A COMMON CULTURE, INDIVIDUAL VOICES: AN ETHNOGRAPHIC 
CASE STUDY OF FIVE CHINESE STUDENT WRITERS 

DISSERTATION 

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By 

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I have been interested in the writing of Chinese students since 1983, when I first went to Chongqing, China to teach English in a middle school. The textbooks from which the students were taught were written by Chinese English professors, the majority of whom had never been to an English-speaking country, and many of whom had never spoken to a native English speaker. Therefore, the theoretical foundations on which these textbooks were based and the choice of which aspects of the English language were taught were entirely based on Chinese culture.

As an example, I was asked to read aloud and record the readings and exercises in the seventh -- twelfth grade English textbooks. The content of these readings were heavily and overtly political, with many stories about strong, selfless, workers who had freed the downtrodden proletariat from the exploitive, capitalist evils of the bourgeoisie. In addition, the exercises accompanying the text were composed entirely of grammar and vocabulary translation exercises, with instructions given in Chinese. The explanations of
vocabulary and grammar points were also entirely in Chinese, as were explanations about the readings. Of the ten English teachers at the middle school, eight conducted their English classes entirely in Chinese. Of these eight, four could not speak or comprehend English well enough to hold a conversation with me. Considering that the students had been taught that English was more like a series of mathematical formulas than a living, breathing language, I encouraged my students, who had never composed in English before, to write freely and creatively in English, using such genres as poetry and narrative.

After leaving Chongqing, I taught academic writing in Hangzhou, China for a year, where I helped students learn to write statements of purpose and other documents to prepare them to study in an English-speaking country. These students had no inclination to write creatively; they wanted models they could follow more or less verbatim. When I went to Taipei, Taiwan for two years in order to teach English and study Chinese, I also taught academic writing for students preparing to study abroad. These students had all achieved above a 500 on the TOEFL exam, in large part due to the TOEFL “cram” schools where they took practice test after practice test until they were fast enough and knew enough about the nuances in the test to succeed. Many of these students, however, upon entrance to my writing class, could not write a coherent paragraph in English. They, like their counterparts in China, wanted models to follow, a pattern to “plug in to,” they didn’t want to write
creatively, or use writing as a thinking process. In the four years I taught writing in China and Taiwan, I read the essays and other writings of over three hundred Chinese students and hence became very familiar with the expectations of Chinese students when writing in English, as well as some of their major strengths and weaknesses.

The seeds of this particular study were planted several years ago when I was teaching two advanced ESL academic writing classes, one for undergraduates, the other for graduate students. I was busily grading papers one evening and feeling rather irritated by the errors in my Chinese students' writing -- why did they always seem to make the same mistakes? Their introductions were much too general, often beginning with an obvious or stereotyped sentence, such as "All people in the world know that divorce causes mental illness in children." From that very general statement to the end of the paragraph a thesis statement would possibly (or not) emerge, for example: "People with children should not be allowed to divorce." Their essays would habitually end by directly addressing the reader: "I think divorce is dangerous for children, don't you agree?"

Additionally, when my Chinese students used outside sources in their writing, they would often include large chunks of the original text, generally without proper citation. The graduate students frequently used a considerable amount of jargon and left key terms undefined.
On a grammatical level, both the undergraduate and the graduate writing exhibited unusual verb tense usage -- a tendency to use past perfect instead of simple past or present perfect, or, on the other hand, using only simple present, habitually without the third person singular marker. When the articles *a, an* and *the* were present in a text, they were more often used incorrectly than correctly. Why could I (and many other ESL teachers) relatively easily determine a Chinese student's writing? Were there factors in the Chinese language in general and in Chinese writing in particular that influenced students to write in a particular rhetorical style? Why did these students have such difficulty mastering the English article system? These questions naturally led me to explore studies in contrastive rhetoric, whose purpose is to analyze the differences and similarities among languages in their written forms. I thought that perhaps if I learned what these differences were and where they originated, I could discover a method to resolve some of the problems my Chinese students faced when writing in English.

As that quarter in which I was teaching the two advanced ESL academic writing classes continued and I met in weekly conferences with the students, I got to know two of the Chinese students particularly well: Chester Bao, a graduate student from a rural commune in China, and Jimmy Ng, an undergraduate business major from Malaysia. Jimmy's first paper included sentences similar to the examples previously cited; it was basically an unsupported, conventional reply to a complex problem: he stated that the
reason why the divorce rate in America was so high and why American children have so much trouble in and out of school is because American women work outside the home. Yet one of his final essays was a well-documented and thought-provoking exposition on why American women work and how this has influenced the structure and expectations of American family life. Jimmy's final assignment for the class had a gripping introduction about his cousin, a young Chinese widow who had no real job skills and who was having a very difficult time raising three young children with very little support. In the body of this essay he explored ways in which Malaysian government and business interests could hire and train women so they could become more independent and not have to face the problems his cousin had had. His conclusion was a hypothetical yet plausible example in which he applied his suggestions to his cousin's situation. By learning about Jimmy's background (defined here as his previous experience combined with his previously acquired skills and beliefs)-- he was a devout Roman Catholic and therefore had a very negative opinion of divorce, he had had some experience working with his father in his family's large, highly-successful plywood business and therefore had some business knowledge, and he felt very sad about the plight of his widowed cousin -- I could help Jimmy to incorporate his beliefs and experiences into his writing. Through the course of the quarter Jimmy's writing evolved from a highly structured yet simply
argued impersonal essay to a sophisticated, thought-provoking, well-documented piece of academic writing.

Chester had very little in common with Jimmy except for his Chinese origin. Chester Bao had been sent by his government to the U.S. to study Poultry Science at the graduate level. Chester's first assignment for his graduate academic writing class seemed to be an almost unintelligible rambling - there was no documentation for his claims, his writing was filled with undefined terms, there was no identifiable thesis statement, and his paper just stopped; it did not conclude: there were no explanations why the points he mentioned were important, or how his ideas related to other research in his field. In addition, there were large chunks of undocumented text taken from other sources. His final assignment, however, was a clearly-organized, highly-detailed fifteen page research report that was later accepted for publication. As in the case with Jimmy, once I learned more about Chester's background, the better I was able to help facilitate his development as a writer of graduate-level English. Chester had not done well in his previous English classes either in China or the United States, and considered English writing a difficult, unpleasant, albeit necessary, task. As a new graduate student he felt unqualified to express his scholarly opinions. Yet Chester's scholarly work was his passion: he was attempting to find a method to acclimate turkeys to Southern China's climate so that they could be used as a new, healthy source of protein to feed his country's booming population.
Before Chester came to the U.S. he had worked for several years on a large, experimental poultry farm in China, where he had learned information about raising poultry that was relatively unknown in America. By helping Chester become aware that the knowledge and experience that he had was valuable, I was able to convince him of the power of his academic authority, which he became more comfortable in asserting in his writing.

The Nature of the Problem and a Rationale

Jimmy and Chester are products of a culture that may define and hence teach academic writing in ways that are much different from what is found in American academic writing. For example, from my teaching experience in China and Taiwan I know that composition in English and Chinese is often limited to in-class essay writing that often follows a set model; the process approach that permeates most ESL writing classes in the U.S. is rarely found in an EFL setting in China. From my experience studying and reading Chinese, I know that Chinese writing differs from English writing on the levels of discourse, rhetoric, and grammar. On the discourse level (i.e., extra-textual factors such as audience), e.g., a good Chinese essay often explicitly invites the reader to "listen" to the writer's words, and ends not by restating what the writer has already said, but instead by encouraging the reader to think further on the topic. Further, on the level of rhetoric (i.e., within the
text itself), plagiarism has not traditionally been considered as a negative quality in Chinese writing – it has been assumed that the reader and writer share the same body of knowledge, and if the reader doesn't know who first had an idea, and if the reader considers it important to know, s/he can find the source. And in terms of grammar, I know that the Chinese language does not have the grammatical equivalent of the English articles a, an, and the, and time does not necessarily determine the tense of a verb as it typically does in English.

Yet, although both of their English writing exhibited some of the problems discussed previously, the examples of Jimmy and Chester clearly illustrate that each student is an individual who brings a unique set of academic and non-academic thoughts, emotions, beliefs, experiences and purposes to the classroom. These factors shape how they write in English, why they write in English, and how they approach writing in English. Therefore, in addition to drawing upon contrastive rhetoric to study the written product, I examined two areas of study that addressed more global issues and factors that may influence the way students undertake ESL writing: the instructional approach, i.e., the process approach, which many of the students are taught when they take ESL writing classes in the U.S., and the concept of academic discourse community. I additionally drew on the field of ethnography and ethnographic research.
Ethnographic research in education emphasizes that there are factors, such as students' individual experiences, cultures, and ethnic communities, which are outside of the classroom and/or academic community that may influence how a student addresses his/her academic tasks (Heath, 1983; Rosenfeld, 1971; Ward, 1971). In the words of Wolcott (1987), researchers who conduct ethnographic studies should:

... view our subjects as people, rather than people as our subjects: to realize that people live fully contextualized lives in which one is a human being all the time, but a student, or teacher, or administrator for only part of the time — and not necessarily the time of one's most interesting or fulfilling moments (49).

In ESL writing research, the term *ethnography* is often applied to any study that:

- takes the researcher out of the artificial environment of the laboratory and into the real space of writing, the collective consciousness of people making and then sharing meaning, so that both researcher and subject become participants in the research process (Krapels, 1990,p.51).

While most of the research that Krapels (1990) defines as "ethnographies," could more accurately be described as case studies, the use of ethnographic *methods* (participant observation, open-ended interviews, and triangulated inquiry, all conducted in a naturalistic setting) in conducting research in ESL writing has become increasingly popular in recent years (for example, Johns,
1992; Leki, 1995; Zamel, 1990). However, most of this research has been undertaken within the confines and in the terms of the academic community, and primarily from the perspective of the researcher (Johns, 1992; Zamel, 1990). Little of this research has been conducted from the students' (i.e., the subject/participants') perspective. It has not examined what ESL students think about their own academic writing and what processes they undergo when they write; why they make the choices they do when they write; what role the students believe their native language plays in the completion of their writing tasks; how they perceive their negotiations with their peers and teacher within the classroom; nor how other parts of their life outside of their classroom may affect their writing in English.

In order to address the issues of negotiations of the students with their teachers and their peers, I drew upon work in academic discourse community/ies, which can generally be defined as a group of individuals (in this case, the students and the teacher) who share common interests (composing in English) and who share conventions in communicating about these interests (the completion of a written product). As Bizzell (1992) points out, a discourse community frequently includes historical, cultural, and socioeconomic factors that shape its views; or in the terms of Schutz (1963), members of a discourse community have a shared "social reality." According to Schutz, social reality is based on three constructs: the reciprocity of knowledge, the social origin of knowledge, and the social distribution of
knowledge (p.313). In this study I was interested in determining how this shared "social reality" influenced how and what the students wrote.

Accordingly, with this grounding in contrastive rhetoric, academic discourse community, and ethnographic research, I conducted an ethnographic case study of five undergraduate Chinese students in order to discover what the students themselves had to say about their writing. One reason why this case study is ethnographic is in terms of the methods used: observation, participant observation, analysis of all student-generated text, use of a native-language informant-interviewer, teacher interviews, and open-ended holistic interviews using both Chinese and English (Spindler and Spindler, 1987). While much ethnographic research in education has the teacher in the role of participant-observer and the students in the roles of subject, I purposely chose to study students whom I was not teaching at the time the study was conducted. I felt that since the teacher is clearly the primary holder of power in a classroom setting, I questioned whether the information I would receive from my own students would be what they truly believed, or instead, what they thought I wanted to hear (Zeki, 1993). I therefore used an informant-interviewer to determine if the students would feel more comfortable talking in their native language instead of English, and hence be more open and/or thorough in their responses. Another reason for using a native-language informant-interviewer was that he served as a source of knowledge for Chinese culture, especially in terms of education in general
and literacy education more specifically. The interviews that I and the informant-interviewer held were open-ended with a holistic focus on all aspects of the students' lives and experiences that may have influenced their writing, not just their experiences within the language classroom.

However, the reason that most clearly defines this study as ethnographic in perspective is the telling of the story. As Wolcott (1987) notes, "ultimately there is only one test of ethnography: the satisfactoriness of the completed account" (p.42). According to Wolcott (1987), ethnographic research should "seek or intend to seek cultural interpretation" (p.54). Wolf (1992) mentions that when conducting ethnographic research where "human behavior is the data, a tolerance for ambiguity, multiplicity, contradiction, and instability is essential" (p.129). I believe that the expression of these ambiguities (through the researcher's voice and/or through the voices of the researched) is equally essential in the written account, since they play an important role in what data is included and how that data is analyzed and presented. I have therefore consciously decided to refer to my subjects, their teachers, and the Chinese informant/interviewer by name (albeit pseudonyms). In addition, I am writing about my own experiences in the first person so as to emphasize the fact that we are "human beings all the time," and to present as clearly and completely as possible the array of voices which were present throughout the course of this study: primarily the voices of the
students, but additionally the voices of their teachers, the voice of the Chinese informant-interviewer, and my own.

In addition to exploring what the students think about their own academic writing, their native language use in the completion of their writing tasks, and how other parts of their life outside of their classroom may affect their writing in English, I was interested in researching whether the students actually implemented the process approach so often presented in ESL textbooks (Schenk, 1988; Smalley and Ruetten, 1990; Smoke, 1992) while they were composing, and whether or not they believed that approach is effective. I was also interested in discovering if the processes the students use to write in English are the same as when they write in Chinese, since the studies that have addressed these issues (Arndt, 1987; Raimes, 1985, 1987; Zamel, 1983) have had conflicting findings. Zamel (1983) found that composing ability transfers from L1 to L2 (Krapels, 1990), while Arndt (1987) and Raimes (1985) found that L2 writers compose differently than L1 writers (Krapels, 1990).

Focus of the Study

I conducted an ethnographic case study of five Chinese students taking an advanced ESL composition course at a small midwestern university to discover how Chinese students negotiate their writing tasks both inside and
outside the ESL classroom. The purpose of this study more specifically was to
determine what they themselves believe about their writing, whether the
processes the students undergo to finish these tasks are similar to those that
are taught in ESL writing texts, or similar to those they use in their native
culture and/or in their native language, or a combination of both approaches.
I was also interested in ascertaining how much (if any) Chinese the students
used while composing in English. More specifically, in gathering data, I was
guided by the following questions:

1. Do the students follow the "process approach" as it is often taught in
   ESL writing textbooks and composition courses when completing a
   writing task? Are the processes the Chinese students undergo when
   composing in Chinese similar to or different from the processes they
   use when writing in English?

2. Which language(s) does the student use at each stage of the
   composing process? Is the language used dependent on the topic?
   Does the language(s) used change over time, i.e., after advanced ESL
   writing instruction?

3. In terms of discourse, rhetoric, and grammar, what, if any, factors in
   Chinese writing influence the way the students write in English?
4. How do the Chinese students approach peer work and other aspects of academic discourse community in the classroom? Do they believe that it is valid and/or effective? Are they comfortable with peer work? Do these students seek input from others, for example, those from the students' academic discourse communities outside of the ESL classroom?

5. How do the Chinese students respond to peer and teacher comments on their work? Do they have the same understanding of these comments that the peer and teacher intended? Do they implement these comments?

6. What understandings do the students themselves have about why they write, how they write, and what they choose to write about? What kind of influence do the students' prior writing histories have on their present processes and attitudes?

Limitations and Significance

Since the population was small, namely the ESL students in the advanced (043) writing class, and my non-random sample size consisted of
five students, generalizations made about the data can only refer to these participants. However, since much of current ethnographic research in ESL writing is presented from the perspective of the researcher and/or instructor (Johns, 1992; Zamel, 1990), the results should be of interest to those ESL instructors and researchers who are interested in knowing how students themselves perceive and actually negotiate their writing tasks. This study examines what these five ESL students themselves think about various aspects of their own academic writing, why they make the choices they do when they write, and how other parts of their life outside of their classroom may affect their writing in English. Additionally, this study employs an informant-interviewer who was also Chinese and who could therefore provide cultural insights concerning the ways these students compose and the way they feel about composing. Therefore, this study should encourage other ESL instructors and researchers to likewise investigate the experiences, knowledge, and various other factors their own students bring into the classroom which influence their writing in English.

Furthermore, in this study I aim to provide information and insights about ESL students and their writing tasks that can increase teacher awareness and understanding in regard to the assumptions and expectations of the students that the teacher (and the textbook) bring into his/her composition classroom. Namely, this study aims to determine whether these students actually implement the process approach presented in advanced ESL
composition textbooks (Schenk, 1988; Smalley and Ruetten, 1990; Smoke, 1992), and whether or not the students find these approaches effective and useful when composing in English.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

Because in this study I am seeking to determine the various factors that may influence how the Chinese students taking an advanced ESL composition course negotiate their ESL writing tasks both inside and outside the classroom, I am concerned with issues in contrastive rhetoric, academic discourse community (ADC), ethnographic research and the process approach as it is taught in the ESL writing context. I will therefore review the literature in the areas mentioned in terms of the Chinese students and their culture, the advanced ESL writing classroom as a discourse community, and other aspects of discourse community that emerged in this class. I will investigate the process approach in terms of classroom textbooks used that assume this approach and studies in ESL writing that examine its practice. Finally, since I believe that there are larger, sociocultural factors outside the classroom that influence ESL students' writing, I will examine ethnographic studies both in terms of their practice as a methodology and the narration of the ethnographic account.
Prior to Kaplan's groundbreaking study (1966) on contrastive rhetoric, much EFL/ESL instruction in general and writing in particular was approached from a teacher-based perspective, which considered the ESL student to be an "empty vessel," and which paid little attention to whatever first language literacy the student possessed (Adamson, 1993). Kaplan's study was an attempt to go beyond the empty vessel, to explain the way the ESL student's native language rhetorical style influenced that student's writing in English. He outlined four major patterns that he believed most languages followed, which included the Oriental pattern, which he pictured as an inwardly spiraling arrow, and the English, which was "linear and direct."

Kaplan's theory was both controversial and appealing, and served as the impetus that opened the field of contrastive rhetoric studies. Those who praised Kaplan found a systematic explanation for why many ESL teachers could seemingly intuitively tell the language background of a particular student based on a piece of that student's writing. Kaplan's critics found his models simplistic, sterotypical, and linguistically inaccurate. For example, Hinds (1983) noted that Kaplan classified languages by geographical location rather than linguistic family - Kaplan's term "Oriental" includes languages from four different families.
Studies in contrastive rhetoric that followed Kaplan's work can be seen from three perspectives: the first is research that has attempted to show the truth or falsity of Kaplan's assertions, or to find out more about specific rhetorics involved (for example, John Hinds' work primarily in Japanese (1983), but more recently in Thai and Chinese (1990) as well, and Mohan and Lo, (1985)). The second seeks to explain why ESL students write the way they do in terms of the "interference", or perhaps "influence" of their native language (Friedlander, 1990; Hall, 1990; Matelene, 1985; Reid, 1990). The last approach is from the perspective of the classroom - attempts to inform teachers of the rhetorical differences in languages (Robinson et. al, 1990; Matalene, 1985) or ways to inform students themselves of these differences, and hopefully produce better ESL writers (Liebman-Kleine, 1986; 1987; Schlumberger & Mangelsdorf, 1989; Soter & Zeki, forthcoming).

In looking for possible language-based reasons for some of the commonalities I had found in my Chinese students' writing, I first looked at studies which had analyzed Chinese writing in terms of English rhetoric. For example, Hinds (1990) discusses how in English, most expository writing is deductive, with "the thesis statement in the initial position" (p.89). He then examines writing samples in Japanese, Korean, Chinese, and Thai, and argues against Kaplan's idea that there is one basic "Oriental pattern." He proposes that although the writing samples he examines do not fit the Western conception of deductive writing, i.e., their thesis statements are not at the
beginning of the writing, the writing samples should not be called inductive, either, because they do not fit the Western pattern of inductive writing. He maintains that this dichotomy between deductive and inductive writing is false, and emphasizing this dichotomy prevents "understanding the true differences between competent English writing and competent writing in other languages" (p.90). Like Hinds (1990), Mohan and Lo (1985) argue against Kaplan's claim that Chinese students writing in English tend to follow a traditional Chinese rhetorical pattern called the Eight-Legged Essay. They used the results of a study in British Columbia and one in Hong Kong to show that the essays written by native English and nonnative English speakers did not differ significantly in organization. They posited that it may be the teaching approach (a traditional grammar focus in Hong Kong and a "process" approach in British Columbia) that influences second language writing. I find that this is a valid point worthy of further exploration -- the students I had taught in China had never been taught that writing could be a creative, learning process; they were instead taught to model a specific piece of writing in an in-class, timed essay. Little writing was done outside of class past the primary level. They had been taught to follow a fairly specific organizational pattern that was similar to a five-paragraph essay in English. The differences I had noted among my Chinese students were more in terms of development and style than organization.
The second perspective found in contrastive rhetoric research examines the influence of the native language on the way ESL students write in English. For example, Hall (1990) questioned whether ESL students write and revise in the same way for both L1 and L2. His study of four university ESL writers (a Polish woman, a French Swiss man, a Norwegian man, and a Chinese woman) found that there were many similarities in the revision strategies in L1 and L2 for these students, and Hall suggests that “an advanced ESL writer is capable of utilizing a single system of revision across languages” (p.56). Friedlander (1990) in his study of Chinese writers, found that allowing students to first plan in their native language and then write in English about a topic in which they first acquired knowledge in Chinese improved the overall quality of the composition. He posits that:

If ESL writers retrieve information about a writing topic from memory in their first language and then have to translate into English before writing anything down, this act of translation can lead to an overload of their short-term memory and a diminishment in the quality of the content of their writing (p.110).

