other three language skills.

According to previous surveys and statistics [3,4,5] the effect of writing teaching has long been inefficient and time-consuming, which is reflected in the scores of both international and national scale test such as IELTS, TOEFL, CET Band 4 and Band 6 etc: Firstly, in terms of written proficiency, a large number of students are found to be spoon-fed and hardly write correct and appropriate English upon graduation [6] many still stay in exam-oriented education state – they learn to write just by recitation of high score texts and picking sentences from it [7]. 2) Secondly, the writing performance of Chinese EFL learners is far from satisfied upon the textual metafunction in the aspect of coherence, cohesion and accuracy. They are many defects in language quality in such aspects as topic, content, structure and language, thus many scholars state that the language they use can be described as highly imitation and identical to others. Besides, the lack of the substance in content, improper way of textual development and poor grammar of written texts is a common phenomenon [8]. Thirdly, the Chinese students have always regard writing as the most tricky and daunting part. They are embracing the feeling for failure and difficulties presented in the process of writing, which lead to their high anxiety to learn written English; they are reluctant or even afraid to write in mother language, not mention the second language. Besides, according to survey and feedback in Hunan International Business Vocational College and Guangdong Industry Polytechnic, nearly 90% of students regard it as the most difficult part of College English. Therefore, it is a consensus among

practitioners that the interest of study and teaching effect must be enhanced.

So there are lots of Chinese writing researchers who found the traditional teaching practice of classroom writing has some limitations [8,9]. According to Wang Wen-yu & Wang Li-fei [10], the main problem of English writing teaching in China is the lack of rich writing contents in students` written texts and sound teaching method. Many teachers still adopt “product approach” in practice, which emphasizes students` exposure to written sentences and paragraphs and its utmost concern is grammatical rules or rhetorical patterns. The priority of teaching is the “features of good texts” and “methods and skills of good writers”, which mainly covers the correct grammar, suitable cohesion and so on in the structure and organization of different kinds of paragraphs and texts, whose focus is essentially on the ability to produce correct texts or “product” [11]. Although the communicative theory is widely accepted, many teacher adopt process or task approach very roughly, which advocates “learning to write through writing”- that is the learners` writing proficiency can be enhanced through a series of cognitive and interactive activities in the process of writing, and values the importance of the exertion of author`s subjective initiative and iterative revision. The priority of teaching is not linguistic knowledge but process and method on “how to compose a text”. Seldom teachers manage to explore synthesis approach and means to cultivate the all-round competence of the learners.

Besides, most of the writing teachers complain about the heavy load of assessment of the student`s written text for the following reasons: 1) large class size and total number of students at a time (usually a typical average class size is about 40-50 students in Chinese colleges, and a teacher usually teach 3-4 classes at the same time, so the number of student`s exercise is more than 120 pieces a time); 2) a detailed check-up or assessment is usually expected by the institution and students, so the teacher needs to assess all aspects including punctuation or spelling etc in the student`s written texts, it is a time and energy consuming work indeed; 3) the validity and reliability of the teacher`s feedback is neither high nor evenly. Because the quality and style or tone of the student`s written text varies greatly from each other, it is a challenge of competence and sensation for the teacher to assess each of them accurately. Some texts are just scattered words and sentences, some are copies or excerpts from model samples, some prefer complex structures, and some prefer simple and plain words and sentences. Besides, there is a large variation of qualification, ability or preference among teachers; 4) the waiting time for feedback is expected as soon as possible, because if the assessment process lasts long, the student may be at a loss about some idea or arrangement, which is unhelpful for self-reviewing and self-enhancement.

2. Literature Review

2.1. College English Writing Teaching/Instructional Design Abroad

A keyword search of “English writing teaching design” was conducted in Foreign Database of China Knowledge

Net, and by October 14, 2017, only 1 paper was found. Then the topic “writing teaching” was searched and got 62 papers. Based on the analysis of the content and correlation of these papers, 59 papers (such as notices, report, book review and other languages) are excluded and 2 papers remained. So, there are only three papers found to be closely correlated to the topic: Within the paradigm of cognitive psychological perspective and communicative language acquisition, Li [12] proposes and studies the systematic teaching design of communicative context in EFL writing communicative language teaching, concentrating on the exploring of the cultivation of communicative environment in the aspect of macro-view, middle-view and micro-view on the practice of Business English Writing. While Jingyu Liu [13] attempts to apply constructivism to writing teaching design and class construction in order to explore and discover a proper and student-tailored writing class teaching mode. He explains in details of the application of this teaching theory in relevant aspects such as teaching content, teaching method. And Jennifer Rowsell [14] presents how a teacher and a researcher teach Grade 11 students through a design-based approach to teaching and learning in English class in an urban secondary school in Toronto. He focused on particular modes such as sound, visuals and materials in order to help student consider design concepts and design epistemologies.