Friedlander analyzed his data quantitatively through a computer program that ranks the quality of the essay on the basis of sentence length, number of pronouns used, etc. I question whether the quality of any writing can be judged primarily through a software package, since this totally ignores the context in which the writing was created, by whom it was created, and the
context in which it would be realistically evaluated, i.e., primarily by an instructor familiar with his/her students' writing. Nevertheless, I find the results intriguing. We ESL teachers have traditionally tended to assume that it is best for our students to write and think in English as much as possible, and this study opens the door for reconsideration of the place of the native language in ESL composition.

Reid (1990) used a discourse analysis approach and, like Friedlander, employed a quantitative analysis of ESL compositions in her study, in which she examined two kinds of thirty-minute timed essays - one type a comparison/contrast in which the students were asked to take a position, the other a graph analysis - written for the Bridgeman and Carlson (1983) study for TOEFL (see below). In her study, Reid analyzed compositions written by Arabic, Chinese, Spanish, and English speakers. Her variables included the following: fluency (number of words); lexicon (average word length, percentage of content words and pronouns); and syntax (average sentence length, and percentages of complex and short sentences and passive verbs).

In terms of the Chinese students, Reid found that they wrote significantly more on the graph topic than the comparison/contrast topic. She additionally found that they used significantly more passive voice verbs in their comparison/contrast essays than in their graph essays. Reid posits that this may be due to the students' awareness of the expectations of the "U.S. academic reader" (p.201). I, however, would be more inclined to view
these results in terms of the degree of the personal nature of the assignments involved. Analyzing a graph requires little personal investment, and is hence a task Chinese students may have had experience with and feel more comfortable writing about. Taking a position, however, takes a type of personal investment that Chinese students may not be accustomed to -- traditionally, Chinese students are not asked to express an opinion in their writing, and hence may feel more comfortable using the passive voice, with its relative anonymity. As Fan Shen’s (1989) experience shows, there is often a “clash” between Chinese students’ backgrounds, which encourages the subordination of the individual to the group, and therefore encourages the use of the passive voice and the pronouns we and our, and the requirements of English composition, which often encourages an active voice and a more individual stance, i.e. the use of the pronoun I.

Those studies conducted from the third perspective have tried to take Kaplan’s ideas directly into the classroom instead of questioning or researching the validity of contrastive rhetoric or exploring the differences in rhetorical style among various languages. For example, Robinson, et al (1990) attempted to explain Kaplan’s four rhetorical patterns to college freshman composition instructors so that the native-speaker (NS) instructors could be more tolerant of the diversity in the styles of their non-native students. However, they did not systematically explain nor explore the complexities of the languages involved, and hence concluded rather simplistically that all
patterns have merit, i.e., the Semitic pattern is poetic and digressions add interest in Romance patterns. While this study may provide basic information to those native-speaking (NS) instructors who have never been exposed to non-native-speaking (NNS) writers and/or concepts of contrastive rhetoric, it is limited in that it does not give suggestions on how these patterns should or should not be modified to conform to the conventions of a given academic discourse community.

Matalene (1985) felt empathy for her Chinese students during her one semester stay in Shaanxi, China; she looked beyond the written texts the students produced to find possible reasons for the difficulties the students faced when composing in English, such as what the students felt when writing and why they felt as they did. While I found some of her statements to be misinformed, such as there is no alphabet in the Chinese language, when in actuality, the official romanization of Chinese, known as Pinyin, has been used since 1949 from kindergarten to teach the language, and Chinese students learn the entire alphabet at that time, she does provide comments on specific characteristics of her Chinese students’ writings, such as that their writing exhibits much concrete detail. She additionally was one of the first researchers to look at possible cultural and historical factors rather than simply the written product to predict why Chinese students write the way they do; for example, she mentions Oliver’s (1971) consideration that historically in Asia, rhetoric often had a political function, which was to
announce and harmoniously arrange the acceptance of truth, in contrast to the Western tradition of arguing a political position (Leki, 1991).

Another approach has been to teach the ideas of contrastive rhetoric directly to ESL students. Schlumberger & Magelsdorf (1989) wanted to find out if after being exposed to contrastive rhetoric theory, the forty-six students in an ESL composition class would show improvement in their writing. While awareness of native language discourse patterns did not seem to influence their writing in English, Schlumberger & Magelsdorf (1989) do advocate teaching ESL students about rhetorical styles in both their native language and in English so as to make students aware of possible reasons why they write the way do.

Liebman-Kleine (1987) also had students in freshman composition classes study Kaplan’s views of contrastive rhetoric. This study, however, was more expansive than Schlumberger & Magelsdorf’s in that she used both ESL and native English speaking students. The students were asked to further research Kaplan’s theories as applied to a specific language by interviewing native speakers and by finding additional rescources in the library. They were then asked to reflect upon their own ideas and experiences in a foreign culture. In another study, Liebman-Kleine (1986) surveyed seventy-seven ESL students to determine what rhetorical structures they felt they were taught in their native language. A fascinating finding is that her students said that in all the countries but Spain, (Malaysia, Japan, Indonesia,
Iran, and some Middle Eastern countries), organization patterns that were taught were similar to the patterns taught in the United States. Liebman-Kleine explained that the differences were more in the teaching approaches - i.e., an emphasis on grammar instead of process. This finding echoes that of Mohan and Lo (1985) that it may be the teaching approach (a traditional grammar focus in Hong Kong and a "process" approach in British Columbia) rather than the language that influences second language writing.

Soter and Zeki (forthcoming) integrated the idea of writing being a communicative act taking place within a particular discourse community in their work with ESL students. Using a scheme (Soter, 1992) adapted from Hyme's (1967) categories, which could be used to describe any type of communicative event, Soter and Zeki asked their students to read through and analyze their own and their peers' writing. While this task seemed difficult in terms of their own writing, the students were much more adept at using it for peer review:

That is, although they could not articulate why they chose to write a particular piece, they could often determine why their peers had done so (p.29).

In conversation with their peers, not only did the students become aware of writing as a communicative act, which includes "writer intention and reader perception" (p.30), but they also became aware of some of the differences between their first and second language discourses. Soter and Zeki
conclude by stating that the complaint that contrastive rhetoric is not easily and in general has not been implemented directly into classroom settings is precisely why it should be used in the classroom:

Writing is not "simply" a set of skills, ... nor is communication "simply" a set of strategies. If we are to make headway in applying contrastive rhetoric in the classroom, the classroom itself must change to accommodate such factors as cultural influence in writer's choices and ... pragmatic factors that relate to the writers as well as to the texts to be created (p.31).

Leki (1991) argues that while the advantages of directly applying findings in contrastive rhetoric research in the classroom may not be readily apparent, she finds two benefits: ESL students can see that they are not inadequate or unsophisticated writers, but instead are coming from a "particular rhetorical tradition," and secondly, contrastive rhetoric can encourage students to confront straightforwardly the varied rhetorical styles and expectations native-speaker audiences have; it can serve to inform students that they themselves are members of different discourse communities. As Leki then concludes:

Contrastive rhetoric studies help us to remember that the idea of "being yourself," or writing elegantly, or communicating clearly and convincingly has no reality outside a particular cultural and rhetorical context and that our discourse community is only one of many (p.139)
Studies in contrastive rhetoric have traditionally focused on either proving, discrediting or expanding upon Kaplan's original theory (Hinds, 1983, 1990; Mohan & Lo, 1985); understanding the influence of a student's first language on his/her ESL writing (Matalene, 1985; Friedlander, 1990, Hall, 1990); or attempting to practice Kaplan's theory in the classroom (Leibman-Kleine, 1986, 1987; Schlumberger & Mangelsdorf, 1989). Little of this research, however has examined what the students themselves may already know about the differences between their native language and English, and how this knowledge may affect the way they write. I was therefore interested in discovering what the students in this study perceived to be the major differences between Chinese and English, and how these differences may impact their composing in English.

Academic Discourse Community

The work in contrastive rhetoric and other student-centered research and approaches has led those in ESL to follow along the lines of research and scholarship done by native English rhetoricians and look at what has been termed the academic discourse community and its possible influence on ESL students' academic success. Porter (1986), as mentioned previously, defines discourse community as "a group of individuals bound by a common interest
who communicate through approved channels and whose discourse is regulated" (p.38).

Herzberg (1986, in Swales, 1990) noted that the term was originally used most commonly in "writing across the curriculum and academic English" pedagogies and is used to:

signify a cluster of ideas: that language use in a group is a form of social behavior, that discourse is a means of maintaining and extending the group's knowledge and of initiating new members into the group, and that discourse is epistemic or constitutive of the group's knowledge (p.21).

Swales (1991) expands on this definition by proposing the following six criteria for determining whether a group is a discourse community or not. The first is that "a discourse community has a broadly agreed set of common public goals" (p.24). These goals may be either written or assumed, and are usually public, and at times, abstract. The second characteristic is that "a discourse community has mechanisms of intercommunication among its members" (p.25). These mechanisms may be meetings, newsletters, correspondence, or in the academic discourse community, professional journals. Thirdly, "A discourse community uses its participatory mechanisms primarily to provide information and feedback" (p.26). There is ongoing communication among members.
The fourth characteristic is that "a discourse community utilizes and hence possesses one or more genres in the communicative furtherance of its aims" (p.26). Genre here means the language that is used to accomplish specific actions. The fifth is that "In addition to owning genres, a discourse community has acquired some specific lexis" (p.26). This lexis most often includes acronyms and abbreviations. The last criteria is that "A discourse community has a threshold level of members with a suitable degree of relevant content and discoursal expertise" (p.27). This implies that for a discourse community to survive, it must have a "reasonable ratio between novices and experts" (p.27).

Like Swales, Bizzell (1992) sees a discourse community as "a group of people who share certain language-using practices" (p.222). She takes a step further than Swales, however, when she maintains that these practices are controlled by stylistic conventions, which "regulate social interactions both within the group and in its dealings with outsiders," and by canonical knowledge, which "regulates the world views of group members, how they interpret experience" (p.222). Bizzell takes into account that there are most likely historical, socioeconomic and cultural factors that shape a discourse community and its views, and that many members of that community may not be consciously aware of these factors.

An "academic discourse community" can thus be defined as broadly as all persons engaged in scholarly pursuit who follow the conventions
mentioned above, such as professors and students, or as specifically as a set of persons in that larger group who share the same specific intellectual interests, such as ESL writing instructors. I see "academic discourse community" as a term that should most often be viewed in the plural; any one person may belong to several academic discourse communities at the same time, and these memberships may overlap, and additionally, of course, change over time. As an example, a Chinese graduate student may belong to an academic discourse community based on her being Chinese and a graduate student, and which focuses on the understanding and negotiation of academic culture in the U.S from a Chinese perspective (for example, the large midwestern university where I am a student has a "Chinese Students and Scholars Association"). She as a linguistics major, may additionally belong to an ADC consisting solely of graduate students in linguistics who have a nationwide membership complete with its own newsletter and conferences. She also must belong to the general ADC of linguistics, and hence familiarize herself with the "scientific" rhetoric that is preferred in theoretical linguistics, and additionally, she must be familiar with the specific ADC in her major area, such as the IPA (International Phonetics Alphabet) that is used to represent sounds in Phonetics and Phonology. In this study I was interested in determining what the students knew about their own various academic communities; for example, their ESL composition classroom, their major, content-area academic community, and their cultural academic community
(i.e., other Chinese undergraduate students on campus), and how membership in these communities may influence their writing in English.

Research that has examined the relationship between the ESL student and the larger academic community (i.e., faculty, mainly in content courses, and students) can be seen from three perspectives. The first has explored how ESL students' language use is judged by members of this general academic discourse community, and has focused mainly on error in composition (Janapoulos, 1992; Santos, 1988; Vann, Meyer, and Lorenz, 1984, 1991). The second approach has studied what kinds of tasks students will have to perform once they are in college content courses (Bridgeman and Carlson, 1983; Horowitz, 1986), while the third has looked at what ESL teachers should do to help prepare their students for the academic discourse community (Horowitz, 1986; Spack, 1988, 1994).

The University as Academic Discourse Community

The Vann, Meyer, and Lorenz (1984) survey is illustrative of this first approach. They asked ten ESL teachers to list what they considered to be the most bothersome grammatical errors, and then examples of twelve types of errors the teachers had found most troublesome were drawn from ESL student writings and collected in a survey. This survey was subsequently distributed to faculty from various departments at Iowa State, and the faculty
members were asked to rank the errors according to acceptability. Vann et al (1984) found that overall, word order errors were considered least acceptable and spelling errors most acceptable.

A similar study was Bridgeman and Carlson's (1983) extensive survey for TOEFL. In this survey, questionnaires were received from a total of 190 academic departments at 34 universities. This study differed from Vann et al's (1994) study in that it not only asked about the effect of grammatical errors such as sentence structure and vocabulary usage on faculty evaluation, but the effect of rhetorical considerations as well, such as paper organization, idea development, and content quality. Bridgeman and Carlson (1983) found that the majority of respondents considered rhetorical concerns more important than "sentence-level characteristics" (sentence structure, vocabulary, punctuation, etc.).

A major limitation of both of these studies is that they focused only on the characteristics of the faculty on evaluation by asking instructors how they evaluate a paper; what the instructors say and think they do when they evaluate a paper may or may not be what actually happens. Moreover, these studies did not consider the effect other factors, such as the student's performance in other areas of the class, may have on evaluation. Whether a student participated actively in the particular class, if the professor's impression of the student was favorable or not, and how the student
performed on other evaluated, non-written tasks (such as presentations) may affect the professor’s evaluation as much as the actual writing.

Santos' (1988) study differed from the aforementioned research by using whole, student-generated texts in her survey. Santos asked 178 professors to read, rate and correct one of two academic, five-paragraph essays written by a Korean student and a Chinese student. The professors rated the essays based on both content (including holistic impression, development, and sophistication) and language (comprehensibility, acceptability, and irritation). In the first part of the study, the professors were asked to correct the errors they found. Santos then corrected the essays, but left in all occurrences of the ten errors considered most salient by the professors. The essays were retyped, and ten sentences which included the ten errors were typed separately, and re-distributed to the professors for evaluation. Santos found that the professors did make a difference in their judgement of content and language, and generally were much more strict on content; i.e., they were much more "forgiving" of grammatical errors, such as a missing third-person singular "-s", and other errors that did not impede comprehension.

Vann, Meyer, and Lorenz updated their original survey in 1991. In this second study, 290 faculty members, who provided information about their age, gender, department, etc., responded to a questionnaire in which they read and responded to two essays (taken from an ESL textbook) which had been altered to include repeated occurrences of only one type of error - either article
usage, verb tenses, or spelling. They found that verb tense problems were judged by the faculty to be more serious than article and spelling errors; i.e., they were considered more irritating, less appropriate, and less acceptable.

In a more recent study, Janopoulous (1992) used the same list of sentences as Vann, Meyer, and Lorenz (1984) to ascertain whether faculty judged the errors of native-speaker writing differently than nonnative-speaker writing. Approximately half of the respondents were told that the errors were made by nonnative speakers (NNS), while the other half assumed that the errors were made by native speakers (NS). Janopoulous (1992) found that the faculty tended to be more tolerant of some errors, such as articles, it-deletion, tense, agreement, and word order, when committed by NNS student writers than when committed by NS student writers, although the overall difference in tolerance was not statistically significant.

While all of these studies have proved helpful in ascertaining what kind of expectations in terms of grammar and rhetoric ESL students may face from non-ESL faculty, they also have limitations and raise questions for further exploration. While the Santos (1988) study is admirable for its use of authentic, ESL-student generated essays, her choice of topic on which the students wrote seems inappropriate for a study such as this: the students were asked to choose three things that may be misunderstood by people outside their culture, and to explain them so that they would not be misinterpreted. This topic may seem innocuous to a globally-aware ESL teacher who has had
much experience with cultures that are different from his/her own, and who probably respects those differences. However, people outside of this field may immediately feel that they are put on the defensive when they read about such a topic, especially since in both essays the student writers had repeatedly referred to Americans as "strangers" and "foreigners," and either stated or implied that Americans don't have close family ties, are somewhat ethnocentric, etc. The use of a less culturally loaded and more academic topic, such as an interpretation of a graph, may have elicited a quite different response from the faculty respondents. The Vann, Meyer, and Lorenz (1991) study also suffers from weak text choice: they artificially altered two essays which were taken from an ESL textbook and had been written by the native-English speaking authors of the book. Their respondents were then asked to evaluate an essay which had only one type of error repeated over 30% of the text. In real ESL student writing, students usually make a variety of mistakes within a text, not just one type. The essays chosen by Vann, Meyer, and Lorenz (1991) hence did not realistically reflect the kind of text these non-ESL faculty would receive and evaluate from their NNS students. In addition, Janopoulos (1992) used decontextualized sentences in his survey, arguing that most research in this area has used this type of data and it makes execution and control easier, and that "writing errors do not have to be considered at the discourse level to affect that reader's overall impression of the paper" (p.112). This seems to be a rather large, unsubstantiable claim, especially
since it contradicts some of the findings mentioned above (Janopolous, 1992; Santos, 1988).

Future research in academic discourse community that examines how non-ESL faculty evaluate the writing of ESL students should aim at providing a setting as naturalistic and realistic as possible: i.e., it should take into account the dynamics of the classroom and of student-teacher relationships; it should make clear what writing is written by native speakers and what is written by non-native speakers; and it should use authentic, student-generated writing on non-controversial topics that may approximate real tasks NNS students may be asked to complete in a non-ESL university class.

**Writing Tasks in Non-ESL Classrooms**

The second approach has studied what kinds of tasks students will have to perform once they are in college content courses (Bridgeman and Carlson, 1983; Horowitz, 1986). The previously mentioned Bridgeman and Carlson (1983) study not only considered what non-ESL faculty thought was important when evaluating a student’s writing, but also studied what kinds of writing assignments those faculty asked of their students. One part of their survey asked the respondents to indicate how many times per semester a specific writing task would be assigned in a first-year undergraduate course. The most commonly assigned writing tasks in descending order were the
following: essay exams, brief research reports, a brief summary of an article, longer research reports, and lab reports or experiments. Expository writing, case studies, and group writing were less commonly assigned, with only seven respondents saying that they assign creative writing at all. The limitations of these findings are similar to the ones mentioned previously; namely, that the faculty were not given a chance to independently decide what they assigned, i.e., they were limited to the nine tasks above, and the professors' definitions and/or understandings of the above were not discussed; for example, how many pages constituted a brief or longer research report. An additional limitation is there is no way to determine if what the professors say they do is what what they actually do.

In order to remedy some of the limitations of the Bridgeman and Carlson (1983) study, Horowitz (1986) requested members of the faculty to provide tests which required students to write and their class handouts of written assignments. Although his response rate was extremely low, the responses were interesting because they fell into seven categories, four of which were similar to Bridgeman and Carlson's (summary of/reaction to a reading, report on a "specified participatory experience" (p. 449), case studies, and research projects) and three that were not, namely, annotated bibliographies, connections of theory and data, and syntheses of multiple sources. What Horowitz found most surprising in his data was the controlled nature of many of the assignments; the students were given detailed and
explicit instructions to follow. Horowitz claims that in advanced ESL composition for academic purposes classes, writing should be assigned that mirrors these controlled tasks, so as to “insure the maximum transferability” (p.460) of the skills taught.

**ESL Student Initiation into the Academic Discourse Community**

The third approach to academic discourse community has looked at what ESL teachers should do to help prepare their students for the academic discourse community. Horowitz (1986) in the abovementioned study provides three ways in which ESL teachers can encourage and facilitate their students' entrance into the academic community. He first mentions academic support courses, in which "the students, along with their ESL teacher, attend a specified university course" (p.455). Secondly, he proposes that students with similar majors should be put in the same EAP classes, and use topics that come from those areas as content for the class. Lastly, he suggests that the class syllabus should be organized "around topic-centered units of general interest, perhaps chosen by the students themselves" (p.456).

Spack (1988) offers several critiques of Horowitz's study. She notes that the context in which the assignments were given were ignored, and that the number of respondents was extremely small - only 36 faculty members responded out of the 750 who were asked. Spack goes on to explain that one
of the reasons why the response rate was so low could be due to the unwillingness of the faculty members "to show English teachers their own poorly written or poorly designed texts" (p.33). She argues that we as ESL teachers should not be overly concerned with simulating the kind of writing required in an academic writing class, especially since she feels much of this writing is not "good writing." Her distaste for scientific writing is apparent in her extensive quoting of Woodford (1967), saying that "this kind of writing is damaging to the students who read it ... it adversely affects students' ability to read, write and think well" (p.39). She states in her conclusion that:

The English composition course is and should be a place where students are provided the enrichment of reading and writing that provoke thought and foster their intellectual and ethical development (p.46).

**Summary of Academic Discourse Community**

Although the studies that have utilized the three approaches discussed above regarding ESL students and the larger academic discourse community was obviously conducted in the interest of the students, they all approached the academic discourse community in terms of the people who already were members of this community, i.e., what faculty does or should do within the ESL or academic content classroom. These studies have not considered what the student him/herself believes about the importance of discourse
community, how a student may or may not define the community, or what the student may already know about the academic discourse community, based on both past and current experience and expectations. In addition, these studies have not investigated other aspects of a foreign student's life in the U.S. which may have an effect on his/her academic work.

My study is an attempt to address some of these overlooked factors by probing into what the five undergraduate Chinese students themselves had to say about their writing, in terms of errors they find most problematic, what kind of writing tasks they feel are relevant to their membership in their non-ESL academic community, and what they perceive the purpose of an ESL composition class should be. Because I was interested in determining what other factors outside of the classroom may influence a student's writing, I used an ethnographic approach and ethnographic methods (Spindler & Spindler, 1987): observation, participant observation, analysis of all student-generated text, use of a native-language informant-interviewer, teacher interviews, and open-ended holistic interviews using both Chinese and English that focused on all aspects of the students' lives and experiences that may have influenced their writing in their ESL writing classrooms. By employing triangulated inquiry, I attempt to present a full account of my students' thoughts on and experiences with writing.
Ethnographic Studies

**Ethnography and Schooling**

The use of ethonography to study classrooms and schooling has had a long and varied history in the field of educational anthropology, beginning with Barnes and Barnes pioneering 1896 study, *Education among the Aztecs* to Jones' work in Africa in the 1920's, to work begun in the 1930's up through the 1970's on urban, rural, and minority communities in the United States (Hollingshead, 1949; Lynd and Lynd, 1937; Roberts, 1967; all in Eddy, 1987). More recent ethnographies of schooling in the U.S. include Hart's (1982) study, *Analyzing the Social Organization for Reading in One Elementary School* and Gibson's (1987) *Punjabi Immigrants in an American High School*.

However, some of the most interesting and informative ethnographies of schooling are those in which the researcher ventured into the larger community beyond the formal school, however that may have been defined (Gay and Cole, 1967; Heath, 1983; Rosenfeld, 1971; Ward, 1971). These ethnographies provide insight into the fact that while schooling is certainly an important part of any student's life, it does not completely define it. The students' experiences, culture and community play an integral part in shaping the school environment as much as the school environment shapes the
student. As an example, in his study of a school in Harlem, Rosenfeld (1971) speaks of a child, Rosie, who was considered lazy, irresponsible and dull by her teachers because she frequently fell asleep in class, was often truant, and while she had studied in English-only schools all her life, often asked her Spanish-speaking classmates for help and/or translations. While taking a walk in Rosie's neighborhood with her after class one day, Rosenfeld discovered that she was the oldest of seven children of a single mother and was therefore responsible for her younger siblings. She had to miss school if other childcare was unavailable, and stayed up the nights her mother worked the late shift. Her extended family mainly included relatives who were unable or unwilling to speak with her in English. Through his encounters with the child, her culture, and her community outside of the school environment, it became obvious that neither laziness, dullness nor irresponsibility were the reasons for Rosie's problems at school. Her problems at school were due to her overwhelming responsibility for her siblings, and her lack of proper nutrition, adequate rest, and time in which to do her homework. Had Rosenfeld conducted his study solely within the confines of the classroom or school building, these factors that determined the child's actions and roles in school would probably have remained unknown. While in this particular study I did not have the opportunity to directly observe the students outside of the university setting, the realization that there are often influences outside the classroom that affect a student's
behavior inside the classroom encouraged me to investigate and discuss with the students what other, non-academic factors, such as whether or not the student had a job, may have affected their performance in class.

**Ethnographic Methods in the Study of Language Learning**

Studying more recent literature uncovers many studies which have used either ethnography or ethnographic case studies (Green and Wallet, 1981; Heath, 1983; Ogbu, 1988; etc.) to determine the effect of culture on first language learning and literacy. Szwed (1988) in *The Ethnography of Literacy* even goes so far as to claim that "...ethnographic methods, in fact, are the only means for finding out what literacy really is and what can be validly measured" (p.309), since in his opinion, schools and other educational institutions make assumptions about what the literacy needs of a particular student may be which "seem to not be born out by the students' day-to-day lives" (p.308).

After reading these studies, I came to realize what little we as teachers of university ESL know about our students' lives outside of the classroom, and how other, cultural aspects of the students lives may impact their attitudes and beliefs about language learning, how the students perform their academic tasks, and how they participate in the ESL classroom. As Johnson (1992) states:
We have much yet to gain by employing ethnographic approaches to understanding second and foreign language learners in high schools, colleges, and varied adult educational and workplace settings (p.135).

**Ethnographic Methods in ESL Writing**

Researchers who study the writing of diverse student populations in general and ESL writing particularly have only recently begun to use ethnographic methods, such as case studies that focus not only on a particular classroom, but also on sociocultural concerns as well. One of the most comprehensive studies, of a basic writing adjunct program, was conducted by Anne DiPardo (1992). In this study she thoroughly investigated the program and its entire community through in-depth interviews at every level, including college administrators, English department faculty, the adjunct instructors and group leaders, and four ethnically and linguistically diverse students. She additionally went to all campus events about student diversity, such as lectures, and she analyzed a wide variety of student and instructor writing. Research in ESL writing specifically that has taken an ethnographic approach has primarily focused on case study. I am considering these case studies as ethnographic in approach as they have also focused on the students' relationships with and negotiations of the academic discourse community, and have also looked at these issues through the experiences and

One of the seminal studies in ESL to employ ethnographic methods was Zamel's (1990) case study of three ESL writers, in which she interviewed the three students, their teachers, and their tutors. She also observed their classrooms, in which she took notes on the focus of instruction, the classroom interaction, and the roles of the students and teachers over a two-semester period. Zamel found that while these students showed much progress the first semester, in the second semester they got discouraged. Zamel believes this was caused by the teachers' emphasis on a model of teaching which only approved a particular type of academic discourse. When the students' efforts to establish their own understandings resulted in writing which was substandard, Zamel was disappointed that the students' individual renditions were ignored and misunderstood.

In their case studies, instead of focusing on the teachers' understanding of the students and their writing, Johns (1992) and Leki (1995) looked at the learning strategies students use to negotiate and complete their academic writing tasks. Johns (1992) interviewed Tic, a Laotian freshman, for twenty minutes every week over a semester and observed her in a content course (cultural anthropology). She additionally collected all her writings (including exams) for both the anthropology class and Tic's portfolio for her adjunct English class.
Johns found Tic to be a successful student based not only on Tic's
"feeling of self-worth and pride in her culture and accomplishments, inspired
by years of adversity" (p.187), but also due to her learning strategies, which
included her ability and enjoyment in relating her academic experiences to
her other, non-academic experiences. She also could ascertain what to focus
on and how to successfully manage her time when taking an exam. She
looked "for underlying structures and concepts rather than concentrating
upon the facts alone" (p.191). She additionally had a keen grasp of the
importance of audience in her writing, and practiced writing out responses to
her essay exams in advance. While Tic's writing showed minor, sentence-
level grammatical mistakes, she effectively edited for "metadiscourse
features" such as transition words and other connectors.

Leki's (1995) case study of five ESL students focused on the learning
strategies those students employed in negotiation and completion of the
assignments in their academic content courses. Like Johns, she also
interviewed the students and their professors, observed the relevant courses,
and collected all the students' writings for those particular courses.
Additionally, she asked the students to keep an academic journal, in which
they wrote about whatever they judged important in relation to their classes.
She found that the students predominantly used ten learning strategies in
completing their assignments: clarifying strategies to be sure they knew the
requirements of the assignment; focusing strategies, which were used to
attend to the assignment; using past writing experiences; using current feedback or models; looking for appropriate models; using past or current ESL writing training; giving in to teacher demands; resisting teachers demands, and managing competing demands (p.240).

While the first seven strategies mentioned are not too surprising, the last three deserve further explanation. Leki found that some students would highlight the fact that they were international students by including something about their home culture in their assignments whenever possible. For example, in her behavioral geography class, a Taiwanese student constantly compared another culture to China in her written assignments, in spite of her professor asking her not to. This example illustrates how a student successfully employed the final strategy, resisting a teacher's demands, by highlighting the fact that she is an ESL student. The student's use of this strategy was effective in that the student received what she felt to be an acceptable grade. Leki found that four out of the five students employed the resistance strategy effectively. The other student discovered that for him, it was important to give in to the teacher's demands instead of resisting so he could get a higher mark on a subsequent paper; he used more critique and fewer quotes in his second summary and response for his political science class.

In her case study, Connor (1994) not only looked at learning strategies used, but also looked at larger socio-cultural factors as well. She found that
Timo, a Finnish Ph.D. student in economics, did not implement his professors' suggestions for textual revisions in a paper, although the professor and peers agreed on the importance of the suggestions. Timo did, however, implement grammatical corrections.

Connor posits that Timo's cultural background may be a reason for his reluctance to change his paper. She states that Finns are often interpreted as being shy and quiet, and this characteristic may have prevented Timo from seeking further, personal assistance from his professor. The grammatical corrections that were implemented had all been written comments on his papers from his professor or peers; he had had no face-to-face contact with any of them. She also points out that since there are fewer professors at the universities in Finland than in the United States, Timo may not have felt comfortable approaching his professor, but instead felt more comfortable seeking help from a colleague outside of the university setting. Or possibly, Timo cared more about returning to Finland to be home for the holidays, and figured that his effort as it stood would probably receive an A- (it did). Whatever the possible reason may have been, Timo's professor, who showed much interest in Timo's work, was disappointed.

Casanave (1992) also looked at sociocultural factors to explain why a Puerto Rican student (Virginia) from New York studying for a Ph.D in Sociology at a West Coast University decided not to return to school after completion of her first year of study. Virginia had great difficulty dealing
with an academic discourse community deeply entrenched in the use of traditional, quantitative research and theory presented solely from the perspective of traditional, white males. While Casanave acknowledges that learning the conventions, norms, values, and practices of a particular academic community is difficult for any novice in a field, she additionally points out that:

Minority and foreign students face the possibility of being confronted with a disciplinary language and culture so distant from their own that to join such a culture would mean alienating themselves from other highly valued personal and occupational communities at home. Likewise, academic communities with inflexible disciplinary boundaries stand to lose the rich cultural resources in their midst (p.174).

The limitations of all these studies, however, are similar. The voice of the student is almost always limited to a few paragraphs of quotations that support whatever point the researcher wants to make. The researcher's theoretical perspectives are rarely discussed, nor have the students been allowed to talk in their native language. Therefore, research in ESL writing should not only continue to look at the student's negotiation and completion of writing tasks within the academic discourse community from the student's perspective, but should also consider what the students themselves believe about the importance of discourse community, how a student may or may not define this community, and what other aspects of a foreign student's life in the U.S. may have an affect on his/her academic work.
This can be accomplished by using other ethnographic methods in addition to interviewing and participant observation, namely, the use of an informant who is a member of the students' community and who uses not only English but also the student's native language, and the presentation of a "multiplicity of voices," which may include not only the researcher's voice, but also the informant's, the students', and their teachers'. Presenting the different voices involved may more accurately and realistically illustrate the complexities foreign students face when learning the conventions, norms, values, and practices of a particular academic community.

**Authority and Rhetoric of Ethnographic Research**

As previously discussed, I have found two major problems with research in ESL writing that has taken an ethnographic approach: the lack of focus on the students' own histories, experiences, and beliefs and opinions, and the lack of representation of other voices involved in the research (the students, the teachers, etc.) presented in the written account. Ethnographic research does not only consist of an approach or the methods used; ethnography consists of two major parts: experience (or fieldwork), and the writing of this experience, the ethnographic account (Wolcott, 1987). Since the fieldwork or data collection itself is restricted by time and place to the researcher and the researched, the written account is the only way researchers
can communicate their experiences to others in their fields of study, not only in terms of their own understanding of the culture and/or community studied, but also in terms of any theoretical and/or intellectual concerns and issues that may have been raised. As Wolcott (1987) notes, "ultimately there is only one test of ethnography: the satisfactoriness of the completed account" (p.42). Ethnography is indeed a "genre of writing" (Marcus & Fischer, 1986), a "culture as text" (Geertz, 1983).

Traditionally, the ethnographer primarily considered him/herself to be an objective social theorist, a distant, impartial (though sympathetic) analyst of a cultural system. The job of ethnographers such as Malinowski and Mead was to scientifically explain the culture under study through a methodological analysis of its significant structures and institutions. Since the ethnographer was scientifically and theoretically trained, s/he could understand the "reality" of the culture in a way and at a speed that a native of the culture could not; the ethnographer was the authority, the sole authority. Clifford (1988) delineates five underlying assumptions that were represented in these written ethnographic accounts.

The first one is the validation of the fieldworker. These accounts had little mention of the ethnographer's doubts about his/her conclusions or the difficulties s/he faced. Secondly, the ethnographer could successfully use the native's language to achieve his/her goals without a complete mastery of that language. Thirdly, possibly because of the previous assumption, the validity
of observation was stressed over interviewing or any other method. The fourth assumption was that theoretical abstractions were considered more valuable than a collection of a culture's beliefs and customs to obtain true understanding of that culture, and finally, culture as a whole could be viewed synchronically.

There were several ways these assumptions were translated into the ethnographic account. Accounts were written in the present tense, exhibited a large degree of skepticism, and used technical vocabulary that was intended to "objectify" and distance human experience (jargon that was far from that used in everyday life).

While there are undoubtedly ethnographic accounts and research still being written up in this traditional rhetoric, in the past decade there has been an explosion of different rhetorical styles that are used in writing up ethnographic research both within anthropology (Geertz, 1983; Rosaldo, 1987; Wolf, 1992) and without, in such fields as sociology (Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Richardson, 1988) and education (Lather, 1986). Many of these new rhetorics have emerged to answer the question of authority in ethnographic accounts. This question can be informally stated as, "Whose reality is actually being represented in these accounts, given that all experience and interpretation is subjective and there are multiple kinds of social reality? Who has the right to speak as the authority of these realities, the researcher? The informants? Everyone involved in the researcher's experience of research?" Although
there is little consensus in answering these questions, I will now explore some of these rhetorical theories and theoretical rhetorics that make an attempt to.

The ethnographic accounts that I refer to here as "interpretive ethnographies" all share the underlying premise that since all research and all accounts of research are subjective, then ethnographic researchers should acknowledge and even exploit their own bias in the writing of their ethnographic accounts. These approaches are interpretive in nature since the researcher decides what aspects of the researched's social reality is relevant to whatever theoretical position the researcher wants to take. Therefore, authority (regardless of the researcher's claims to the contrary) lies firmly in the pen of the ethnographic researcher.

Geertz (1983) is often quoted in rationales for interpretive anthropology. The crux of Geertz's (1983) argument lies in "experience-near" and "experience-distant" concepts. Briefly, an experience-near concept is one that a lay person may use to describe what s/he experiences and feels, while an experience-distant concept is one that professionals in the social sciences use to "forward their scientific, philosophical, or practical aims" (p.53). Geertz (1983) believes that anthropologists must figure out what role each of the concepts plays in analysis, for,

Confinement to experience-near concepts leaves an ethnographer awash in immediacies, as well as entangled in vernacular. Confinement to experience-distant ones leaves him stranded in abstractions and smothered in jargon (p. 57).
Geertz goes on to claim that while doing his studies of the Javanese, Balinese, and Moroccan societies, he attempted,

to determine how the people who live there define themselves as persons, what goes into the idea they have (but, as I say, only half-realize they have) of what a self, Javanese, Balinese, or Moroccan style, is (italics mine, p.58).

These quotes illustrate the fundamental flaw that permeates Geertz’s entire argument; namely, by virtue of being an anthropologist and having access to experience-distant concepts, Geertz can not only witness (or through an informant become privy to) the immediacies of a society, but can also use these immediacies and his experience-distant concepts to understand the society and its individual members in a much more profound way than the individual members of that society. Although Geertz claims that by giving up on the idea of being able to see a society “from the native’s point of view,” he is distancing himself from traditional ethnography, he falls into the same traps of traditional ethnographic rhetoric (the ethnographic present, obtuse technical language and overt skepticism). Moreover, because only the ethnographer can recognize and hence write about experience-near concepts, the ethnographer has the sole authority in the written account.
Lather (1986) has a similar view of the importance and power of the role of ethnographic researchers and their written accounts. She begins "Research as Praxis" with the following quote:

Since interest-free knowledge is logically impossible, we should feel free to substitute explicit interests for implicit ones (Reinharz, 1985, p.17).

Lather's (1986) explicit interests lie in what she terms an "emancipatory approach." Emancipatory research is "committed to critiquing the status quo and building a more just society" (p.258). She continues to say that the purpose of research such as this is "to empower the oppressed to come to understand and change their own oppressive realities" (p.260).

I agree with the idea of making one's interests explicit. Every researcher is a Self, who as Schutz (1963) states, experiences the world "as built around my place in it, as open to my interpretation and action, but always referring to my actual biographically determined situation" (p.314). Stating one's interests (or biases) explicitly can help others perceive where in the social world of the researched the researcher positions him/herself, which can therefore facilitate better comprehension of the written account.

My problem with this approach is similar to my problem with Geertz's (1983) interpretative approach; who or what gives the researcher the authority to decide what is reality, and/or who is oppressed? Lather (1986) recognizes that a great deal of sensitivity to the Other's reality is necessary not only while the research is being conducted, but also in the written account, to truly be
considered emancipatory. She tries to empower the researched through reciprocity, "a mutual negotiation of meaning and power" (p.263). This, however, is unrealistic. To be able to determine oppression and make a change in any person's reality (if indeed that is even possible or desirable) requires power. If a researcher is a professor with a comfortable life making a comfortable salary with easy access to the knowledge necessary to conduct research, the funding to make that research possible, and access to a powerful media, the professional journals that publish such research, then that researcher indeed has power that the researched simply does not.

Richardson (1988), like Lather (1986) and Geertz (1983), also expresses her concern with authority in ethnographic research and rhetoric, with the "uncertainty about what constitutes adequate description of social reality" (p.200). She expresses her disillusion with feminist research, saying that it is "a product primarily of privileged women in a social movement which has glossed over meaningful differences in the experiences of differently situated women" (p.200). She sees traditional ethnography as having two forms of authority, the personal experience of the ethnographer and the "presumed objective, factual report" (p.203). Neither of these forms includes the voice (or voices) of the informant (or to use her term, the storyteller). Her solution to these concerns is to write her sociological works in such a way that allows the expression of many individual voices in a cohesive way, as a "collective story":
A collective story tells the experience of a sociologically constructed category of people in the context of larger sociocultural and historical forces. The sociological protagonist is a collective. I think of similarly situated individuals who may or may not be aware of their life affinities as coparticipants in a collective story. My intent is to help construct a consciousness of kind in the minds of the protagonists, a concrete recognition of sociological bondedness with others, because such consciousness can break down isolation between people, empower them, and lead to collective action on their behalf (p. 201).

The concerns mentioned above in regards to Geertz (1983) and Lather (1986) apply equally here. The intent to construct a consciousness in the minds of those who are unaware is another way to say that the researcher feels s/he can determine the Other's social reality, which the Other does not have the ability to do. Additionally, to acknowledge that much of current ethnographic research takes away the voice of the Other is a step in the right direction. To solve this problem by creating an artificial Other whose reality is solely determined by the researcher is a frightening exhibition of power and authority. When one makes only a vague attempt to be true to the spirit of the Other's social reality as that Other perceives it, and instead allows his/her account be dictated by theoretical or political concerns, the humanness of the ethnographic account is lost. This type of ethnographic rhetoric is no more responsible to the representation of the Other than the traditional, all-knowing, "objective" accounts.
Inclusion of Other Voices in Ethnographic Accounts

Because I firmly believe that to provide a complete and realistic account of ethnographic research as many as possible of the voices involved in the research should be presented, I investigated other ethnographic researchers who acknowledge that the voices of the cultural Others (i.e., the researched) deserve to be expressed in those same voices as much as is possible in the ethnographic account. Two of the pioneering works written from this perspective are Rabinow's (1977) Reflections on Fieldwork in Morroco and Dumont's (1978) The Headman and I (Marcus and Fischer, 1986). Both of these accounts explicitly and abundantly refer to the dialogues between the cultural Others and the anthropologist which took place during fieldwork, and try to take into account larger issues such as the effects of history, politics and economics on the community studied.