2.2. College English Writing Teaching/Instructional Design in China

A keyword search of “College English Writing Teaching” was conducted in China Knowledge Net, and 0 papers was found. Then the topic “College English writing teaching” was searched and by October 14, 2017, 814 papers were found. Based on the analysis of the content and correlation of these papers, 182 papers remained. Among them, only 9 are related to teaching design, such as “Task Design for College English Writing from the Perspective of Implicit Grammar Teaching” by Zhu Yushan [15], and “Research on Teaching Design of College English Writing Based on Activity Theory” by Wang Xiaoqing in 2015. Other literatures can be divided into three categories: 1) the application of certain theories or teaching modes in College English Writing teaching, such as “The Application of Memetics in College English Writing Teaching by Huang Changnai in 2016, The Application of Brainstorming in College English Writing Teaching by Liu Jing in 2015”; 2) the study of the characteristics or current situation of College English Writing teaching, such as “The Infiltration of Discourse Analysis into College English Writing Teaching by He Jingling in 2015, The Study of Teaching Strategies for College English Writing Based on Memetics by Cheng Honghong in 2015”; and 3) the study of countermeasures or measures to improve College English Writing ability, such as “How to Improve the Teaching Effect of College English Writing by Zhu Yan in 2015, On Interlanguage Fossilization in English Writing Course and Preventive Strategies by Zhang Xiaofei, Yang Li [16]” and so on.

In a word, the current research on College English Writing teaching in China mainly focuses on the theoretical and empirical aspects, and provides macroscopic guidance for the specific teaching content, staying at the stage of

description, reflection and experience introduction. However, the study of “College English Writing Instructional Design” is still in its infancy, and the scope and depth of the study are not enough: there is simple description of the status quo and significance of the overall design of a single teaching theme, the introduction of relevant theories and practices; the teaching of a single teaching content such as the “Memo” in the practical text and so on.

3. The introduction of “Three Dimensional” Model

The “three dimensional” model includes 3 dimensions of teaching priority: the product (discourse), process (competence) and communicative strategy (see Figure 1). It is first proposed by Rong wei-dong [17] in L1 Chinese writing and introduced to EFL English writing by Li [12,18,19]. It roots from functional linguistics (pragmatics), dialogue theory, context cognition theory and social cognitive rhetoric, poststructuralist and post modernist rhetoric, which holds the belief that writing is a process of interaction between the author and target audience. It emphasizes the importance of writing context and purpose. Its matching pedagogy are genre-based pedagogy, communicative approach, task approach and ESP (English for specific purpose), which focus on “write for whom” and “what is the purpose of the text”. Its teaching priority is the development and application of genre consciousness and social writing habit such as the specific schematic structure of the discourse, rhetoric and language features as well as writing skills, aiming to enable the students not only to grasp the characteristics of the schematic structure, but also to understand the construction process of a certain discourse. The leading scholars include Richard Badger and Goodith White, Krashen, Hymes Halliday and so on.

3.1. Its Teaching Content

The teaching priority of this model is composed by the following aspects (see Figure 1): the product (discourse) dimension focusing on the features of good discourse and skills, which aims to present the standard of good texts; while the process (competence) dimension focusing on the process and methods of writing, which aims to present the procedure and method of writing; the communicative strategy focusing on the contextual knowledge and the construction of writing skills, which aims to present the communicative strategy of writing.

3.2. Its Teaching Procedures and Activities

Detailed procedures and activities will be illustrated and explained in Part 4 sample case of this article. (Figure 2)

3.3. Its Teaching Assessment

The means of assessment in this model is composed of 3 types (see Table 2), each has its own priorities, the procedures of the assessment will be illustrated in Part 3.4 and 4 sample case in this article.

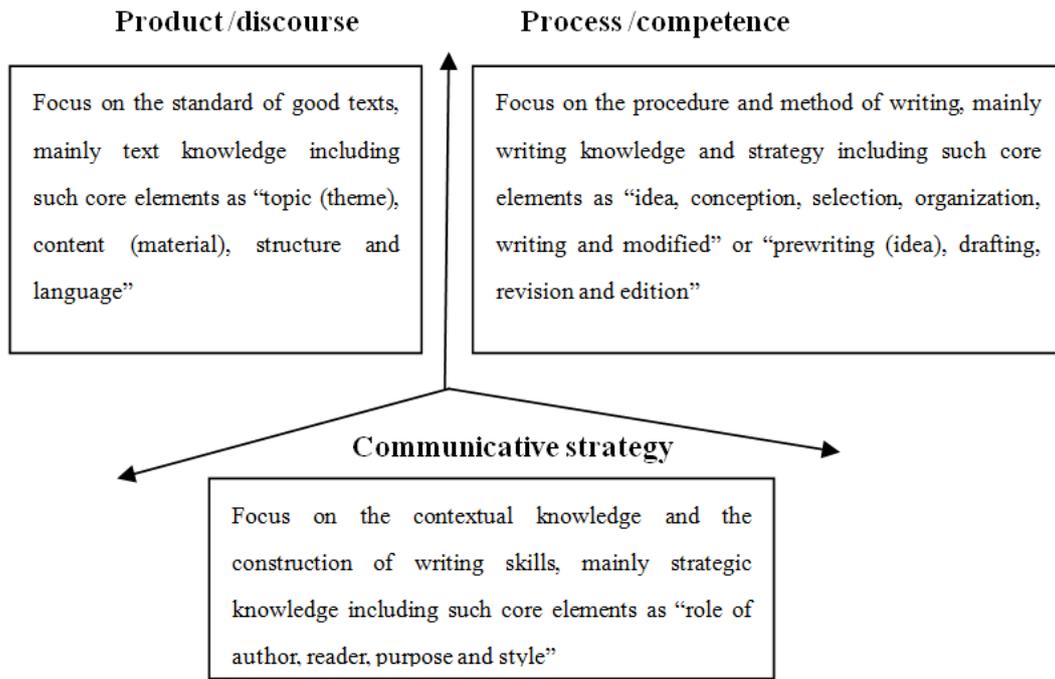
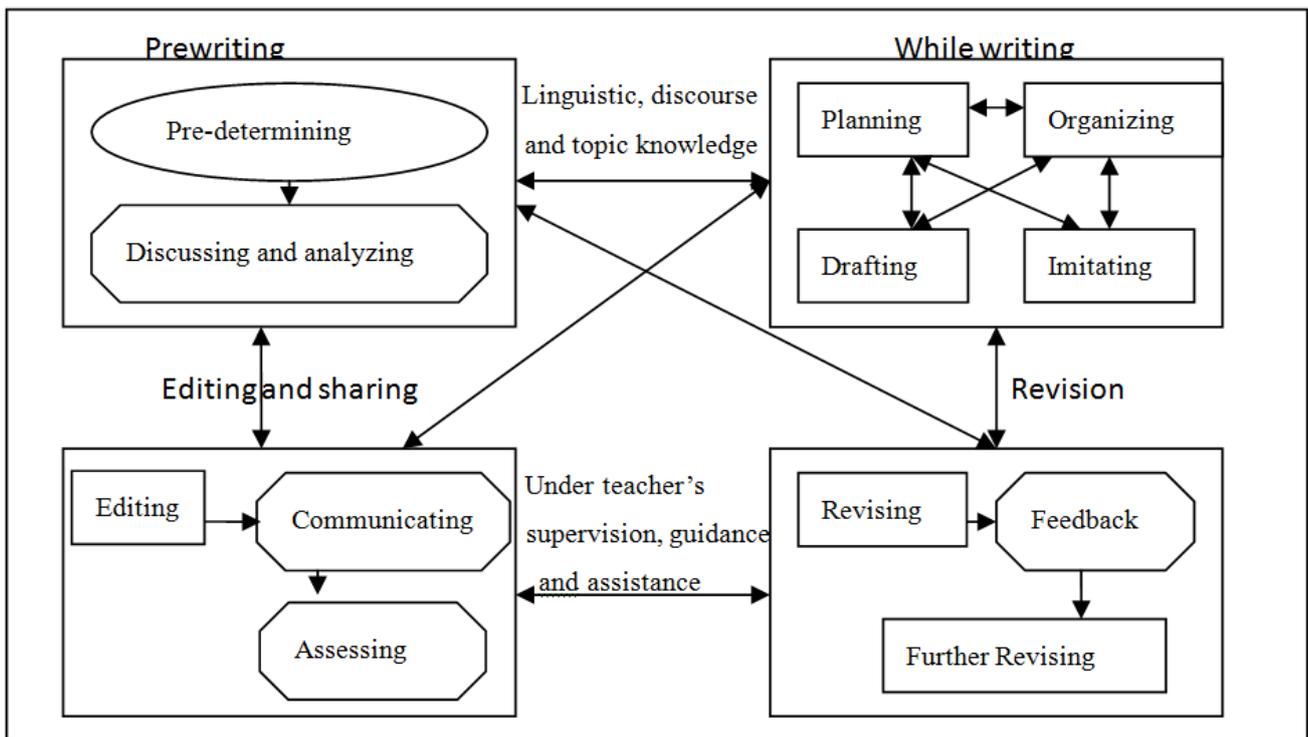