Rosaldo (1987) also explores his experience with the "dialogic potential, ... critical reflection and reciprocal perceptions" (p.90) of the ethnographic account when he was doing fieldwork among the Ilongots in the Philippines. Although he was heavily trained in "cultural relativism," i.e., an ethnographer should attempt to be nonjudgemental by not allowing his/her own culture influence the way the other culture is perceived, he had a difficult time in seeing the headhunting practices of the Ilongut as anything but "utterly alien and morally reprehensible" (p.90). When after about a year and
a half of fieldwork Rosaldo was drafted to fight as a soldier in Viet Nam, the Ilongots were appalled. They could not comprehend how "a man can do as soldiers do and command his brothers to move into the line of fire" (p.90). Through these types of encounters he discovered that his own culture also had its share of morally reprehensible flaws, and realized that,

we as ethnographers should be open to asking not only how our descriptions of others would read if applied to ourselves, but also how we can learn from other people's descriptions of ourselves (p.91).

An additional, significant point that Rosaldo mentions is that in the distancing and objectifying positions found in the traditional (and to some extent, in the interpretive) ethnographic account, the outsider's (or researcher’s) perspective fails to consider or provide the Others' own reflections of their own experiences that the ethnographer observed. This is especially ironic when considering the fact that much of recent interpretive ethnographic accounts contains inordinate amounts of the researchers' own reflections of their experiences in the field. Wolf (1992) discusses the negative effect this abundance of reflection may have on the readers of these accounts; namely, that "the excessive authorial presence just might make the text seem a bit self-indulgent" and "that readers find out more about the self than the other" (p.51).
In addition to the rhetoric of ethnography, in *A Thrice-Told Tale*, Margery Wolf (1992) discusses other controversies and concerns, such as the role of the self and others, feminism, and authority, faced in the writing of the ethnographic account today. In regards to the self/other dilemma, Wolf comments that she:

... would prefer to keep her distance from what seems to be in some instances a philosophical problem, in others a literary one, and nearly always a political one. The Other is a perfect concept for postmodernists because it is constantly having to be defined, is nearly always vague in its boundaries, and is as luxuriant in meaning as it is constrained by specificity (p.12).

As discussed previously, feminist researchers such as Lather (1986) Richardson (1988) in sociology believe that the role of feminist research is to save the oppressed from themselves and their "oppressive realities." Wolf (1992), however, views the purpose of feminist ethnographic researchers to be "to expose the unequal distribution of power that has subordinated women in most if not all cultures" (italics mine, p.119). The written account of these exposures should not fall prey to postmodern jargon or to experimental, fictional rhetorical styles, for as she points out, "If our writings are not easily accessible to those who share our goals, we have failed" (p.119). Those who share those goals could very well be the women in the community that was studied by the feminist ethnographer. Just as the women studied by feminist researchers have a subordinate status within the community being studied, I
believe that because ESL students have little authority or power in the classroom (curricular and evaluation decisions are primarily and ultimately made by the teacher or other administrators), they too have a subordinate status. The written account should represent the Other's reality in rhetoric that not only reflects what the Others says as accurately as possible, it should also be written in a style that the Others can understand.

Therefore, like Wolf, I believe that while it is a necessity (and almost an obligation) to present and even amplify a multiplicity of voices in an ethnographic account, in the end, the process of the writing and the finished written product should be the ethnographic researcher's responsibility. She personally does not believe in the viability of co-authorship with one's informants, for as she reasons,

... the seriousness of the ethical problems associated with such a plan are surpassed only by the complexity of the practical problems that would arise in attempting to implement it (p.121).

As one who has also had experience living as a foreigner in China (and who is therefore by definition, suspect, uncivilized, and of questionable moral fiber), I fully understand and support this position. I have seen first-hand the consequences, such as being interrogated, being a victim of unfair gossip, and even being demoted, that young Chinese have encountered when they have "spent too much time" with a foreigner. Wolf dramatically yet honestly states that:
Those of us who work in China know that a sudden change in political climate could make last year's adventure in crosscultural understanding this year's treason (p.121).

She then mentions that when conducting any kind of social science research where "human behavior is the data, a tolerance for ambiguity, multiplicity, contradiction, and instability is essential" (p.129). I believe that the expression of these ambiguities (through the researcher's voice and/or through the voices of the others) is equally essential in the written account, since they play an important role in what data is included and how that data is analyzed in the account.

I find my perspective of ethnographic study in agreement with Rosaldo (1987):

Anthropologists aspire to describe other cultures in ways that render them familiar (or at any rate intelligible and humanly plausible) without losing sight of their differences. Good descriptions neither bring other people so close that they become just like ourselves nor so distance them (in the name of objectivity) that they become objectified and dehumanized. Anthropology's project thus is viewed as the study of human possibilities (p.89).

I believe that this position should be taken not only by anthropologists, but by any researcher in the social sciences who uses ethnographic methods with the aim of understanding human behavior and/or thought, and this is therefore what I have attempted to show in the written account of my study.
Instructional Focus: The Process Approach

In the advanced ESL writing class the students in my study were taking during the semester of my data collection, they were explicitly taught to compose by using a process approach: namely, their teachers viewed writing as an ongoing process, beginning with some sort of pre-writing activity(ies), several revisions of a draft, and extensive use of peer review and teacher conferences in order to guide the students in the process and develop a sense of audience and purpose. The theoretical foundations of the process approach are assumed to value the exploration of ideas, the fostering of creativity, the primacy of content over form and the primacy of form over structure. Reid (1993) quotes Zamel (1980), one of the leaders of the process movement in ESL, as follows:

the act of composing should become the result of a genuine need to express one’s personal feeling, experience, or reactions, all within the climate of encouragement (p.31).

Further in the same discussion of the process approach, Reid also mentions George Jacobs' encouragement of the use of "quickwriting," which is based on the ideas of Peter Elbow (1973), whom she quotes:
Concentrate on ideas. Forget about mechanics, grammar, and organization. Take care of those at another stage in the writing process.

Research on how ESL students actually implement the process approach have generally been conducted through the use of case studies. Zamel (1982) studied interviewed and examined the writings of eight students (one Japanese, one Hispanic, two Arabs, two Italians, and two Greeks). She referred to these students as ESL writiers although they had all completed their ESL requirements and were taking university content classes. Her major finding was that these “proficient ESL writers” used composing strategies similar to those of native-speaker writers; namely, that in the pre-writing stage, the students would often have an “internal dialogue” where they would think about the writing, then write notes or a first draft. Interestingly, only one of her subjects wrote an outline. After this preliminary writing, the students would leave their writing alone for a while. They would then think about their writing, write more, and so on. Zamel found that the students needed time to write what they felt was an adequate paper. She additionally found that only one of the students, the one she termed as most proficient, used translation when writing in English. She told Zamel that “When I write in my own language I feel great because I can express my writing as part of myself” (p.201). In 1983, Zamel conducted another case study which addressed some of the problems of her previous
(1982) study, i.e., she had interviewed the students and analyzed their written work, but had not actually observed the students while they were composing. In this study she observed six of her own students (two Chinese, one Spanish, one Portuguese, one Hebrew, and one Persian) while they were composing and interviewed them at the end of the semester. She found that their composing processes were non-linear, that there was a “constant interplay of thinking, writing, and rewriting” (p.72). When revising, the students made global changes: sentences were added and deleted, and ideas were clarified. Vocabulary and “editing” concerns were not addressed until after the students ideas were on paper; Zamel (1983) found her students not to be concerned with grammar. She did find, however, that the students were well aware of what writing entails; they “know what to anticipate, how to pace themselves, and what to focus on as they write and re-write” (p.180).

Raimes (1985) also used eight of her own ESL students (four Chinese, two Greek, one Spanish, and one Burmese) in her study. Noting that previous studies such as Zamel’s (1982, 1983) had not defined what exactly constituted a skilled or an unskilled writer, she attempted to discover if there were indeed differences in the way unskilled ESL students wrote. She asked her students to “think aloud” while they composed and then analyzed the tape recordings. Unlike Zamel, she found that the processes the students used while composing were not dependent on skill level. None of her students were “preoccupied with error and editing” (p.247) and as the
students were writing, they all "exhibited not only attention to the task but commitment to it" (p.246).

While the studies mentioned above certainly provided much valuable information on the processes used when ESL students compose, none of them considered what effect language and cultural background had on the composing process and the final product. Lay (1982) specifically looked at the composing processes of Chinese students. She met with her subjects four times and asked them to write an essay while thinking aloud. She found that the composing process was "definitely difficult" for her students. She found that, unlike Zamel's (1982) subjects, her students translated key words into the first language in order "to get stronger impression and association of ideas for the essay" (p.406). Lay (1982) additionally found that when students switched frequently from their native language into English, the essays were of better quality in terms of details, organization and ideas.

Krapels (1990) summarizes the findings of ESL process research as follows: inadequate writing competence in English is not determined by linguistic competence; a student’s first language writing process often influences their second language writing process; differences between L1 and L2 writers may be determined by composing proficiency rather than differences among languages; and alternatively, L2 writers have different composing processes than L1 writers; the use of L1 when writing in L2 varies, and is often
involved with vocabulary; and culture-bound topics elicit more first language use than other topics do. As Krapels (1990) elaborates:

Although much has already been learned about second language processes, so much more lies undiscovered. Early L2 studies pointed out similarities and/or differences between L1 and L2 composing. More recent studies have questioned these similarities and have presented differences to be considered in future research. As a field of research, then, the second language composing process is rich with potential and full of vitality (p.53).

However, ESL composition may be on the verge of a shift away from the process approach to one based more on sociocultural concerns, such as critical pedagogy, or one based more on form, such as Swale's work in genre analysis. While the process movement has been critiqued for several years for some of its weaknesses, namely, its total focus on the process and the student and its lack of concern for context, task, and other realities of the classroom that play important roles in how and what students write, the criticism of late, such as that in John's (1995) article "Genre and Pedagogical Purposes" is becoming increasingly vitriolic. She quotes Christie (1993), who says process pedagogies are:

... cruelly unfair, for those not posesssed of the (English) language patterns of schooling ... are left to deduce for themselves (p.181).
Johns then discusses and critiques some of the present pedagogical alternatives to the process approach. She discusses how critical pedagogy, in its overriding mission to encourage students to "transform the university", not only by critiquing the balance of power in the traditional classroom but also by empowering students to somehow change it, is actually doing a great disservice to our students by not introducing them to the tools necessary, namely "the discourse structures, linguistic precision, objectivity, or critical thought" (p.182) to survive their own academic reality outside of the critical theory-based classroom.

Johns then critiques those who misapply the work of Horowitz (1986), and Prior (1995), and feel that the variations in participants, text, context, situatedness, etc., in each academic task renders teaching genre or discourse community "too complex to cope with" (p.183). She accuses those who consider this view of "retreat(ing) to the process" (p.183). However, neither researcher cited proposes that the concepts of academic discourse community (ADC) are too complicated to address in an ESL setting and hence should be ignored; instead, they caution that ADC should be taken quite seriously: Horowitz (1986) proposes that ESL teachers should try to attend university classes with their students, and students with similar majors should be in the same composition classroom so as to encourage participation in the students' ADC. Prior (1995) states that, "writing tasks in disciplinary classrooms are cued, produced, and evaluated through complex, largely tacit, social and
intellectual processes” (p.49). Prior’s work cautions us not to be content with limiting our focus of ADC to primarily text-based issues such as genre and stylistic conventions, not to ignore or discount ADC completely. Using the findings from studies in ADC to inform our students of nontext-based issues (such as audience and purpose) that are important to keep in mind when using the process approach to compose can provide them with a more complete representation of how to approach their non-ESL academic writing tasks.

Johns then discusses other current teaching approaches, such as those that consider using authentic texts from other disciplines as artifice and those that are "returning" to a focus on form, such as the five-paragraph essay. I would argue here that this focus never left; a glance through many process-based writing textbooks show that they are still organized primarily by form. For example, in Reid’s (1988) The Process of Composition, Chapter 5 is entitled “Persuasion and the Argumentation Essay” and Chapter 6 is entitled “Summary and Analysis.” Other examples are easily found: Lautulippe’s (1992) Writing as a Personal Product includes “Unit 4: Preparing a Writing Plan: Comparing and Contrasting” and “Unit 5: Preparing a Writing Plan: An Essay of Definition.” Shenck’s (1988) Read, Write, Revise includes sections on “Writing from Experience,” (which is writing a narrative essay) “Writing to Persuade” and “Writing to Analyze.” These textbooks, while promoting a
process approach in terms of emphasizing prewriting, drafting, revision, and peer review, all ask students to write essays based on form.

In addition, as my experience as composition coordinator has shown, many ESL teachers feel most comfortable teaching these forms because they are relatively concrete and hence easier to grade "objectively." The dichotomy that Johns wants to establish between process and form may exist theoretically, but certainly not in practice.

Johns (1995) then explains how in her classes, genre is focused on: students and instructors collaborate to identify the genre; hypothesize about larger ADC concerns, such as community, context, reader and writer roles; and hypothesize about text-level concerns, such as similarities and differences within a genre, and similarities across genres. Texts that these hypotheses are based on include wedding invitations, advertising brochures, newspaper articles, and/or "other genre exemplars with which students interact with some comfort" (p.186). Perhaps Johns' students, who appear to mainly be immigrants who have studied to some extent in an American public school system, feel comfortable with these "genre exemplars." Other ESL students, such as the ones in my study, who do not have this experience and hence may have never seen a wedding invitation in English or attempted to read a newspaper in English, may not. Moreover, while Johns devotes considerable space to explaining how her students analyze writing, she ignores any mention of how they are taught to write. There needs to be a separation of
the theoretical problems associated with the assumptions on which the process movement is based and the actual process of writing itself. As Benesch (1995) asserts in her reply to Johns (1995):

Process is compatible with a sociocultural orientation. We do not need to abandon brainstorming or revision, for example, to attend to 'role, audience, and community' as well as to other features of the social context.

Summary

Researchers in ESL writing that have considered ESL students to be more than basic language learners have often examined ESL writing through a contrastive rhetoric approach or in consideration of the students' academic discourse community. The research in contrastive rhetoric has traditionally focused on either proving, discrediting or expanding upon Kaplan's original theory (for example, Hinds, 1983, 1990; Mohan & Lo, 1985); understanding the influence of a student's first language on his/her ESL writing (for example, Matalene, 1985; Friedlander, 1990, Hall, 1990); or attempting to practice Kaplan's theory, either by informing teachers about different rhetorical styles or encouraging the students to be more aware of their own rhetorical background and how it may influence their writing in English (for example, Leibman-Kleine, 1986, 1987; Schlumberger & Mangelsdorf, 1989).
Work in ESL writing that has focused on academic discourse community has traditionally been concerned with both ESL and non-ESL faculty opinions and perceptions of ESL student writing in terms of grammar and other areas where ESL students have traditionally shown much "error" (Janapoulos, 1992; Santos, 1988); what requirements non-ESL faculty have of their students (Bridgeman & Carlson, 1983; Horowitz, 1986), and whose responsibility it is to initiate ESL students into the academic discourse community (Spack, 1988, 1994).

The most promising of current research considers both perspectives in a wider context. It has students look at their own writing in L1 and L2 in terms of academic discourse community (Soter & Zeki, forthcoming), and additionally looks at how the students themselves negotiate the writing tasks set forth by their communities (Leki, 1994), and consider the effect this community has on foreign and ethnically diverse students not only in terms of language, but also in consideration of social and cultural factors (Casanave, 1992). Much of this research has successfully employed ethnographic methods such as case studies and participant observation (Lay, 1982; Raimes, 1985; Zamel, 1982, 1983). The use of these methods allow researchers to obtain a richer, fuller understanding of the various and diverse linguistic, social, and cultural factors which come into play when an ESL student composes in English. However, ethnographic studies in ESL could be even further
enhanced by encouraging the representation of the voices of the students and others in the ethnographic account (Rosaldo, 1987; Wolf, 1992).
CHAPTER III:

METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

Overview

As stated in Chapter One, I conducted an ethnographic case study of five Chinese students taking an advanced ESL composition course at a small midwestern university to discover how Chinese students negotiate their writing tasks both inside and outside the ESL classroom by addressing the following questions:

1. Do the students follow the "process approach" as it is often taught in ESL writing textbooks and composition courses when completing a writing task? Are the processes the Chinese students undergo when composing in Chinese similar to or different from the processes they use when writing in English?
2. Which language(s) does the student use at each stage of the composing process? Is the language used dependent on the topic? Does the language(s) used change over time, i.e., after advanced ESL writing instruction?

3. In terms of discourse, rhetoric, and grammar, what, if any, factors in Chinese writing influence the way the students write in English?

4. How do the Chinese students approach peer work and other aspects of academic discourse community in the classroom? Do they believe that it is valid and/or effective? Are they comfortable with peer work? Do these students seek input from others, for example, those from the students’ academic discourse communities outside of the ESL classroom?

5. How do the Chinese students respond to peer and teacher comments on their work? Do they have the same understanding of these comments that the peer and teacher intended? Do they implement these comments?

6. What understandings do the students themselves have about why they write, how they write, and what they choose to write about? What
kind of influence does the students' prior writing histories have on their present processes and attitudes?

Basing my inquiry on the above questions, in this study I have explored what the students think about their own academic writing and their use of Chinese in completion of their writing tasks. I have additionally studied how the students implement the process approach as it has been taught in class and presented in their textbook, and what other parts of their life outside of their classroom may affect their writing in English.

In this chapter I will provide the context for my study, including descriptions of the research site, its ESL program and the ESL program’s writing curriculum. I will describe how the students who took part in my study were selected and introduce them briefly. I will then discuss the kinds of data collected and the methods used to collect this data, including reflections by me, the informer-interviewer, and the students on the interviewing process. I will then discuss how this data was coded and analyzed.
Context

The Research Site and its ESL Program

Franklin is a small, private, non-sectarian university whose main campus is located downtown in a large city in the Midwest. It additionally has been offering classes in one of the suburbs and is currently building a new campus there. Its founding mission was to provide equal educational opportunity regardless of a student's age, race and/or ethnic background, income, or gender. This mission is very much alive today; Franklin's student population is quite diverse and has an average age of twenty-nine. Franklin grants Bachelor's, Master's and Doctoral degrees in disciplines ranging from education, history, and psychology to music and computer science.

The ESL program, which is located on the downtown campus, is one of the oldest in the country (it was founded in 1955) and is very large in comparison to the downtown campus's overall enrollment: while there are approximately 3,000 students per semester in the downtown campus overall, the ESL program has an average of 120 - 150 students per semester.

At the time this study was conducted, Franklin did not use the TOEFL as an acceptance criteria, instead accepting international students by the same criteria as domestic students --transcripts, letters of recommendation, and a written statement of purpose. Therefore, international students who had
been accepted to Franklin either to pursue a degree or just to study ESL took the English Language Placement Test, which consists of standardized listening and grammar sections, a writing sample, and an oral interview, before their first semester begins. Based on the results of this placement test, the students are instructed to take classes in the intensive program, which consists of four classes (reading, grammar, writing, and conversation) at three levels (beginning, intermediate, and advanced); one of the two transition composition courses (043 for undergraduates and 044 for graduates); or no ESL classes at all. During the first week of each semester all the students are given a writing diagnostic test in their ESL writing classes, and if the essay is judged superior in terms of the goals of the particular composition class by the teacher, the composition coordinator, and the program director, the student may advance to the next level.

**The Writing Curriculum**

Franklin's ESL program has a series of five composition courses. The beginning level class, 013, focuses on sentence and format conventions and developing an essay, beginning from a simple paragraph with a main idea sentence to a three-paragraph essay. The intermediate class, 023, introduces the five-paragraph essay and various genres such as process and narration. The advanced class, 033, is a research paper writing class that teaches all
aspects of writing a research paper -- gathering sources, creating a thesis statement, summarizing and synthesizing, etc. This class is extremely demanding, especially since at the beginning of the semester the students are more accurately categorized as high-intermediate rather than advanced writers. The 043 class is the equivalent of a post-admissions writing class (i.e., it is not a true part of the intensive program) that prepares undergraduate international students for freshman composition. 044 is the graduate-level equivalent of 043.