Figure 1. Teaching Content of “Three Dimensional” Model



Represents the student's activity
 Represents the teacher's activity
 Represents mutual activity of teachers and students

Figure 2. Teaching Procedures of Various Stages of “Three Dimensional” Model

Table 2. Assessment means and priority of “Three Dimensional” Model

Means	Priority
Juku Pigai software	Textual quality such as punctuation, spelling, organization of words and sentences, grammar, etc
Peers and teacher	Process and communicative elements such as the organization of writing process, tone, role of author, purpose, style etc
Social media judges	All elements concerned.

3.4. Its Peculiar Characteristics

The utmost characteristic of this model is the cultivation of the communicative context. Although the task and communicative approach is widely accepted in teaching practice, most of the teachers just implement it very roughly in the procedures of assignment of tasks. The typical routine teaching procedure goes like the following: first of all, the teacher explains the format and features of the samples, focusing on the dimension of discourse. Then the teacher assigns a written task for the students. Thirdly, the teacher reviews and assesses the students' products by means of written or oral ways. Optionally, outstanding products are shared and analyzed. Therefore the dimension of discourse is highlighted in teaching, and the dimension of process is experienced but not stressed in classroom teaching. In this way, the students are used to recite model samples and fixed words and expressions when in application. They still don't know how to write a proper article in practice. Therefore, apart from routine teaching, the author focuses on the design of communicative context throughout the whole teaching process, which is the weakness in most teaching practices. The details are shown in Part 4 sample case.

The second feature is the usage of automatic assessment software- the Juku Pigai software- to assess the student's discourse performance. Based on its wide diversity of relevant corpus, this software can evaluate the written text instantly and accurately in the aspects of textual dimension such as punctuation, spelling, organization of words and sentences, grammar, etc. Furthermore, the students can revise it online as many times as possible until they are satisfied. One of my students revised one of

his texts 115 times. In this way, the efficiency, reliability and validity of the assessment is assured.

4. Sample Case of Teaching Design for Memo in Various Stages

Table 3. Background information of sample case

Item	Description
Name of course	College English Writing
Teaching object	Non- English major college freshman
Teaching location	Multi-media classroom
Teaching subject	Memo
Teaching material	Textbook, written text from students, online software
Skill-training objectives	The students are required to be able to identify different types of the strategies and skills of various Memos and apply them properly in practice.
Knowledge objectives	The students are required to get familiar with the writing features, format, communicative strategy and skills of memos, understanding the differences between various types of memos.
Important & difficult point	1. The format and features of English Memo 2. Common English communicative strategy and skills of English Memo
Approach	Interactive teaching, discussion, questions and answers, role-play, brainstorm
Period of time	4*40 minutes classroom teaching
Assessment aspects	Task fulfillment, language, format, tone and organization etc

Table 4 Description of the distribution of "Three Dimensional" Model in the case of "Memo"

	Product /discourse dimension	Process /competence dimension	Communicative strategy dimension
Teaching objective	The students are required to be able to: get familiar with the writing features and the format of Memos; be able to differentiate the features of various types of memos.	The students are required to be able to compose corresponding memos based on given situation.	The students are required to be able to differentiate the features of communicative strategy in various types of Memo and apply some of them in practice properly.
Teaching content	The feature of Memo	The procedural knowledge and skill of understanding and composition of Memo	Contextual knowledge and skill of Memo
Teaching procedures	Prewriting	With references to relevant discourse knowledge and skill	Discussing and analyzing the communicative tasks and characteristics of model together to sum up the writing structure and language characteristic (field, model and tenor) of Memo
	While writing	With references to relevant discourse knowledge and skill	Focusing on the process of developing the writing plan → organizing related materials → imitating writing → composing the first draft
	Revision	With references to relevant discourse knowledge and skill	Focusing on the revision of the first draft upon self-assessment or peers assessment
	Editing and sharing	With references to relevant discourse knowledge and skill	Focusing on the editing and sharing of the text upon trial communication
Teaching assessment	Involved	Involved	Involved

4.1. In Prewriting Stage

First of all, the teacher pre-determines the communicative tasks and its environment (including communicative environment, interpersonal relationship) of Memo (see task 1) along with several samples.

Task 1 Compose Memos based on the given situation.

Situation: 湖南外贸进出口公司办公室Wang Li对本公司的办公电脑状况做了一个调查, 并拟写一份备忘录呈递总经理Li Ping。

此备忘录的目的: 陈述对办公电脑状况的调查结果;

研究的问题: 现有的电脑是否能够满足公司的办公需要;

在调查中采用的方法: 检测电脑的运行速度;

检测的结果: 电脑硬件已过时, 电脑运行速度慢;

得出的结论: 需要修复和更换电脑;

建议: 立即购置四台运行Windows XP、运行速度至少233mhz的电脑。

Requirement: 请根据上述情景,

- 1) 代Wang Li给总经理Li Ping拟一份备忘录。
- 2) 代总经理Li Ping回复王莉, 已同意更换电脑, 并已交代采购部经理Fan Bo 尽快执行。

Task 2 Read and summarize the format and feature of the following English Memos.

Sample 1

Memo

To: Joseph Perkins, General Manager
From: Robert Myers, Training Manager
Date: February 15, 2009
Subject: The Investment of the Profits

Introduction

This report is to examine how the company should re-invest this year's profits. The areas under consideration are the purchases of new computers, the provision of language training courses and the payment of special bonuses.

Areas under Consideration

New Computers

The majority of company computers are quite new and fast enough to handle the work done.

Language Training Courses

The company aims to increase exports, especially in North Europe. Therefore, language training courses would be a good idea for employees dealing with overseas partners and customers. In addition, training courses would increase motivation. The staff would enjoy the courses and perceive that the company is investing in them.

Special Bonus Payment

Special bonus may have a beneficial impact on motivation, but it would have no direct effect on the company's operation. There are also potential and the setting of a problems concerning precedent for future payments.

Recommendation

It can be seen that the best solution for both the company and the individuals would be to invest the profits in language training. It would be wise for the company to organize courses in English, French or German. The staff dealing with overseas cases should be assured of places and other members interested in that should also be allowed to attend.

Sample 2

Memo

To: General Manager
From: Pan Wei, Manager of the Buying Department
Date: December 7, 2008
Subject: Staff changes

There are two problems which I would like to bring to your attention concerning the staff changes in my Department.

Firstly, the clerk in charge of ordering from the stores (Mr. Jiang Ping) is also responsible for the filing of information. Consequently, at the end of the month, when most people want replacements from the stores, and also require information from the files, he is unable to keep up with the demand. In contrast, he is practically unoccupied during the first week of every month, when he could be helping someone else, so I suggest we try to reorganize his job.

Secondly, the Material Man Mr. Zeng Qing is getting rather old for his job, and furthermore, he is suffering from his old complaint of bronchitis and has to ask for sick leave occasionally. I therefore recommend that he be invited to retire early. There would be obvious advantages if we were to appoint a much younger and more qualified man to replace him.

I would suggest that we approach the Workers Union and ask Mr. Zeng Qing to retire in the coming year. Meanwhile, we should ask the Personnel Department to draw up a new job specification for Buying Department Clerk and Material Man, so that employees in these areas will have clear idea of their duties and will be able to use initiative to the full.

Sample 3

MEMORANDUM
<i>To: Mr. Jack Johnson</i>
<i>Sub: Booking done</i>
<i>From: John Smith</i>
<i>Date: May 13, 2009</i>
A single room with bath and shower has been reserved for Mr. Li Qiang at the White Lily Hotel from 25 to 27 May as you have instructed.

Sample 4

MEMORANDUM
<i>To: John Smith</i>
<i>Sub: Room booking</i>
<i>From: Jack Johnson</i>
<i>Date : May 12, 2009</i>
<i>John:</i>
Please book a single room for Mr. Li Qiang in our local four-star hotel from 25 to 27 May before 4 pm tomorrow. After get the booking confirmed, inform me at once.