My subjects were all students in 043. The number of sections of 043 offered varies from semester to semester depending on how many students enroll. In the semester I conducted my study there were two sections of this course offered. I gained access to both 043 classes through personal contact with the ESL Program Director and personal and written contact with the Director of the School of Liberal Studies. Permission was granted to carry out the study by the previously mentioned administrators and final approval was provided by the Dean of Liberal Studies. I asked permission from the two instructors to observe and audiotape their classes and audiotape their conferences with their students during the first week of the semester. Both instructors agreed.
The 043 Classes and Their Instructors

As mentioned in the preceding section, 043 is the undergraduate composition course that transitions undergraduate students out of the ESL writing courses and into the freshman composition courses. As such it focuses on developing academic essays that feature rhetorical modes such as personal narrative and persuasive/argumentative writing. The curriculum emphasizes notions significant to the concept of academic discourse community such as audience, purpose and appropriate development. An additional goal is to familiarize the students with classroom writing practices, such as peer review and in-class essay exams, that are often found in undergraduate composition and content courses.

Karla, one of the teachers of 043, is the quintessential advanced ESL composition instructor: she has a Master’s degree in English with a concentration in Language and Linguistics, and she has many years experience teaching both advanced ESL and freshman writing classes. She is a firm but not inflexible believer in the process approach; and she is a caring yet demanding teacher who provides much feedback (both written and oral) to her students.

Daniel, the other 043 instructor, is a relatively new ESL teacher who graduated with a Master’s degree in English Literature. While Daniel had spent two years teaching ESL in China, he was honest in expressing his
apprehensions in teaching the 043 class. He relied heavily on Karla throughout the semester to provide a syllabus, writing assignments and teaching suggestions.

Data Collection

Data was collected during the sixteen-week Spring Semester, 1995, using the following methods: a questionnaire, classroom participant observations, collection, conference audiotaping, and collection of all student writing generated by the five students over the course of the semester. In addition, a series of six interviews were conducted individually with each student. I conducted three of these in English, the Chinese informant/interviewer conducted two in Chinese, and one interview was conducted by both of us using both English and Chinese (see Table 1). These procedures were scheduled so that the students were observed and/or interviewed every week (with the exception of midterm week, spring break, a week that I attended a professional conference, and finals week) so that data could be collected and analyzed continually throughout the semester.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Week</th>
<th>Dates</th>
<th>Data Collection</th>
<th>Data Coding &amp; Analysis</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1/17 - 1/19</td>
<td>entrance questionnaire</td>
<td>select students, get permission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>1/23 - 1/26</td>
<td>interview 1 Chinese</td>
<td>code, sort data, verify w/ Da Peng</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>1/30 - 2/2</td>
<td>participant observations</td>
<td>transcribe, code &amp; sort data</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>2/6 - 2/9</td>
<td>interview 2 English</td>
<td>transcribe, code &amp; sort data</td>
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<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>2/13 - 2/16</td>
<td>interview 3 English &amp; Chinese</td>
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<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>2/20 - 2/23</td>
<td>conference tapings</td>
<td>transcribe, code &amp; sort data</td>
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<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>2/27 - 3/2</td>
<td>MIDTERM EXAMS (no collection)</td>
<td>analyze data in depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>3/6 - 3/9</td>
<td>SPRING VACATION</td>
<td>analyze data in depth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>3/13 - 3/16</td>
<td>interview 4 English</td>
<td>transcribe, code &amp; sort data</td>
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<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>3/20 - 3/23</td>
<td>participant observations</td>
<td>transcribe, code &amp; sort data</td>
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<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>3/27 - 3/29</td>
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<td>4/10 - 4/13</td>
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<td>code &amp; sort data, verify w/ Da Peng</td>
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<td>interview with teachers</td>
<td>transcribe, code &amp; sort data, verify w/teachers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>5/17 - 5/20</td>
<td>interview 6 English</td>
<td>transcribe, code &amp; sort data</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Selection

In the first week of the Spring Semester, 1995, I gave questionnaires (see Appendix B) to both instructors and asked that they be distributed to all the students enrolled in the 043 classes. There were two major reasons why I invited the 043 students to participate. The first was that due to their advanced level, they were probably more experienced in writing in English than the students in the lower levels and hence could talk in more detail about their writing experiences. The second reason was that they were the 043 students were the most fluent and therefore could more clearly express their ideas in English during the interviews. The questionnaire included questions about the students' nationalities, native languages, other languages spoken, how many years of English they have studied and other composition courses they have taken. There were also several open-ended questions (see Appendix B) to determine how fluent they perceive their English writing to be, if they enjoy writing in English, and if they have any "rituals" or practices they employ before and/or during their writing processes. I then asked them to answer the same questions about their native language writing practices.

I had originally intended to select students based on the responses to the questionnaire; I wanted students who liked to write in English and those who did not; students who enjoyed writing in their native language but not in English; those who did not enjoy writing in either language and those who enjoyed writing in both. However, since the total number of Chinese
students was so small, I invited all of them to participate. As mentioned earlier, all five agreed (see Appendix A).

The Subjects

Three of the of the five students were in Karla's 043 class -- Jia-Tsong, Lee Lap, and Shen. Ronald and Wen-li were in Daniel's class.

Jia-Tsong

Jia-Tsong is a twenty-seven year-old male from Taiwan majoring in music performance (he plays clarinet). He began taking English classes at Franklin in the Summer, 1993 semester at the beginning level, and has taken English classes in tandem with music classes over the past two years. Jia-Tsong was a solid "B" student in his English classes except for 033. He had a very difficult time in this class and passed with a C-.

Lap Lee

Lap Lee is a seventy-one year old immigrant who came to the U.S. from Canton when he was eighteen. He has lived in Chinatown all his life, and retired from running his family's business there. He has constantly taken classes since his semi-retirement and is close to earning a degree in Liberal Studies. Although Lap Lee has maintained a 2.7 average, his downfall
has been his English writing. He has taken ESL classes at various city colleges and other institutions for about six years, yet he failed basic writing at Franklin three times and was referred to the ESL program by the English department.

Shen

Shen is a twenty-eight year old male from Guangdong (Canton), China, majoring in pre-business. He began taking English classes at Franklin in the Spring 1994 semester at the intermediate level. While very fluent verbally, Shen has a "C+" average in his ESL classes. He received a "B-" in the 033 class.

Ronald

Ronald is a twenty-four year-old male who is also a pre-business major from Fujian, China. He began taking English classes at Franklin in the Spring 1994 semester at the intermediate level. His average in his ESL classes was a "C-", primarily due to his lack of interest in the courses and his relatively demanding work schedule. His teachers generally characterized Ronald as "capable but lazy."
Wen-Li

Wen-Li is a twenty-four year-old woman from Taiwan majoring in Public Administration. She started taking ESL classes in the Fall, 1994 semester and had an average of "A-" in her ESL classes. She had no problems in her 033 class; in fact, she was her teacher's favorite student.

Classroom Participant Observations

I (see Table 1) observed the two 043 classes during weeks three and ten. During this time data collection was focused on how students negotiate their writing tasks in class, especially in terms of peer and group work. I audiotaped these classes and recorded my observations both in field notes taken during the class - a condensed account of what happened (Spradley, 1979), and in a fieldwork journal - an expanded account that "fills in details and records things that were not recorded on the spot" (Spradley, 1979). I additionally transcribed the tapes and coded the data as it was being gathered.

At the beginning of the first observation both instructors introduced me to the class. They mentioned that I was collecting data for my dissertation and that I would be observing the class periodically. Daniel pointed out to the class that I was "the boss" or "the power that be" and that the students should therefore be "on their best behavior," (in spite of the fact that I had asked him not to). Each instructor then asked me to speak for a few minutes to describe what my research entailed, and I obliged. I tried to emphasize that
I was not there to evaluate either the students or the instructors, but simply to observe what was taking place. I felt that both instructors taught that first class I observed more for me than for the students. After class I talked to each instructor about this perception and they admitted that this was true to varying degrees. I reassured them that I appreciated their cooperation greatly and I understood that this was originally both uncomfortable and inconvenient for them. I reiterated that when I was observing their classes the "Composition Coordinator hat" came off and the "doctoral student hat" went on. I acknowledged that this would be a difficult thing to do, but I would do my best to maintain this dichotomy, since I wanted them to feel comfortable that I was indeed examining what was occurring in their classrooms for my study, not judging their teaching ability. During the subsequent observations, the teachers appeared much more comfortable with me in the room. In each class several questions were addressed to me by the students and/or the instructors, and hence I also participated in the class. In addition, during an observation in each class I was invited to take part in a peer review, and I taught one of Karla's classes that I had originally planned to observe. These experiences served to increase my role as participant-observer.
Conference Recordings

I had originally planned to observe the conferences the teachers held with their students. However, both instructors expressed concern about their own comfort and/or the students' willingness to be open if I were there. Since they preferred that I not be present, I asked them if they would take the recorder and record the conferences for me; they both agreed to do this. I immediately listened to and transcribed the tapes after they were recorded, and addressed any misunderstandings or other problems with the teachers as soon as I could.

The Roles of the Primary Researcher and the Informant-Interviewer

I undertook this study during my second semester of employment as full-time ESL Instructor/Composition Coordinator at the small metropolitan university where the study was conducted. Two of the five students had been in my 033 class the previous semester. Two of the remaining three had taken the 033 class with different instructors, and the other had never taken an ESL class at this university before. Since all of the students were familiar with my position as composition coordinator and aware of my experience in China and Taiwan, in the beginning of the study I was concerned that the information I would be told may very well be closer to what the students
thought I wanted to hear (i.e., the right answer, the "supposed to") rather than a reflection of the students' actual experiences and thoughts (Zeki, 1993). I therefore asked Da Peng, a Chinese Ph.D. student in the Foreign Language Education Program at the large midwestern university where I am a doctoral candidate, to serve as an informant-interviewer to help with the data collection throughout this study, since he shared the language, culture, and general educational background of the students. He chose the pseudonym Da Peng (which literally means "older friend") to use for the purposes of this study.

In order to get a fuller range of data, three interviews were conducted by myself in English (interviews 2, 4, and 6), one was conducted by me together with Da Peng in both English and Chinese (interview 3), and Da Peng conducted two separate interviews (interviews 1 and 5) in Chinese (see Table 1). While Van Maanen (1988) notes that an informant of a community might not be a representative member, and the power balance between the informant and the ethnographer may not be equal, I believe that this type of interview held the most potential for providing a relatively realistic portrayal of the writing experiences of the chosen Chinese students, since the interview data were triangulated - three sources of information, i.e, Chinese interviews, English interviews, and an interview in both languages -- and were collected from two different perspectives, an American perspective and a Chinese one. Da Peng's Chinese perspective helped greatly in terms of cultural
interpretation -- he often could clarify what factors in the students' cultural background may have influenced what they did. And as Wolcott (1987) remarked, "Cultural interpretation ... is the essence of ethnographic endeavor" (p.43).

**Informant Interviews**

Da Peng, the Chinese informant-interviewer, conducted open-ended interviews with the participants individually in Chinese during weeks two and twelve (see Appendix C). The aim of these interviews was to determine possible cultural factors that may influence the students' choices they make when undergoing the writing process. The first interview centered on how the students choose a topic to write about and when and if they do pre-writing. This interview focused on the diagnostic in-class writing, and additionally asked for expectations the students had about the class. The fifth interview asked for the students' overall assessment of the class and the progress they had made throughout the semester. In addition, Da Peng explored the students' use of their native language in their writing processes from the beginning of the semester until the end. These interviews were audiotaped and Da Peng kept a field journal. He immediately went over the content with me orally after the completion of the interviews, and I took careful notes during these discussions.
Researcher Interviews

I held three open-ended interviews with the student participants in English, two of which were during weeks four and eight (see Appendix C). The interview in week four (interview 2) encouraged them to share their thoughts and ideas about peer work, teacher comments on their papers, and revision. The interview in week eight (interview 4) asked the students to discuss their satisfaction with a recent piece of writing; more specifically, I was interested in finding out what they themselves liked and disliked about their writing. I additionally questioned them about whether their use of Chinese in their writing process had changed since the beginning of the semester. These interviews were audiotaped, and data was recorded in a fieldwork journal the same day of the interview.

I held the final interview (interview 6) a few weeks after the end of the semester. The purpose of this interview was to get a description of each student as a "whole person", not just as an ESL student in a writing class. I asked the students how they would describe themselves; what they felt were their greatest problems and successes in the U.S., both in general as foreigners and more specifically as students; and their future goals, and whether or not these goals had changed since they arrived in the U.S.
Joint Interview

In week six, open-ended interviews (interview 3) were given by Da Peng and me in both Chinese and English. The purposes of these interviews were to see what language the student participants would choose to use when talking about the various issues concerning their writing, and to discover how they felt about the writing class and their writing processes thus far. The interview additionally asked the students to reflect on their experiences with the interviews themselves; for example, how comfortable they were in using either or both languages, if they noticed a difference in the type of information they provided depending on the interviewer or language, and which language they preferred to be interviewed in. These interviews were audiotaped and both the primary researcher and the informant interviewer kept a field journal, and discussed the tapes of the interviews immediately upon their completion. I took careful notes during these discussions.

Reflections of the Informant-Interviewer on the Interviewing Process

In the beginning of this study I had originally referred to Da Peng as an “insider” since he was a member of the Chinese culture and shared the same general educational background as the students in this study. He reported,
however, that as the semester progressed he felt an ambivalence in being labeled an "insider" because while in some ways he was an insider, in other ways he was not. As an insider, he shared a common language and a common culture; all students except one spoke Mandarin, so the interviews could be held successfully in Chinese. The older man, Lap Lee spoke only Cantonese; in the first interview, one of the other students translated from Mandarin to Cantonese. (note: In the other interviews which were scheduled to be conducted in Chinese, this student preferred to be interviewed in English.)

Da Peng also noted, however, that in some ways he was an outsider. He was not very familiar with the students' overall English proficiency and writing ability. In addition, since he had had no prior contact with these particular students, he was not familiar with "their personalities" and hence felt he had little rapport, especially in preparation of the first interview. He felt overall, however, that this lack of familiarity was not a hindrance to his data collection; the students wanted to share information with him about their experiences. They could easily make references to their common cultural context when discussing their experiences and feelings, and Da Peng found that in general, the students were "personal, insightful, and flexible." Since he did not feel that he was completely an insider, I decided to use the term "informant-interviewer," because this emphasizes that he has a shared cultural background, yet does not imply that he is a member of the exact same
group -- i.e., Chinese undergraduates enrolled in 043 -- as the students in my study.

Da Peng believes that there were several advantages to interviewing the students in Chinese, his native language. Since there was no language barrier, he could easily probe a question in-depth and get to a specific point directly. He considers that since the interviewer and interviewees shared the same language and culture, some of the formalities of interviewing in English could be dispensed with, such as omitting "commonly understood parts" and feeling free to "interrupt and shift the focus (of the conversation)." He concluded that because he shared in and understood the students' cultural background to some extent, and because he had nothing to do with the grades the students would receive in the class, the students were "extremely comfortable and relaxed."

Reflections of the Researcher on the Interviewing Process

I had labeled myself as an outsider due to the fact that I was not a student, nor a member of the 043 classroom, nor a member of the Chinese culture. However, as the study progressed, I, too, felt some ambivalence in labeling myself as an outsider, because I began to feel quite close to the subjects, and felt that much of what we were doing was reciprocal. They, indeed, were providing me information for my study, but I could also sense a
feeling of community developing among us due to the fact that I was listening to what they had to say and taking their work very seriously. While I certainly was not Chinese, I was familiar with the students and their overall English proficiency and writing ability. I had taught two of the students the previous semester and had had an extremely strong rapport with both of them. I was tutoring grammar to the older student individually, and I had had extensive conversations with the remaining two students. Like they, I was new to the area and had had to go through the adjustments that life in a major city demand; they were sympathetic to my concerns about the cost of living and the safety of my child. Perhaps because of this empathy and their knowledge of my interest and experience in China and Taiwan, they were all very eager and felt somewhat special to be chosen to participate in this study. I finally considered myself as an informed, empathetic, outsider. Being an outsider had a certain advantage: since they knew that I was in no way responsible for evaluating their work in 043, they felt uninhibited in their discussions with me and felt they could discuss their weaknesses as well as their strengths, and provide me with candid appraisals of their teachers and classmates.

I, like Da Peng, found the interviewees to be extremely relaxed and open. They were comfortable talking and wanted to share their thoughts, emotions, and experiences. In fact, the question that repeatedly elicited the
most interesting and telling responses was "Is there anything else you would like to say to me?"

As an interviewer, I found I could not easily separate my role of researcher from my role as former teacher and/or composition coordinator. I found myself interjecting comments on particular aspects of their writing, and offering suggestions when asked. I often made encouraging comments such as "that's interesting" or "I really enjoyed reading this paper." I don't believe that this had a negative effect in any way; all the students said in their final interview how much they enjoyed discussing their writing with me and how they appreciated my comments.

The collaborative interviewing with Da Peng was both frustrating and rewarding. His understanding of the relative importance of the various interview questions was often different from mine, and information that I felt was important was at times glossed over; for example, in the first interview I was very interested in discovering what language was used in discussing the various aspects of writing. Did they say organization in Chinese or English? If Chinese, were these terms direct translations or not? Da Peng could not understand the relevance of this concern and hence ignored it. My experiences with Da Peng at times reminded me of Wolf's (1992) comments that when conducting ethnographic research where "human behavior is the data, a tolerance for ambiguity, multiplicity, contradiction, and instability is essential" (p.129).
Yet on the other hand, the different perspective was greatly appreciated when interpretation of a particular point was not easily forthcoming, or when I had inadvertently missed a salient piece of information, or had possibly misinterpreted a student's intention. While listening to the tapes in Chinese, I would often think of the easier or more obvious translation; Da Peng's lively yet patient interpretations provoked deeper understanding and further thought on my part.

Reflections of the Students on the Interviewing Process

In the third interview Da Peng and I asked the students which language they felt more comfortable being interviewed in. Three of the students said they felt almost as comfortable speaking in English as Chinese, while one preferred English and the last preferred Chinese. Ronald said that when using Chinese he could talk more freely and deeply about his language use, but since he had experience talking and working with foreigners in China, he felt he could speak in English easily and naturally. Jia-Tsong expressed similar sentiments when he stated that when speaking in Chinese his ideas were "automatic." He felt quite comfortable being interviewed by me, however because he "understood my English and I understood his". Lap Lee preferred to talk in English, because he "understands it now." He preferred talking about his English writing in English because the context was
there — he was used to talking with his teacher and other students in his writing classes in English. Wen-li was the only student who said she preferred to talk in Chinese. She was afraid that if I didn't understand her, she would feel "bu hao yisi," which roughly translated, means that it would cause embarrassment. She felt her English was not good enough nor "correct" enough.

In the final interview, all five of the students said that they felt more comfortable talking to me in English as the semester progressed. And interestingly, even after they knew I could understand their Chinese fairly well, they preferred to talk to me in English, even if they had difficulty expressing their ideas.

**Student Writings**

I photocopied with student and teacher permission all drafts of all papers and all in-class writings for the five participants. These writings were copied immediately after they were graded by the teacher (complete with teacher comments) and were used to stimulate discussion during the interviews and for data coding as discussed in the following section.
The primary method of data analysis was what is commonly employed in case study and ethnographic research; namely, "a continual process of looking for meaning by sorting reiteratively through the data" (Johnson, 1992, p.90). While coding the data, I kept Johnson’s four concepts on which ethnographic analysis is based in mind: recursiveness, which is ongoing analysis and adaptation as the study progresses; being grounded in the data, which means looking for cultural patterns in categories and codes that are developed inductively as the study progresses; comprehensiveness, in which the researcher selects examples that reflect both central tendency and variation; and interpretation, which requires triangulation in analysis and explanation of the data in terms of cultural norms. The specific coding procedures are discussed as follows.

Classroom Observation and Conference Fieldnotes and Audiotapes

I sorted, categorized, and coded the data collected from my classroom observations according to trends and patterns that emerged while analyzing the data as it was gathered. In the classroom data, I focused on the five students in their negotiations with their peers in group work. I developed the following categories: characteristics of the participant in relation to the
other group members - talkative or relatively quiet; willingness to accept suggestions made about their writing, and willingness to offer suggestions on others' writings. I decided on these categories after I had analyzed Da Peng's first interview and had met with the students individually for my first interview (interview 2). Some of the students had expressed an appreciation for peer work, and enjoyed reading and discussing their classmates' writing. Others had expressed a dislike for peer work. I was interested in seeing if their actual classroom behavior reflected what they had said in the interviews or not.

The data gathered in the conferences, served a similar purpose: it was used to corroborate data from the interviews and classroom observations which had been coded and categorized. With this end in mind, I categorized the students' talk in terms of amount, i.e., willingness to directly answer and/or explain the teacher's questions about his/her writing; agreement, which was the student's willingness to accept the teachers' comments on his/her draft as expressed by affirmation ("yes", "okay", etc.), direct disagreement ("but what I meant was..."), or neutrality/passive disagreement (silence, "mm-hmm", "I see", etc.); and assertiveness, the student's eagerness to raise further questions or comments about his/her writing, to strongly express a dissenting view, and/or to develop/expand on a point mentioned by the instructor. In order to verify the accuracy of my categorizations, I checked my
interpretations with both Daniel and Karla, who agreed with my assessments of their students.