Task 3 Rewrite the samples by means of changing the format (from outlined to full text) or the role of author and compare it with the origin.

Consequently, the teacher and students discuss and analyze the communicative tasks, role of author, form of text, topic of the task and characteristics of model together to sum up the writing structure and language characteristic of the Memo (see Table 3). In this stage, the author not only stresses on the analyses of the format and feature of sample Memos but also on their communicative environment such as the role of the author, the selection of tone, words and manners etc in order to let the students understand various authors or topics may lead to various version of the same Memo. So the students may acquire some awareness of communicative strategy knowledge and skills.

Table 5. Format and feature of a specific Memo

Role of author
Target reader
Purpose
Format
Language
Tone
Organization
Task fulfillment

4.2. In While Writing Stage

The while writing stage is not necessary to be carried out in class, it can be done by individual student or groups after class. It is the process of self- exploration and self- construction of relevant knowledge and skills for the learners based on the concept that the language acquisition only happens during practice [20,21,22]. The students are required to accomplish the composition tasks by experiencing the whole process of four steps step by step: developing the writing plan→organizing related materials→imitating writing→composing the first draft.

4.3. In Revision Stage

In revision stage, the students are required to further revise their products upon self-assessment or peers assessment. It should be carried out in study team or group where the students and teacher can exchange their opinions toward a single product. It is a very important stage to view one`s own comprehension of the task as well as the format and features of the Memo through group discussion.

Table 6. The assessment table in revision stage

Domain	Advantage	Disadvantage	Suggestion
Format			
Language			
Tone			
Organization			
Task fulfillment			

4.4. In Editing and Sharing Stage

In editing and sharing stage, the students are required to improve and share their products upon trial communication. It aims to test the actual communicative effect of their products, which will urge them not only to pay attention to the dimension of discourse but also the communicative strategy. In practice, the author may choose one of the products randomly as a sample to analyze and share in class. In my own experience, it is also very important for the teacher to design a summary procedure to summarize the skills and tips of Memo writing together, dealing with some language points at the same time.

For example, the author designs the following teaching activity to summarize the skills and tips of Memo writing.

Firstly, the teacher points out that there is a wide diversity in conveying the opinion of “购置四台运行 Windows XP, 运行速度至少233mhz的电脑” and listed then as the Table 7 shows. Secondly, the teacher and students analyze and summarize the difference among them with the aids of some background information of social communication regulations and taboos. Since these sentences are assessed by Juku Pigai software in advance, they are correct in grammar and syntax. But some of them are still inappropriate in practice owing to its tone and usage of some words. Through discussion, they come to realize No 1-2 sentences in the role of Wang Li and No 1-3 in the role of Li Ping are the best choices. A conclusion is further drawn that an inferior social person such as Wang Li had better state her opinion as recommendation without any personal emotional preference; otherwise, the reader may be offended. While a superior social person such as Li Ping had better declare a resolution without any ambiguity, otherwise, the reader may be confused on what to do next. Through such comparison, the students experience a directly impression of what is the social regulation for various social status to convey one`s opinions appropriately.

Table 7. Various samples to express the opinion of the office computers in different roles in experiment

No	In the role of Wang Li	In the role of Li Ping
1	It is recommended that four new computers running on Windows XP and a processing speed of at least 233 mhz should be purchased immediately.	Resolution: Four new computers as required should be purchased immediately.
2	Recommendations: Four new computers running on Windows X P and a processing speed of at least 233 mhz should be purchased immediately.	Solution: Four new computers as required should be purchased immediately.
3	Action required: purchase four new computers running on Windows XP and a processing speed of at least 233 mhz.	It is approved that four new computers as required should be purchased immediately.
4	Suggestions: immediately purchase four new computers running on Windows XP and a processing speed of at least 233 mhz.	I agree to purchase four new computers as required
5	I strongly think (recommend, demand, require) we should purchase four new computers running on Windows XP and a processing speed of at least 233 mhz immediately.	I recommend (suggest, think) that we should purchase four new computers.
6	I think (recommend, demand, require) that four new computers running on Windows XP and a processing speed of at least 233 mhz should be purchased immediately.	I strongly think (recommend, demand, require) we should purchase four new computers running on Windows XP and a processing speed of at least 233 mhz immediately.