**Student Writings**

In analyzing the students' drafts of their papers, I primarily focused on how engaged the students were in a particular piece of writing and in what way the students implemented the comments and suggestions of their written work that were given to them by their peers, teacher, and/or others. I used broad categories divided by suggestions that were accepted and those that were rejected, and why these decisions were made. These suggestions were divided into discourse, which included, for example, questions about audience and writer assumptions; rhetoric, which included appropriate introductions and thesis statements; and grammar, which included word choice and verb tenses. I then discussed these observations with the students; the writings served as stimulus and content for the interviews, and were used as reference when coding and analyzing the interviews.

**Interviews**

All of the interviews in English were transcribed. The first interviews in Chinese were transcribed first into Chinese and then translated into
English; the other interviews in Chinese were directly translated and transcribed into English. The interviews that were conducted in both English and Chinese were directly translated and transcribed in English. I checked and discussed the transcriptions and translations with Da Peng to clear up any uncertainties and encourage reliability.

The data was then sorted, coded, and classified by the trends and patterns that became evident as determined and guided by my research questions. I first broadly categorized this information in terms of the student's background, the process approach, and what I will refer to as "the present context." Background factors included their previous experiences with writing both in English and Chinese, and their assumptions and opinions about writing. Process approach factors include reading and pre-/freewriting, drafting, revising, and value of teacher comments. Factors concerning "the present context" include the student's relationships with his/her peers, teachers, and the student's own purpose and awareness of extratextual concerns such as audience. These broad categories will serve as the basis for organization of the following chapter.

Summary

In order to discover how Chinese students negotiate their writing tasks both inside and outside the ESL classroom, I collected data by the following
methods: a questionnaire; classroom observations, conference audiotaping, and ongoing analysis of all student writing generated by the five students over the course of the semester. In addition, a series of six interviews were conducted with each student individually. I conducted three of these in English, the Chinese informant/interviewer conducted two in Chinese, and one interview was given by both of us using both English and Chinese. I sorted, coded, and transcribed the data as it was being gathered, and corroborated my analysis with both Da Peng, the informant interviewer, the teachers, and the students when appropriate.

Findings and general themes that grew out of this analysis will be presented in Chapter Four. Part One presents my subjects' life histories and writing histories (in both English and Chinese) because these have impacted and continue to impact their composing in English today. In Part Two I will discuss the students' experiences and opinions concerning topic selection, process writing and in-class writing, revising, peer-review and teacher comments on drafts; other factors that have influenced what and how the students wrote, such as the students' opinions of their teachers; and the students' expectations of and satisfaction with themselves as writers. I will then examine what the students learned and some of the changes they implemented throughout the semester. I will discuss the changing role of their native language in their writing.
Since the participants in the 043 classes were not only the students, but also the teachers, Part Three will examine the teachers' own perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses in teaching the 043 class. This section also will discuss the possible reasons for the students' success from the teachers' (and the researcher's) points of view. The teachers' opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of the individual students will then be discussed, and finally, the results of the students' final exam and their placement in the freshman composition sequence (basic writing or freshman composition) will be presented, since this is the conclusion of the students' ESL writing history at Franklin University.
CHAPTER IV, PART I

THE STUDENTS THEMSELVES:

PERSONAL AND EXPERIENTIAL INFLUENCES ON WRITING

One cannot make friends with a community. One has to make friends with individual people ... I must be content to learn by degrees, to penetrate deeper and deeper, level by level. There was no short cut. I could force the pace a little, but I must also acquire the sensitivity that would tell me how far. Above all, I must learn to accept, with what patience and humility I might, the fact that their voice, not mine, was final (Bowen, 1954, pp.99-100.)

Although Bowen's words in Return to Laughter, her anthropological novel, were those of an anthropologist in a remote village in the Congo in the 1950's, I found myself nodding vigorously in agreement when reading the passage above in terms of my own subjects. When I began my study I was under the assumption that each of my subject's primary, overriding identity was as a Chinese person; in my experience Chinese students tended to live, study, and socialize together. In fact, I recall a Chinese student in the U.S. referring to Americans as "you foreigners!" In addition, at Franklin I had
noticed the relatively large percentage of Chinese students who were
members of the Chinese student organization. This organization was
composed of students from The People's Republic of China, Taiwan, Hong
Kong, Malaysia, and Singapore. Evidently, for the Chinese student members
of this organization on a downtown campus in a large metropolitan city,
cultural ties were more important than political ones, since China and
Taiwan have been political arch enemies for the past fifty years. In reviewing
each of the students' writing from previous semesters, I had noticed that all
of them shared some of the patterns of Chinese ESL student writing, such as
overly general introductory paragraphs and article and verb tense patterns
that were different from those found in academic English, I had mentioned in
the introduction to this study. And although each student was obviously an
individual, in my previous semester teaching I found that the Chinese
students seemed to come to class together, preferred to sit together in class,
and often left class together. Based on these and previous experiences, I was
prepared to find many commonalities among the students and their writings.

My assumptions that the larger culture (i.e., being Chinese) is the
primary identity of an individual and the primary influence on a person's
writing were not unfounded. Most ethnographic studies and much work in
composition and contrastive rhetoric has been carried out under these same
theoretical assumptions. As Rosaldo (1987) stated, ethnographers should
"aspire to describe other cultures in ways that render them familiar" (p. 91).
Wallace (1961) refers to these assumptions as the replication of uniformity, in which the researcher:

... is primarily interested in the extent to which members of a social group, by virtue of their commongroup identification, behave in the same way under the same circumstances ... Under such circumstances, the society may be regarded as culturally homogenous and the individuals will be expected to share a uniform nuclear character (p.26.)

Examples of this view are not difficult to find in the field of composition research; the entire concept of academic discourse community assumes the common group identification (a specific branch of academia) behaving in the same way (commonalities in rhetoric) under the same condition or circumstance (for instance, writing up a research report). Kaplan (1966), had assumed that there is a "Oriental thought pattern" that most Asian languages share, while Hinds (1993, 1990), and other contrastive rhetoricians have also assumed such commonalities in the rhetoric of languages and cultures, such as "quasi-inductive expository writing in Chinese, Japanese and Thai" (Hinds, 1990). In a more recent case study, Connor (1994), who is a Finn, posited that perhaps one reason her subject, Timo, didn't talk to his professor directly about his writing is because Finns are thought of as "shy and quiet."

However, early in the process of gathering data, I began to see that my subjects were primarily very diverse students who secondarily shared the same cultural background. Wallace (1961) calls this view of culture in which
the individual is primary the organization of diversity. He explains that when doing research, this concept considers:

... the actual diversity of habits, of motives, of personalities, of customs which do, in fact, co-exist within the boundaries of any culturally organized society .... Culture ... is characterized internally not by uniformity, but by diversity of both individuals and groups, many of whom are in continuous and overt conflict in one sub-system and in active cooperation with another (p.27-28.)

More specifically, with a perspective similar to Wallace's organization of diversity, Kinneavy (1994) explores Heidegger's theory of forestructure and applies it to the process of composing. Kinneavy emphasizes the importance of individual history and experience in one's composing process, and like Kinneavy, I found that my subjects' life histories and writing histories (in both English and Chinese) greatly influenced their writing in the course of my study. According to Kinneavy, the basic idea of forestructure is that all understanding entails interpretation, and a person must use the knowledge s/he has when engaged in interpretation (p.9). Forestructure can be divided into three parts: forehaving, which means that "a person approaches the object to be interpreted with some sense of having the thing in mind" (p.9); foresight, which "always has the idea of a unity which is projected onto the object which is intended. It ... makes the parts cohere as a whole, and it is existentially grounded" (p.11); and foreconception, which is "a recognition of the structure of the object being interpreted" (p.11). Kinneavy begins his
detailed application of the concept of forestructure to the composing process as follows:

When an author wishes to write about something, to interpret this something to future readers, he or she brings to the act of writing a forestructure. This forestructure is constituted by the entire history of the author, including complex cultural conventions which have been assimilated. Against this background, the something which is to be written about is interpreted. Consequently, any writing project I undertake immediately takes a long look into my past. I sort out related objects, meanings, and structures which I have encountered in the past which are similar to or markedly different from the object being interpreted in an attempt to understand the object I have focused on (p.12).

While Kinneavy is concerned with writing in one's native language, I find this concept may be just as important for our students writing in a second language. As discussed previously, my subjects' life histories and writing histories greatly influenced their writing in the course of my study, as did their individual personalities. I am therefore basing the telling of this first part of my account on Kinneavy's concepts, i.e., of the importance of individual history and experience in one's composing process. By compiling data gathered in the classroom observations, personal interviews, and previous ESL class records, I am devoting this section to "telling the individual story," i.e., establishing the identity of the individual students who were involved in my study, and to introduce the factors in their
personalities and their histories which have impacted and continue to impact their composing in English today.

Ronald's History

As I sat in the classroom waiting for class to begin so I could observe, Ronald, with his bright eyes and ready smile, didn't just enter the room; he exploded into it. Ronald is an energetic young man with a thoughtful demeanor majoring in pre-business. He is from Fujian Province, where through the centuries many overseas Chinese have originated from, and which therefore has a reputation in China as being rather "worldly." Since China first re-opened to the West in the mid-seventies, many joint-ventures with Western companies have been set up in Fujian.

Ronald worked at one of these joint-ventures, a large, luxurious, American-based international hotel in Xiamen, for a year before coming to the U.S. His experiences there allowed him to "touch American culture," since his boss and many of the other employees were American. He worked as a purchasing clerk, which allowed him not only to practice English every day, but which also introduced him to some of the complexities and fascinations of Western-style business. He found his experience at the large
international hotel stimulating, and it piqued his interest in studying business abroad.

While Ronald is certainly interested in the Western world, he also has a very traditional Eastern side. He is an expert at Qi Gong, which he translates as "meditation," but which is also a form of martial art. In his spare time he reads books about Chinese religion and philosophy, especially Daoism and Buddhism. He also enjoys calligraphy, the traditional art of brush writing. And in this large sophisticated American city, he lives in Chinatown. He wishes that he had some American friends, but with his heavy work and study schedule, he finds he doesn't have enough time to socialize.

Ronald's goal in coming to the U.S. was to learn about American culture and combine this knowledge with Chinese culture in order to learn and practice in the business of joint-ventures. He believes this will be good for his future career; he wants to "help both countries and earn a lot of money."

As a student, Ronald has gotten mixed reactions from his teachers because of his idiosyncratic performance: If Ronald is engaged in an assignment, he gives one hundred percent; if he is not, he gives almost nothing. His attendance is sporadic and he is known to have fallen asleep in class. Ronald says that this is due to the necessity of working full-time; he doesn't have enough time to study, let alone "spend time on not important things." While Ronald's parents paid for his first year in the U.S., Ronald has
been entirely on his own since then, and works as a waiter in a nice Chinese restaurant which attracts a lot of tourists. While he doesn't like being a waiter, he does enjoy talking with his customers, and is very confident of his speaking and communication skills. He feels that he could "...probably live freely in the U.S. if I wasn't in school."

**Ronald's Views of Writing**

Ronald likes "to write in general because I always observe the things in many ways," yet he is keenly aware of the rhetorical and stylistic differences between English and Chinese. For example, he had a hard time grasping the importance of the main idea sentence in English:

> ...when I was in China, I read the Chinese book. If I got the main idea sentence, I don't like to read the paper. When I get the main idea sentence, I skip the paper (because) it's not interesting anymore.

Ronald greatly enjoys writing in Chinese and considers himself a good writer. Writing in Chinese is very natural for him:

> (Writing) in Chinese is just like free talking. Just express my ideas and think of detail. When I write I can think of detail. But in America we should put the grammar and organization in.

When Ronald first started writing for his 043 English class he had some difficulty coming to grips with the teacher's expectations:
Here, I write this paper. But in my way, I don't like my paper because the style's different with Chinese. So I just change my idea to follow teacher's instruction ... First draft is from my own idea, no change directly. But the teacher don't like...But now when I follow the teacher's instruction, my mind change and I find my first draft is very simple.

As the semester progressed, Ronald discovered and implemented ways to make writing somewhat easier (this will be discussed in the next section), but after four weeks he still was not satisfied with the development and sophistication of his English writing:

My paragraph like the talking, da...da...da...da, one sentence, one sentence, like talking. But their (other students in his English class) papers have grammar, have some decoration, like the building's decoration... I can make an example. Somebody builds a building, and the building looks not beautiful. Then they put some (wall)paper, some painting, do the decoration, and then the building is beautiful. My paper is like a building with no decoration.

He also felt that he needed suggestions on how to adapt his writing style to one that would be more acceptable to an American audience. At the end of our second interview, I asked Ronald if he had anything else to say. He replied,

Can I ask you how to change my style from the Chinese to American, how to study well? American style, we are different cultures. I keep my culture's concepts. I should change my concepts to the American concept. If I change I can write a good composition.
A Summary of Ronald's Semester

From his first interview with Da Peng in the beginning of the semester until his final interview with me, Ronald was very interested in improving his English writing. He was aware of the fact that good English writing included not only good grammar and organization, but also other factors such as style and audience. He originally thought that the way to make his writing more understandable to an American audience was by thinking in the American style, i.e., thinking like an American. He came to realize later, however, that there was a difference between thinking "like an American" and thinking primarily in English in order to write a good composition. According to his teacher and based on his writing samples, Ronald showed much improvement over the semester, and received a "B+" in his 043 class.

Wen-li

Wen-li's History

In some ways Wen-li is the opposite of Ronald. I observed her entering the room like a whisper, quietly sinking into a chair in the front of the room, wordlessly getting out her book and papers from her backpack. She is a serious, traditional young Taiwanese woman from Kao Hsiung, which is the second largest city. Wen-li grew up in and went to college in the same city, so she had never lived away from home before she came to the U.S. She came
to the U.S. as soon as she finished nursing school in Taiwan, and she now lives with her brother and sister-in-law. Though she considers herself a lot more independent than she was in Taiwan, she admits that she still depends on her brother. She says that she is "a little shy, but if I know someone well I can be open."

In many ways Wen-li reminded me of the typical woman of her age I had taught in Taiwan. Her hobbies are watching T.V., sleeping, and listening to Chinese pop music, in that order. She spends most of her time studying and practicing English:

I really want to learn English well and so I study hard. (The course) "Public Administration in the U.S." was hard for me, all about American government and politics. I don't know about that. I got a B (in that class) but I'm not satisfied. I wanted an A.

Because Wen-li is such a hard-worker, she was well-liked by all of her ESL teachers. Her work was always accurate and precise, and she would participate in class when asked. She herself feels that she has mastered the academic environment, although she still has problems "in the real world":

When I talk to people in this school, you all know we are foreign students so you speak slowly and clearer, but when I go out, other people don't speak like that. It's hard to understand what they are talking about. People use a lot of slang.
Wen-li originally planned to return to Taiwan as soon as she finished her Public Administration degree. Now since she feels more independent, she would like to transfer to another school to study Health Administration, which is more closely related to her nursing background. She feels confident that now she can live in the U.S. on her own.

**Wen-li’s Views of Writing**

Wen-li is not very fond of writing in either Chinese or English; she remarked in one of our interviews that "I don't enjoy writing because brainstorm is difficult for me." She likes writing in Chinese comparatively more; "Most of writing is ok for me, but not poems." She sincerely wants to learn writing well, however, because she realizes that writing is important for public administration and communication.

Although Wen-li complained about the difficulty of writing in English, she had mastered the style of the five-paragraph essay. She wrote by first brainstorming and then preparing an outline, and then writing by adhering closely to her outline. She told Da Peng in the first interview, however, that she felt somewhat confined when writing in English:

I only learned techniques that became restrictions - topic sentence, support, topic sentence, support, etc. This restricts (my) fluency... (my) ideas are interrupted by the structure, I can't express my ideas. I should be able to write more than first, second, third. I want to expand how I write (translation by Da Peng).
While Wen-li voiced these concerns throughout the semester, she often resisted her teacher's suggestions that she take chances in her writing by varying her style or writing on more thought-provoking and/or controversial topics. She would respond that "she was not a creative person and I do not like to brainstorm." When asked why she didn't want to write about a controversial topic, she replied:

I don't know, for me, when I came here, I don't like to write that kind of topic. I think it depends on people's view. I think if I write that kind of paper I will have a lot of arguing with my partner (in peer review). This is why I don't like to write. I think this is more easier. Because sometimes ... I think it's a little bit political, but that's not what I like, because everyone can argue with it. Even in Taiwan I still didn't write (like that).

While Ronald had difficulty restricting the amount of writing, and in refining in his ideas, Wen-li had the opposite problem:

I think sometime when I write the paper, like Daniel usually ask me to write some details, but when I write a paper I usually think if I write a lot of details, it takes many pages, and I think for me I want to write as short as I can. That's my problem.

Wen-li got good grades on her compositions due to her organizational and grammatical mastery, but Daniel, her teacher, still commented on her need to try to write more creatively, writing on one of her papers, "please do not
worry so much about rules if you are afraid to take risks.” She commented that,

I am not a creative person and I do not like brainstorming... (however this comment influenced me and) that’s why I wrote it (i.e., why I took this risk). I think if it’s wrong the teacher will tell me.

The risk Wen-li took in this particular piece was to write what she thought was a Chinese-style introduction:

For this (paper) I didn't follow the (English) rule. In Chinese introduction we don't have to write about what you want to write in the following paragraph(s).... You have to give the person (the reader), to think you write very well, I don't know, like a famous sentence or word ... or something to describe very good and to enthuse people's interest to reading your paper, and then after that you describe.

Daniel indeed liked her introduction, commenting on her second draft, "good idea - but needs to be clearer." In her final draft, Wen-li added another sentence that more explicitly laid out the topic and thesis. This addition satisfied Daniel -- she received a "B+" on the paper.

A Summary of Wen-Li’s Semester

Wen-li's view's on writing are dichotomous. She made no secret of the fact that she did not enjoy writing, yet she consistently obtained the best grades in her class. She complained throughout the semester about the restrictions of writing in English, yet most of the time was unwilling to take a
chance and go beyond those perceived restrictions. She overall felt this same ambivalence about the class and the teacher:

Our classmates, ... as long as they don't fail it's okay. They don't care if they learn or not. I don't feel the same .... I didn't participate in Daniel's class - I didn't like his teaching style. (Yet) I did learn to add more detail when I write.

Jia-Tsong

Jia-Tsong's History

Like Wen-li, Jia-Tsong is almost undetectable in the classroom. On the days I observed his class, he entered quietly, sat in the middle or the back of the room, and when he did speak in class, was extremely soft-spoken. He, too, is from Taiwan. He wrote in one of his first compositions:

I come from a small fishing village which is in the Taiwan Strait. I am a son of a fisherman and grew up in the south of Taiwan. At the age of 15, I went to Taipei to deal with my high school degree.

As required of all young men in Taiwan, Jia-Tsong completed his two-year military service before coming to the U.S. But unlike many of his contemporaries, music is not just a hobby, it is his passion. He started playing piano when he was ten and began clarinet in junior high school. He is majoring in clarinet; more specifically, music performance. His free time is spent practicing, not studying English or watching T.V.
Because his clarinet is clearly Jia-Tsong's priority, his success in his English classes has been mixed. He received mainly "B"s in his beginning and intermediate classes, but had more difficulty in his advanced classes, especially in his research paper writing class, in which I was his teacher. Jia-Tsong was not very interested in the subject of his paper, which was reflected in his writing -- his sentences were often disconnected, incoherent, and grammatically impossible. In fact, I remember wondering how he had even passed the intermediate level classes. However, like his other ESL teachers, I found Jia-Tsong likable enough, and he always came to class and turned in his work on time.

Jia-Tsong feels his greatest success at Franklin is that he has studied (his clarinet) hard and has learned a lot so far. He told me in our final interview that "My clarinet teacher is a very, very, very good teacher. I can be educated better here (than in Taiwan)." He is also proud that he is finally earning some pocket money giving private lessons.

Jia-Tsong came to the U.S. to study because he failed the university entrance exam in Taiwan by only one point on the written portion of the exam -- he needed seventeen points to pass, and received only sixteen. He decided when he finished his military service to come to the U.S. to study music because it had the most potential for him. He is on full-scholarship at Franklin, and since his arrival his goal has been the same -- to be the best musician he can, "If I be a great musician that's fine. If I am not, that's okay,
because I do my best." Jia-Tsong is planning to return to Taiwan when he graduates for a practical reason -- there are too many very talented clarinet players in the U.S., and the chances of his finding employment as a professional musician are much greater in Taiwan than here in the U.S.