5. Methodology

5.1. Participants

This study employs a combination of survey, classroom observation, discourse evaluation, Juku Pigai software discourse evaluation and writing competence test to measure the effectiveness of writing performance for Chinese EFL learners. The sample for the study consist more than 741 college students for 6 years (from 2013-2018) in two Chinese vocational colleges (Hunan International Business Vocational College and Guangdong Industry Polytechnic), 154 (20.8%) males and 587 (79.2%) females, 482 students are majoring in Business English in Hunan International Business Vocational College, the other 259 students are non-English major in Guangdong Industry Polytechnic. The age of the participants ranges from 19 to 21 with an average age of 21.1. 90% of them are at least in grade A level and above in PRETCO (Practical English Test for Colleges in China), so they can be categorized into competent or modest English learners in Chinese college students at the same level. They are assigned to subject classes randomly, so they are many contrast classes at the same level. The same strategy and teaching design are used in all of these experimental classes. Moreover, to avoid variation in teachers, the same teacher (the author) is in charge of the instruction of the course.

5.2. Research Design

The research consists of 5 parts: classroom observation, discourse evaluation, online software evaluation, writing competence test and questionnaire. The same requirements and similar teaching content (as in Table 1) is implemented in the subject class in order to collect comparative data. Besides classroom observation, the author also employs discourse evaluation and writing competence test using the analytic scoring scale to evaluate the learner's performance. Then a database of student's work is built to compare either with those of the contrast class or the former ones. Simultaneously a questionnaire on the effectiveness of the strategy is carrying out.

5.3. Procedures

The experiment was carried out in the normal classroom teaching in the 1st or 2nd semester. The subjects had the same course book and followed the same syllabus. The experiment took up 18-20 class hours. That is, according to the arrangement of 2 hours of writing English classes a week, the experiment lasted 9-10 weeks. Before the experiment, the subjects' scores of English of the National College Entrance Examination were analyzed through SPSS 16.0 and no distinctive difference was found among those classes.

In experiment, the author gave instructions to the classes in line with the requirements stipulated in the framework of "three dimensional" mode almost the same way. Since the cultivation and evaluation of writing competence is very complex, the author mainly assesses learner's performance in the final revised version of each task and writing competence test. Therefore, what I analyzed in this study is the student's comprehensive performance of a long term, not of one specific time point.

5.4. Data Collection and Analysis

The students' written texts were assessed by means stipulated in 3.3 Assessment. In order to further the research, after experiment, a questionnaire focusing on the effectiveness of this strategy was given out in Chinese to the participants. The questions were the following: 1) When you get writing assignments, your consideration includes ① the format of the genre, ② the organization of the text, ③ the purpose of the discourse ④ the features of the target audience. 2) Do you think "3 dimensional" model is helpful to your written English, how? 3) What do you think it is the most difficult thing you encounter in English writing in previous experiment: ① to convey ideas concisely, ② to organize the text well, ③ to choose appropriate tone or ④ to deal with language points? 4) Have you made progress in your written English, if so, in which aspect? ① discourse knowledge and skills such as the format and features of a certain genre, ② process knowledge and skills in composition such as how to plan, organize, revise and polish an essay, etc. ③ strategic knowledge and skills such as role of author, tone, etc. The

responses were collected, classified into similar categories, and then analyzed.

6. Result and Discussion

After practice of a series of similar cases as above-mentioned for 6 years, the author builds a data of student's products and collects a feedback data as well, which implies optimistic effects. There are some typical feedbacks towards it as stated below.

6.1. Positive Feedbacks

1) It is helpful to cultivate the learner's comprehensive writing competence other than single ones. It can be observed very clearly in this mode that writing is viewed as involving knowledge about language, knowledge of the context in which writing happens and especially the purpose for the writing, and skills in using language [23]. The students are expected to be aware of that the 3 dimensions of writing elements are comprehensive and integrated to each other; each of them has a very close correlation to the effect and quality of the written text. They will learn to concern with the social macro-purposes of language, and not just the semantic micro-functions of individual words and sentences. They will also learn not to jump into writing right away once they receive the writing assignment or once they are asked to write. Rather, they will spare some time to think and plan first, and then carry out the rest relevant writing procedures gradually.

2) It can effectively enhance the learner's communicative writing competence. The students' communicative competence is strengthened because the author tries to cultivate an authentic and rich communicative context in the teaching tasks. As shown in the sample case, the author concentrates on the cultivation of the context throughout the whole teaching process. Therefore, the learners are exposed to authentic in-put and out-put atmosphere, which is a key requirement of communicative method. Furthermore, through the design of a series of teaching activities such as rewriting and comparison, the students may realize gradually the features and importance of communicative strategies and skills, which is a main defect of Chinese EFL learners according to the research by Ding Xiaojie [9]. Furthermore, every student is required to analyze the target reader in advance. According to surveys and researches by Deng Zhiyong [8], the Chinese learners regard their writing teacher as their only reader. But in this model, the students are required to think of the target reader and their features. Hence, they may be used to bearing it in mind afterwards. Furthermore, they are also required to play different roles in tasks, so they must at least take the relevant communicative knowledge and skills into consideration in order to obtain target effect.

3) It can greatly enhance the efficiency, validity and reliability of the assessment and feedback. As stated in part 3.3, 3.4, with the aid of Guku Pigai software, the speed and conciseness of the assessment and feedback of the written text is out of question, the teacher can focus more on the other two dimensions. Therefore, it is very helpful to carry out massive authentic in-put and out-put practice, the students' English writing knowledge

is wildly enlarged other than in abstract rules. Many of them have formed a sense of English writing.

4) It can effectively reduce the teacher's workload and the student's writing anxiety. Owing to the automatic assessment of Guku Pigai software, in one hand, the teacher's workload is greatly reduced, in the other hand, the student's writing anxiety is effectively reduced too because it can feedback instantly so they don't need to wait and face the teacher's judgment, which can remove their nervousness and anxiety of failure and losing face. Just as one student states:

"I used to concentrate on and worry about some trifles details such as spelling, punctuation and choice of words etc in writing before and spent a lot of time in looking up words while writing. So my writing competence stay stable anyhow hard I work and I am afraid of writing very much. But now I become much more relaxed in writing because the software can find out most of my low-level mistakes such as allocation of words and grammar instantly and provide me some advice or sample cases. It greatly spares me from looking up references somewhere. Therefore, it is much easier to improve my text, and I can focus more on the organization of structure and textual elements. My writing performance is enhanced and I am no longer anxious as before."

6.2. Negative Feedbacks

1) It is a challenge task for the teacher to design and comment these tasks in terms of time and energy consume as well as his or her comprehensive quality because there are no reference answer to them and she or he will answer or explain some very extreme phenomenon independently. Moreover, it costs a large amount of the teacher's time and energy to review or check all the students' products from my own experience because each task has several versions and each student has his or her own way to convey it.

2) The teaching activities needs much longer time than traditional ones. Some activities must be accomplished after class. And some students may implement roughly.

3) Not all teaching subjects of Practical English Writing are rich in contextual flexibility, some subjects such as Notice and Certificate, which have fixed format and expression, are less flexible to various authors and context, so they are not so suitable to design diversity communicative situations.

4) Some examination oriented students are not used to this mode, because the students are required to develop their own critical thinking competence, which is a very rare virtue in Chinese because obeying and accepting what the teacher has said is regard as a good tradition in Chinese culture.

7. Conclusion

7.1. Summary of the Research

This research aims to explore the application of "three dimensional" mode in the teaching design of Practical English Writing in Chinese higher vocational colleges. Contrastive analysis of qualitative and quantitative data

reveals the following facts: this mode is much more effective in cultivation the learner's comprehensive writing competence, promoting the learner's communicative writing competence, enhancing the efficiency, validity and reliability of the assessment and feedback, reducing the teacher's workload and the student's writing anxiety in practice.

7.2. Limitation of the Research

This research tries to explore and investigate the effectiveness of the "three dimensional" on the writing performance of Chinese EFL learners in Practical English Writing class. The reliability of the findings of this research is limited for the following reasons: Firstly, the experimental content is in narrow range-mainly taking the common paperwork into account. Secondly, the subjects of this experiment lack variety, they all come from three majors and two colleges. Thirdly, numerous factors can affect the teaching effect. Fourthly, this research narrows the description of the design of this mode other than contrastive analysis of qualitative and quantitative data. Fifthly, the total scores of the texts and test cannot be equal to writing performance or competence. Therefore, further investigation should base on larger variety of subjects, topics and samples, more detailed analyses of correlation of various factors. Moreover, the cognitive or psychological effect of the teaching strategy can be taken into account as well.

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