**Jia Tsong's Views of Writing**

In general, Jia-Tsong likes to write in Chinese. He likes to write about his feelings, to "let my body cool down. To let my mind fly." He finds this freedom primarily when writing letters and essays, although he does not write much self-initiated text.

However, Jia-Tsong felt little pleasure in writing in English. At the end of our second interview, he volunteered the following:

> I think when most students they are writing a composition, finally they will lose their mind, because they are getting crazy. Actually, they never finish. They just get tired in their minds from writing.

Jia-Tsong also talked at length about studying English in Taiwan; in fact, he had chosen this as the topic for his midterm since he had experienced it firsthand. Or as he put it, he was "suffering with this topic." When he first said this, I thought he was suffering due to the difficulty of the subject or sheer boredom. I later discovered he meant that while he was in junior high and high school, he suffered literally:
Two of the subjects, English and math, the teachers are strict. (If your test score is) under the 70 score, just one, you get beat. I got hit with each score under 70. If my score is 55, I get 15 hits. If teacher is female, she hit our hand with a ruler. If the teacher is male, he hits with a stick. On your butt or thighs, and we wear shorts in junior high. I got hit a lot. It just made me more nervous. I couldn't sit down much.

He was also aware of the ironies of the English teachers in Taiwan just "teaching for the tests," and discussed them at length:

They just teach (for) the test. If the grammar and vocabulary never showed on the test, we didn't learn it. Only memorize. The tests were fill in the blank, make sentences and composition. We know what each question will show on the test, so I will memorize one hundred questions. But I don't know why. Just memorize. Composition is 20%. So I give up this 20% and still have 80%. 60% is still pass, so my final grade is pass. Most students don't care about composition. I study English more than six years in Taiwan, and can't talk with foreigners (there).

Jia-Tsong felt that now his major difficulty in his English writing was vocabulary. He couldn't express himself easily, and didn't know how to use specific words in the appropriate context. He told Da Peng in the first interview:

My grammar and sentence structure is too simplistic, like an elementary school kid's. I'm embarrassed. In Chinese I don't have that problem. I can organize my thoughts and feelings in a detailed way. I can't write that way in English.
Jia-Tsong does, however, try to write in English when he is composing. He tries to restrict his use of Chinese to the pre-writing stage; he thinks about what he wants to write in a fairly detailed way before he begins. He describes his preparation to write as follows:

(I think in) both languages. If it's a sentence I know, I will think in English. But if the sentence I don't have the idea in English, I will think in Chinese. I stop and get my dictionary to find out which word I can use. It doesn't make a difference (thinking in Chinese), just wastes my time.

The biggest change that Jia-Tsong underwent over the course of the semester was his awareness of the importance of previous experience on the success of his writing. He consistently chose topics with which he had experienced himself (English education in Taiwan), and/or which he had familiarity with through reading, and hence could use as a model (his first trip in the U.S.). He used his experiences in all stages of his writing, including his use of metaphor. In discussing one of his papers on immigration, he said:

*Immigration is like a snowball.* I made a snowman in the park. So I got the idea from that. I got the idea of my introduction from Shen. Shen always says in class, 'China has a 10,000 year history.' So I got the idea from him.

Jia-Tsong became very adept at weaving these various influences and experiences into his writing throughout the semester.
A Summary of Jia-Tsong’s Semester

I was personally delighted with the progress Jia-Tsong showed in one semester. He had gone from stilted, cryptic, grammatically incomprehensible writing to using humor, metaphor, and description very effectively. Both Karla (his teacher) and I looked forward to reading Jia-Tsong’s papers, and on more than one occasion, Jia-Tsong’s paper was used as a model in class. Jia-Tsong acknowledged his progress in our final interview:

Writing is very difficult, but actually I learned a lot this semester. I enjoyed [043] writing better [than in 033]. I got an "A" in 043. I didn’t expect it. I was surprised.

So in some ways, Jia-Tsong overcame his troubled (and troubling) previous experiences with learning English. Yet it was also at our final interview that Jia-Tsong said that the most difficult part of being a student in the U.S. was his English classes, and "writing class is the biggest pain of all."

Shen

Shen’s History

At the welcome party for new students on my very first day at Franklin University, Shen had approached me with a huge smile on his face and his hand outstretched. He grabbed and shook my hand enthusiastically and said that he had heard that I had spent quite a lot of time in China and Taiwan,
and asked me several continuous questions to the effect of "How did you enjoy your experience in China and Taiwan? I am from Guangdong and worked for a major American electronics company, and what did I think of the city so far? I think that although it takes some getting used to, the city is actually a wonderful place to live, and I've heard that you have a daughter, and what does she think of the city? Do you have a babysitter yet for her, and where are you living?"

I had been overwhelmed. Never in my life had I encountered such a Chinese whirlwind. My previous experiences when meeting a Chinese person for the first time usually consisted of a smile, vigorous head nodding, a few "hello, hello, hello's" said in time to the nodding, and an occasional "How do you do?" Students who had been in the States for a while might venture a "How are you?" or an "It's a pleasure to meet you, " but I had never experienced the intensity of a Chinese person such as Shen.

Shen was a very enthusiastic subject and told me a great deal about every aspect of his life. He was born and raised in a small village in Guangdong province in southern China. He had a very happy childhood playing in the fields and meadows near his hometown. He could relate story after story of his childhood escapades, and would use them as topics for his writing. He was a very good student at his much-less-than-top-ranked middle and high schools, and one of his greatest sources of pride is his winning first prize in a county-wide Chinese writing contest. He had
completed college in China, and had been a reporter for his university newspaper. Shen had worked for a major U.S. electronics firm that had a joint-venture business in China, and while working there he realized that he needed to both improve his English language skills and increase his business knowledge in order to achieve his goal: to be a successful businessman in the U.S. He has worked continuously to achieve this goal:

I'm getting used to (using English). In one way I have been, but in another way I should study hard to improve my English. Because you know, right now I really worry about my English because if I will graduate next year, you know right then, how can I communicate with Americans? How can I do business in America? That's what I really worry about ... I ordered Reader's Digest and New York Times, I read the articles, very good articles. (They) help me learn English, learn (about) America.

As to be expected, Shen was well-known to his ESL teachers, and was either very well-liked or strongly disliked. Those who liked him praised his class participation and his willingness to work hard. Those who didn't found him overly aggressive and stubborn. He received average grades in most of his classes, except, of course, in advanced conversation, in which he excelled. His low grades were primarily due to his inability and/or unwillingness to slow down and master some of the intricacies of the language, such as accurate pronunciation and correct verb tenses and subject/verb agreement. Shen felt that as long as he could get his meaning across (which he could,
although he often had to repeat and rephrase both in his speaking and in his writing) he was doing okay.

One of Shen's successes has been his relatively quick adjustment to life in the U.S. He has been in the U.S. for only two years, but during that time has married, made many friends, both Chinese and American, and as of the summer after this study was conducted, has found a full-time job. He additionally realizes how much English he has learned:

I began learning English in my country when I was in junior high school, and now I have been studying English for 11 years. I have been in the U.S. for one year, but I think one year's learning (here) is more than three or four (years') learning in my country.

**Shen's Views of Writing**

Shen, as mentioned above, has been quite an accomplished writer in Chinese, and greatly enjoys writing in Chinese. He prefers writing "narrative and argument articles". Like most of the others in this study, at one of our first interviews he said that he didn't like writing in English:

To be honest, I don't really like writing in English. The reasons are I didn't know how to write well, and when writing English I should care about my vocabulary and grammar problem. I am not very comfortable writing in English. I don't think I am a good writer, but I am willing to work hard and to improve my English writing skill.
Perhaps because of his sophisticated skills in writing in Chinese, Shen was very frustrated by his limitations in writing English. He told Da Peng in the first interview:

When I started writing in English, the biggest differences were in vocabulary and grammar. But now when I came to America and started to write it's like culture shock -- I still used the Chinese way of thinking, but in English I must use a different approach. I can't express exactly what I mean in English, I don't have a lot of support in my writing. I can't use the same rhetorical devices such as metaphor in English as in Chinese .... I need to learn more about American writing style.

In the second interview he additionally told me:

When I write in English I can't write in wen tsai, I don't know how to say in English, maybe 'tone'. So my English writing maybe looks rather boring, but if I write in Chinese, you will find something humorous, very funny story, with very detail.

Shen does not do a lot of pre-writing activities; most of the content of his paper comes as he is writing. At the beginning of the semester, Shen did most of his pre-writing and thinking in Chinese, and translated as he was writing:

(For this paper) I was thinking in Chinese, it just comes this way. Maybe (because) I think of my childhood, my mother .... This was a very deep impression in my mind. I think in Chinese.

However, by the time of the midterm he had switched to thinking primarily in English:
This time (I was thinking in English). I think about it first and then I begin to write.

His strategy of thinking in English was successful — he received an "A-" on the midterm, and his paper served as a model for the students in both 043 classes.

A Summary of Shen’s Semester

Like Jia-Tsong, Shen had been my student the previous semester in the 033 writing class. For his research paper he had chosen a topic that was too large and complicated for him to deal with adequately (against my advice) and had had serious problems with plagiarism. While he had showed some improvement by the end of the semester, I had considered him to be a rather average-to-poor writer.

So as with Jia-Tsong, I was very pleased with the progress Shen showed and the types of writing he did in his 043 class. Of all the students in the study, Shen’s writing showed the most natural English writing style and some of the most sophisticated development. So in this way, he was successful; however, he continued to be plagued with grammar problems through the end of the semester.
Lap Lee

Lap Lee's History

When I first saw Lap Lee, he shuffled into the classroom all hunched over, his snow white hair neatly combed, his briefcase (with a myriad of papers sticking out in every direction) clutched under his arm. Lap Lee is seventy-one and has lived in Chinatown since he came to the U.S. at the age of eighteen. He grew up in Guangdong in southern China, and considers his greatest academic achievement to be his acceptance to a public high school where over one thousand students applied for two hundred vacancies.

He came to the U.S. to work in the canned food business that was founded by his father and uncle, and ran this business most of his life. Although he is retired, he still goes to the office for a few hours several times a week. Lap Lee is fluent in Cantonese, his native language (which he speaks with his wife, colleagues, and friends) and in English, both because of the necessity to use it in his business dealings and because of the fact that his children (who are now grown) don't speak Cantonese well, -- English has long been the medium of communication with his children.

Lap Lee is a man of few spoken words, but many "receptive" ones. He listens intently and reads avidly — his daily reading includes the two local papers, The New York Times and The Wall Street Journal, as well as a magazine or two. He has been taking college classes more or less continually
for the past ten years, taking full advantage of the tuition breaks senior
citizens receive. He has taken ESL classes at several local high schools and
city colleges, and outside of passing basic writing, has completed all the
coursework for a degree in Liberal Studies. When I asked Lap Lee to describe
himself, he said:

    I’m always trying to learn something. I’m not afraid to study
    hard. I understand 50-75% of what I read, but anyway, I get it
    overall. I read two or three hours a day. I’m not really shy, just
    quiet. I just sit and listen. I don’t like to talk much. I’m an old
    man. Learning keeps me young at heart.

While saying this his eyes twinkled mischievously, and when he had
finished, he chuckled heartily. While talking with Lap Lee was often a gentle
game of tug-of-war with me doing the tugging and him doing the resisting, I
truly enjoyed his company and his gentle sense of humor.

Lap Lee is satisfied and appreciative of the life he has led. His business
skills allowed him to be able to send all three of his children to top
universities. And naturally, his children’s successes provide his greatest
sense of accomplishment: one son is a physician, the other received his MBA
from MIT, and his daughter is a happily married, successful insurance agent.

When I asked Lap Lee what his goals were, he again chuckled and
declared, "I’m an old man! I don’t need goals anymore." But under further
cajoling he admitted:
I hope maybe to finish my degree. I took accounting classes, computer classes. All the classes I pass. I can write papers (to) pass a class but I can't pass English 100 (basic writing). I just need to pass basic writing.

Lap Lee's Views of Writing

Because Lap Lee is a man of few words, Lap Lee does not enjoy writing in either Chinese or English. He said in his first interview with me:

Even if I write in Chinese, I don't have much to say, much to talk about. I am a simple man. I talk simply. I write simply, too. Maybe my writing isn't complex enough.

Lap Lee does not use Chinese at all in his writing process. He's comfortable and capable of writing in English directly, and his style is basically fluent and natural, which makes his writing difficult to categorize. His writing exhibits good use of transitions and complex sentences. Yet he also has grammar problems, specifically with verb tenses and word forms, that a native speaker would not make. Probably due to his age, Lap Lee is not a fast learner, and often needs extra time and extra practice to master new information, and his writing (especially at the beginning of the semester) showed little development. However, he was always satisfied with his writing, because:

For myself, I think it's a good paper for me. I said what I wanted to say. I had a good idea and I wrote it. I like all the paper. I wrote it for myself.
Although he passed first-year composition at a local city college, when he transferred to Franklin he was placed in basic writing. He failed basic writing three times, at which point he was referred to the ESL program. Lap Lee blames his lack of success in his previous basic writing classes solely on the instructors:

I learned nothing (in basic writing). Everyday they (the instructors) just give you something to write about. You don't know what and you don't know why. Actually I learned nothing. (They) just correct my paper, give it back. (They) told me what was wrong but didn't explain it. I couldn't understand what they said my problems are.

Over the course of the semester of the study in which he took 043, Lap Lee felt he was learning a great deal. He repeatedly mentioned what a good teacher Karla was in comparison to his previous composition teachers and how hard she worked. He additionally was very appreciative of the time I spent with him working on his grammar, and of everything he learned in his composition class this semester, he found the concept of freewriting especially helpful.

**A Summary of Lap Lee's Semester**

While Lap Lee certainly showed progress with his writing, neither he nor Karla thought he was ready to tackle basic writing again. He decided to
take 043 one more time in order to internalize some of the skills he had
learned over the quarter. He continued to show excitement over the
improvement in his writing development and grammar, and told me in the
final interview that he remembered an American who had learned Chinese
by memorizing entire sentences. While he realized that this was not
necessarily a good thing for a man of his age to try to do, he was writing down
sentences that he had liked in his reading, and trying to read his magazines
and newspapers more critically so he could use what he learned in his
writing.

Summary

In this section I have attempted to identify these five students as
individuals, to introduce how their personalities and experiences greatly
impact their composing. Richard is the philosopher who uses his writing as
exploration, and who has difficulty confining his words to a few pages. Wen-
li is the practical student who views English writing as a tool for academic
success, doesn't really care about personal exploration, and ekes out the
required amount of words and no more. Jia-Tsong is the gentle musician
whose sense of humor and desire to share his experiences are manifested in
his writing, in spite of his negative writing experiences in the past. Shen is
the consummate storyteller, for whom writing is an enjoyable craft in both
English and Chinese. And Lap Lee is the old-fashioned gentleman with a deep and abiding respect and affection for the written word, as long as it is not his own.

As Kinneavy (1994) notes in his explanation of forestructure, all understanding entails interpretation, and a person must use the knowledge s/he has when engaged in interpretation (p.9). This knowledge consists of “the entire history of the author, including complex cultural conventions which have been assimilated” (p.12). I discovered throughout my study that the histories and personalities of these students greatly impact how they write, how much they write, what they choose to write about, and even their satisfaction with their writing. In the next section I will discuss these influences on the present context, their experiences in the 043 class.
CHAPTER IV, PART II

THE PRESENT CONTEXT FROM THE STUDENTS' PERSPECTIVES

As a composition instructor, I have always followed the assumptions about drafting inherent in most process-oriented writing texts; namely, that excluding pre- and freewriting, a composition has basically three drafts: a first draft is written that focuses on organization and ideas; a second draft follows that focuses on major grammar, word choice, and transition errors; and a final draft that is focused on editing, i.e., "cleaning up" any remaining problems not addressed in previous drafts, and minor grammar errors, such as verb agreement. When I realized that I myself don't practice what I had been teaching, I became curious as to what these students felt about and how they utilized the process approach, especially since none of them had been schooled in that method in Chinese.

Every student told me in our second interview that from junior high through high school, in both China and Taiwan, writing was an in-class activity confined to Chinese class. The students would be given models of compositions and asked to write mainly expository and some analytical texts.
As Da Peng explained, when there are fifty students in each class, the teacher has neither the time nor the energy to teach and/or look at multiple drafts. In addition, the reason why the students had not been using pre-writing strategies at the beginning of the semester was that in China and Taiwan, they were taught to literally compose in their head; they should understand completely what they were going to write -- i.e., the organization, purpose, and content --before they put pen to paper. They had been taught that after they had composed their entire essay in their minds, they should write continually from the introduction straight through to the conclusion. Writing was not taught as a thinking process or as a way to explore issues, but simply the end product of previously thought out ideas.

Over the course of the semester I found these students varied greatly in their understandings and implementations of the process approach as it was being taught in their 043 class. In this section, using data provided by the students in their interviews with me and Da Peng as well as samples from the students’ writings, I will first discuss the students’ experiences and opinions concerning topic selection in terms of process writing and in-class writing (see Table 2). Because the process approach was taught by both teachers and is the method used in the textbook, Read, Write, Revise: A Guide to Academic Writing (Schenck, 1988), used in both Daniel's and Karla's class, I will then focus on selected aspects of this approach such as revising, peer-review and teacher comments on drafts (see Table 3). I will then examine other factors
that have influenced what and how the students wrote, such as the students' opinions of their teachers, and the students' expectations of and satisfaction with themselves as writers more specifically. I will additionally explore what the students learned and some of the changes they implemented throughout the semester, by my examining their writing and their talking about their writing. Finally, I will discuss the changing role of their native language in their writing.

**Topic Selection**

Deciding what students should write about is a dilemma for many ESL composition teachers (Raimes, 1991). Raimes (1991) notes that what topic is assigned is often dependent on the teaching approach used in the writing class. In a “content-dominated” approach, topics are usually chosen based on the subject matter of a particular discipline. In a more reader-based approach, prompts are used which approximate those the students may face in their academic courses (Johns, 1986). These prompts are then deconstructed so that students can transfer their knowledge of “essay writing conventions to their own prose” (p.252).

In the process approach, students are often asked to choose their own topics, which are usually based on personal experience (Raimes, 1991). Spack (1985) argues for the use of literature as a basis for topic selection in the
process classroom because "writing has no subject matter of its own" (p. 719). However, one relatively neglected area of research in terms of topic selection is the students' own perceptions of the importance of topic in their writing. It is not uncommon in ESL classrooms for a topic to be assigned in order to elicit a particular form. For example, a student may be asked to write about education in the U.S. and in their home country in order to practice a comparison/contrast essay (Schenk, 1988). The what (education in the U.S. vs. the home country) we ask them to write about is often subordinated by the why (to practice comparison and contrast) and the how (format and organizational concerns, such as first writing about the U.S., then the home country, or organizing by specific point, i.e., expense of education in the U.S. and the home country).

However, Zamel (1982) found that her eight case study subjects were all very interested in the what. The subjects, who had all completed their ESL and freshman composition requirements, stated that they did not like writing about personal topics which were often required in ESL classes, since personal matters "were none of my teacher's business" (p. 195). Zamel's (1982) subjects preferred "more objective, informationally-based subjects" (p. 195). The students in my study were also very eager to talk about topic. Table 2 illustrates whether the students preferred the teacher to choose the subject or if they preferred to choose the topic themselves. It additionally shows what criteria are used when a student must choose a particular topic him/herself.
A "++" means that the student thought this criteria very important. A "+" indicates that the student thought this criteria important, and a "--" means the student did not mention this as important in our interviews.

Table 2 - Topic Selection

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shen</th>
<th>Jia-Tsong</th>
<th>Lap Lee</th>
<th>Ronald</th>
<th>Wen-li</th>
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<td>process papers</td>
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<td>in-class writing</td>
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<td>process papers</td>
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As Jia-Tsong explained about the importance of topic:

The hardest problem is the topic for English composition. I prefer the teacher to give me a topic. I don't like to choose my own topic. The teacher just give us an area and I must choose. But I don't like to, I don't ever understand exactly. It's in English. Every sentence I understand, but the big picture, I don't
know exactly. I don't know, I'm not 100% sure. Sometimes my understanding is wrong. So sometimes I feel it is dangerous.

Perhaps because in China and Taiwan they rarely had to decide for themselves on which topic to write, Jia-Tsong, Lap Lee and Wen-li preferred that the teacher choose the topic, or at least provide several choices. Ronald and Shen had little problem coming up with their own topics, presumably because they enjoyed writing as a way to express their ideas -- they had both written extensively in Chinese. In fact, Ronald kept a journal in Chinese. For all the students, however, the primary criteria for choosing a particular topic, regardless if it was for an in-class writing or a piece that would undergo several drafts, was personal experience. They wanted to write about not only what they knew, but what they had lived through.

Experience was especially crucial when considering a topic for in-class writings such as the midterm. Lap-Lee wrote about learning a foreign language, saying, "I chose this topic because I had more ideas about it. I myself learned a foreign language. I experienced it." Shen spent about ten minutes analyzing each of the three topics, and chose the one which he thought best based on his "background experience." He chose "Crime in America" because he was overwhelmed by all the people and noise in the city when he first arrived:

What I write in the paper are true. All of the things are true .... Just one day before I came to the U.S. I went to Hong Kong to
visit my Korean friend. He give me a wise say(ing), oh (it's) too
dangerous for you to dress professional suit. These words I write
in the quotes ... and when I came here my friend picked me up at
the airport and drive me to the school ... one of the black people,
he was so big, came over and begged for money. I was so, so
scared.

Wen-li wrote about the entrance exam system in Taiwan because she
has her "own experience and it's not too much to do in the time limit."

Ronald wrote about the system of teaching English in China:

I find a lot of interesting topics on the paper to choose, but this
topic, the English study in the Chinese school, I have experience,
so I think I can explain the Chinese teaching system here, it will
be easy for me to write. It's because I have experience studying
there. But the other topic I don't have any experience or
opinion, so I think if I write it, it will be more difficult, because I
cannot get example, but here Chinese-English system I can get
examples.

If the students had had experience with all of the topic choices, all of
them naturally chose the experience which had affected them most
profoundly. For one of his papers, Lap-Lee decided to write about becoming a
U.S. citizen more than fifty years before. When I asked him why he chose
this topic, he replied that "It was my experience." When I commented that he
had led a long life and had many experiences, he clarified,

I think this day was the most important to me. This day
immediately came to mind. I'll never forget that day and the
feelings on that day.
One of Wen-li's favorite papers was "How to Plan A Trip Across America."

She had thoroughly and carefully planned this trip with her friends, and had enjoyed it greatly. She said it was the easiest paper for her to write, because,

It was my experience just last year. I had a lot of information about it. I remember every detail, every step I followed. I can tell clearly about how I planned that trip.

Jia-Tsong wrote about his studying English in Taiwan:

I chose this topic because I have the experience. I was suffering with this topic .... In junior high and high school in Taiwan if you are under the 70 score, just one, you get beat ... I got beat alot.

One of the papers Ronald particularly enjoyed writing was about his grandmother. He chose to write about her because:

My grandmother stayed a long time together with me. Both of my parents stayed in Hong Kong and I stayed in China with my grandmother and my uncle and my sisters. My grandmother was the wisest, she knows a lot about traditional Chinese medicine. And she was very kind to me. She was the most important person in my life.

If the students did not have direct experience with a topic, they would use their knowledge of and/or familiarity with the subject to help them decide what to write about. For example, Lap Lee reads several newspapers and magazines each week. One of the papers that was easiest for him to write was entitled "U.S. is the Police of the World." He said, "I can write about this because I read a lot. I know a lot about it."
Conversely, several students said their most difficult papers were the ones in which they had no experience with and/or little knowledge of the topic. Shen hated his paper on the advantages and disadvantages of Americanization. This chapter in their textbook (Read, Write, Revise, Schenck, 1988) entitled “AMERICA/AMERICA Writing to Inform” included readings that discussed whether children born to immigrants are helped or hindered if they only speak English ("Americanization Has Its Weaknesses," by Paul Simon); and how the cultures from which many of the immigrants come impact America ("The Changing Face of America," by Otto Friedrich). These readings were dense, and to the students, seemed controversial. As Shen commented:

> How do I know? I'm not an American citizen. I don't have the experience, the cultural background. I am not second generation. I speak two or three languages (not just one). I read some material (about the topic) but I can't make up my mind. My knowledge is too superficial.

The students gave a few other reasons for selecting the topics they did. Both Jia-Tsong and Wen-li mentioned that a deciding factor on choosing to write about their trips in the U.S. and Canada was that the organization was already there; they could write chronologically, place by place. They also felt these trips would be interesting to read, and were stories that they wanted to share. Jia-Tsong explains as follows:
My trip happened in this country. If I write about my country, I think it's not interesting. This travel gave me a lot of surprises and I had a very interesting travel. It was my experience and I wanted to write about it. I wanted to share my experiences with others.

Discussing topic selection with these students was indeed enlightening. For example, I thought they would find the topic of Americanization interesting because Ronald, Shen, and Wen-li are all considering becoming U.S. citizens, and Lap Lee has been a citizen for almost fifty years. But they all considered the issue too complicated — they could see the many disadvantages and advantages of becoming a citizen — and themselves too inexperienced — they hadn't yet made that decision and therefore didn't have the experience necessary to allow them to write a good paper; they simply felt the topic was overwhelming.

From the findings of contrastive rhetoricians such as Matelene (1985), process researchers such as Zamel (1982), and my own experience teaching Chinese students, I expected the students to dislike writing about personal topics that forms such as personal narrative require due to their relative lack of experience writing this kind of composition in Chinese. Shen had mentioned that personal narrative writing was not done past the sixth grade in China, and Wen-li said that she had never written personal narrative in Taiwan. However, all the students (with the exception of Lap Lee) found writing stories about their lives the easiest and most enjoyable. When they
had to choose a topic for their personal narrative writing, they chose an experience which had affected them profoundly. For example, Lap Lee wrote about the most memorable day in his life: when he first became a U.S. citizen. Wen-Li wrote about traveling across America, in which she had felt proud of both her ability to successfully plan her trip and her first independent vacation away from her family here in the U.S. Not only did all the students have experiences they wanted to share, but they also felt that their audience, i.e., the other students in the class and/or their teacher, could learn something from these experiences. Wen-li wanted to tell her classmates about the various sources such as AAA and toll-free hotel reservation numbers that were available for them to use in planning their own travel. Shen enjoyed both telling about his childhood and reading about the childhood of others, since he felt this was an important way to not only learn about the other students in the class, but about their childhood as well. When writing their personal narratives on personal topics, the students became completely engaged in their writing due to the fact that they had a real purpose (to entertain or inform) and a real audience (their classmates and their teacher) and therefore had real motivation to write.
Pre-Writing and Freewriting

One of the most interesting findings in the first interview was how little pre-writing the students had done in their writing before, even though (with the exception of Lap-Lee), they had all been instructed in pre-writing strategies, such as outlining and brainstorming, in their previous ESL composition classes. Wen-li explained that out of the one and a half hours she was given to write her in-class diagnostic essay, she had spent half an hour to forty-five minutes brainstorming about each topic before she decided on which one to write. She then thought carefully a while longer in order to decide exactly what she was going to write, and then wrote her essay in the remaining forty-five minutes. Ronald said of his preparation to write on the in-class diagnostic, "It is a good way for me to think thoughtful before I write something." Jia-Tsong said he outlined what he wanted to write in his mind before he wrote, while Lap Lee admitted that he didn't do any pre-writing or planning at all, although he felt he should think about the topic.

In the second interview, both Ronald and Shen said that when they were writing a process paper that would have several drafts, they used outlining as a pre-writing strategy. Shen explained:
I will write down an outline of what I am going to write. Then I will think in my mind what recourse I have, what I am going to use to explain my points.

Ronald explained his outlining as follows:

The first draft, I just write little things, not a lot ... the first draft I just write the main idea sentence, the major point. Like an outline. The outline is for all my writing. Every paper I do, because we write the outlines in America. In China, I don't do the outline, I don't know how to do .... It's helpful. Because when I prepare the outline and then I can develop my logical thinking .... It's about logic. When I prepare the outline, I can develop my logic. If I don't have an outline, it will be very complex. But if I make an outline, my logic is clear. It helps me develop my topic.

Shen and Ronald's use of outlining as a pre-writing strategy is not unexpected. As mentioned previously, they both are experienced writers who produce a great deal of text when they write in Chinese. This productivity also took place when they wrote in English; in fact, Ronald at times has trouble restricting the amount of text he writes; he repeated on several occasions that he feels he must limit the amount when he writes a paper in English, because "Americans like concise." Outlining helps them to stay focused.

Perhaps because of her educational background and her teaching experience has been with both native and nonnative English speakers, Karla is a strong proponent of freewriting as a pre-writing strategy. Reid (1993) describes Elbow's (1973) concept of freewriting as writers putting:
all their ideas on paper, quickly, without the word the revisions in word and sentence structure that can 'interrupt' thought, and without lifting their pens from their papers. Through this freewriting, which Elbow considers a relatively risk-free way of transferring ideas into words and onto a page, students will discover both real meaning and what they want to say (p.4).

While it may be hard to tell from the above quote what Reid's opinion of free-writing is, all the students but Wen-li found it to be a liberating and worthwhile activity (see Table 3). Ronald said that the composition course was helpful because he learned brainstorming and freewriting, and he therefore didn't feel limited by his writing and he could write a lot. At our final interview, Lap Lee said that he considers freewriting to be the most helpful skill he learned the entire semester:

Before when I write, I have to carefully select out my grammar and everything, so I just worry and not write freely. Now I write what just drops out of my mind, correct it later. I don't have to worry about things when I write. I didn't know about freewriting before. Now it's easier to write, new material continues to come out of my mind, or things I'd like to say.

Shen enjoyed one freewriting especially because it evoked pleasant childhood memories:

When I was freewriting I think of all the details I should write down. I remember about my village, it is a very small village, it was very beautiful, I have a sweet memory ... the hills opposite my house have so many white flowers ... my friend and I always climbed the hills and played games there, so when I write down, I think, oh I know, I remember, it's very interesting.
As the semester progressed, Jia-Tsong also incorporated freewriting into his pre-writing activities. He said that after he chose a topic, he would freewrite in English and then look up how to spell specific words in the dictionary. Only Wen-li was unswayed as to the benefits of pre-writing. Unless she was required to brainstorm and freewrite in class, she did little pre-writing at all. She simply thought about what she was going to write, organized it in her mind, and wrote. She believes that freewriting takes too much time, and is therefore a waste of time. Wen-li was the one student who continued to rely on her writing strategies learned in Taiwan; namely, she preferred to think through her composition in her mind before she began to write.

Reading as a Pre-writing Strategy

Using literature and other readings in the ESL writing classroom has become increasingly popular in the past few years. Reid (1993) provides three reasons why: literature can be used as a way to show specific aspects of culture from an insider's perspective and thus increase the students' cultural sensitivity and awareness; it can serve as "stimuli for writing" (p.186) and provide content to discuss and analyze in terms of both structures and ideas. In the preface to the textbook used in the 043 classes, Schenck states that the readings were chosen "for their topical interest and their potential for provoking critical thinking preparatory to writing assignments" (p.v) and that they are to be used to stimulate writing topics and group discussion.
Although the students had all read some American literature, such as works by Mark Twain or Edgar Allen Poe, in their home countries, they were not in agreement about the value of using literature in the writing class (see Table 5). This disagreement was possibly due to the fact that while they had previously been required to read literature in English, they had not been required to write about it. Neither Lap Lee nor Yu-mei liked the literary selections in the textbook, nor did they see the value of using these selections in class. Lap Lee explained:

(The) reading is the hardest part of class. It's not at all what I'm used to. Literature, not newspapers or magazines or other textbooks. I have to look up a lot of words. (It) makes writing more difficult.

Wen-li expressed similar sentiments:

I don't like the readings at all. (They are) not interesting. Before I study (in) this class I hope it will be like 93, a lot of writing and the teacher will help us a lot. But when I went to the class, this is far away from what I think, what I expected. It's just a reading class.

Ronald had mixed feelings about the readings for the class. On the one hand, he thought many of the readings were interesting and could remind him of his own experiences to write about. On the other hand, those selections that were focused completely on American culture were demanding, perhaps
because there was a great deal of knowledge about American culture assumed in the writing:

...for Chinese people, to read the English book and get the information from the English book to write a paper on American culture is very difficult. Some (selections) we don't understand, some is too long, and I can't conclude what it means.

Both Shen, who often reads for enjoyment, and Jia-Tsong, who rarely does, considered the reading selections in the textbook interesting and relevant to their writing, since a selection often served as an impetus and gave them ideas for their own writing. Shen chose the topic "Crime in America" as the topic for his midterm based on both his own experience and a selection in the book ("What America is Really Like," by Gary Moore):

Because the article in the book is talking about one American, he travelled by foot in the whole country and he found out that America is not as danger(ous) as people say. And I feel (it's) very interesting and I think and I get some ideas ... I want to read, and also we discussed (it) in class ... he didn't have a gun with him, and we discussed what kind of clothes and what kind of hair does he have. A lot of details make it so interesting.

Jia-Tsong also enjoyed this particular selection in the book, which notably, helped him to recall a book in English he had read three years ago in an EFL class in Taiwan about a Chinese-American's trip to Niagara Falls (Unfortunately, Jia-Tsong could not remember either the author's name or the title of the book):
Before I wrote this topic I had two choices — my family and this (his trip to Canada). But I read in the book (about a trip) and about Niagara Falls in a book. (It) gave me the idea, so I choose this one. It reminded me of my trip to Canada.

A major reason why Wen-li and Ronald, who were Daniel’s students, may not have liked the readings while Shen and Jia-Tsong, who were Karla’s students, did, could be the difference in the two instructors’ teaching styles. Daniel’s M.A. is in English Literature, and his fondness for and comfort with the reading selections were obvious. One of the times I observed his class he dramatically read the entire selection aloud even though he had previously assigned it for homework, and the majority of the class was spent discussing the content of the selection itself. Karla, on the other hand, used the readings as a springboard for discussing the students’ own experiences, and pointed out stylistic and other effects from the text that the students could use in their own composing. By the end of the semester even Lap Lee (who was Karla’s student) was convinced of the merit of the reading selections in the text:

(Basic writing) was no good, just reading, (the teacher did) not (teach) writing. Karla showed how reading could help my writing.

Lap Lee’s acknowledgment of the value of using literature in the ESL composition classroom was in all probability due to Karla’s explicit linking of
the literary selections as writing that could serve as models for the students' own composing.

The First Draft

For the sake of clarity, I will not consider any pre-writing or freewriting as a draft (see Table 4). Instead, what I will refer to as the first draft is the product a student submits to his/her teacher for the first time. For several students, this "first draft" had already undergone many revisions before being turned in. This first became apparent in the following interview with Jia-Tsong in discussing a three-page composition:

Cynthia: How long did it take you to write this?

Jia-Tsong: Three hours. From nothing to this.

C: Oh, I see. But this is actually your second draft, isn't it?

JT: This is my first draft.

C: But you rewrote this.

JT: Oh, if you mean that way.

C: I'm confused. Did you write this whole thing at one time?

JT: This one, yes. But not always. This one I wrote the whole thing and then read again and again and I think I should change.

C: How did you change it?
JT: One time I change the first and second paragraph. The second paragraph should be first. Sometimes I change grammar or spelling or words or add something. Each time I read I always find an error.

It is not surprising that it had taken Jia-Tsong so long to write so little, since his first draft had already been revised several times before Karla even held it in her hands. Like Jia-Tsong, Wen-li undergoes a similar process for her "first draft." When she writes in Chinese, she sits at a computer after she has her thoughts and organization clear, and then writes from the beginning of the composition until the end. She then looks over what she has written, focusing on organization and clarity:

I want to know if I keep only one idea in one paragraph, or if I jump, I will reorganize so it is more clear.

Lap Lee’s process for drafting is similar to Wen-li’s, but he writes entirely by hand. His reply to the "first draft" question was similar to Jia-Tsong’s:

It’s my first (draft). But I copied over again. Some times I change (it) if I find something wrong, (such as) (verb) tense, grammar. Then I give to the teacher.

Both Ronald and Shen, however, find writing to be a thought-producing process, and as they are writing they constantly go back and forth within the text, often working paragraph by paragraph. They both mentioned the need to take breaks while writing from time to time because of the intensity of
their composing process. Ronald tried to explain his drafting process as follows:

The basic idea is in my mind. I just get an idea and I develop it. When I write, I think, I write, I think, I write. And when I think I stop and then write some more. And also when I type it, I develop again. So this is my fourth draft, not really (my) first.

Shen’s process is similar to Ronald’s, although like Wen-li, he composes directly on the computer:

I have a computer in my home. So I read my freewriting first, and then I begin to type in the computer, and I also do editing, (for example) oh this is wrong, I want to delete it, and then to edit more information and ideas. And then the second paragraph is just like that, after I finish typing, then I will go review again. And if I read it, I feel this sentence is no good, so I will delete it. And then maybe I’ll edit some sentence (some) more.

What Shen refers to as "editing" is actually more similar to revising since he addresses global issues, such as cohesion, more than editing concerns, such as grammar and spelling. Shen and Ronald’s processes echo those of Zamel’s (1983) skilled ESL writers; namely that they wrote non-linearly -- there was a “constant interplay of thinking, writing, rewriting” (p.72).

While it is true that for all the students writing is a process in that they revise their work several times, the amount of drafting done is often much more than teachers may have traditionally thought; both Karla and Daniel expressed surprise when I told them the amount of pre-writing done by their
students in this study. This is especially noteworthy when considering that the students had not done any drafting when they wrote in China and Taiwan. Raimes (1985) said of her case study subjects, "As the students wrote, they exhibited not only attention to the task but commitment to it" (p.246). The students in my study exhibited this same commitment to their tasks. Therefore, because students' first drafts are often far from "rough," this commitment should be recognized and acknowledged by the composition teacher when he or she is evaluating first drafts. First drafts in reality are the best writing the students can produce individually before they get feedback from their teachers and/or peers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Jia-Tsong</th>
<th>Shen</th>
<th>Lap-Lee</th>
<th>Ronald</th>
<th>Wen-Li</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>writing of first draft</td>
<td>completely written, then revised</td>
<td>write, revise, rest, write, revise, etc.</td>
<td>completely written, then revised</td>
<td>write, revise, rest, write, revise, etc.</td>
<td>completely written, then revised</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>use of computer for 1st draft</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>no</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>peer review</td>
<td>very helpful</td>
<td>helpful</td>
<td>very helpful</td>
<td>very helpful</td>
<td>not helpful</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>teacher comments (teacher)</td>
<td>very helpful (Karla)</td>
<td>very helpful (Karla)</td>
<td>very helpful (Karla)</td>
<td>not helpful/ problematic (Daniel)</td>
<td>not helpful/ problematic (Daniel)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>revision focus</td>
<td>cohesion</td>
<td>reader interest grammar</td>
<td>grammar, amount of text</td>
<td>idea development</td>
<td>cohesion, amount of text</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 3: Drafting and Revision in English
Peer Review

Much has been written about the importance of peer review to help ESL writing students develop a sense of discourse community and audience and to get feedback from a variety of readers (Reid, 1993). Some researchers, however, have expressed concern about whether peer review is an effective tool for ESL students, especially those from Asia, where societies tend to function more for the good of the whole rather than the individual. For example, Carson and Nelson (1994) suggest that since Chinese and Japanese students come from "collectivist cultures," when participating in writing groups they may be more comfortable maintaining group harmony than giving constructive criticism, or at the other extreme, may be "hostile, strained, and competitive" (p.17) if they believe their peers are members of the "outgroup," i.e., not members of the group in which the student him/herself belong.

None of the students in this study (with the possible exception of Wen-Li) fell into either one of these categories, perhaps because they had been in the U.S. for at least a year, and felt comfortable with their classmates (see Table 4). They all had and expressed respect for their classmates' writings, and offered specific criticism, both positive and negative. They all found peer review helpful. For example, Lap Lee, who had, rather surprisingly, not done
much peer review in his previous writing classes, had underestimated the importance of audience in his writing before experiencing his first peer review of the semester. He had previously thought that he was misunderstood by the teachers either because he was a foreigner or simply not a good writer. He commented that:

Before I thought (the) details (were) enough. But my classmate, she didn't understand and asked me more questions. I had to explain. (When) I revise I need to add details.

Ronald had a similar experience with peer review in his paper about his grandmother. When I asked him how he decided to change his second draft, he replied:

The second draft is because in the first draft we have peer review. When I read my first draft for my classmates, they ask me many questions. They ask me to write a lot about my grandmother, because they don't know who my grandmother is and how my grandmother influence me. So I put a lot about this to introduce my grandmother. But my first draft I only write how my grandmother influence me, I don't tell the reader who my grandmother is and they told me to put (it) in.

When Jia-Tsong was talking about revising one of his papers, he mentioned the changes he would make were based on the information he received in peer review:

I need to add more information. And finally I find (from peer review) I didn't write a conclusion. Peer review is helpful. It
may remind me of something I missed, something I don't aware about.

Shen, who was usually very gregarious and verbose during our interviews, did not have much to say about peer review. He found it helpful, but emphasized that the decisions on what and how to revise were his own. One reason why he may not lay as much emphasis on peer reviews as the others is because he has an outside reader: his wife. He does his writing and revising at home and then often asks his wife to read it:

I give my article to my wife ... and sometimes she will give me some advice ... (on) the content, sometimes the organization. She ... used to work in a big company so her English, really, it's not bad, and her vocabulary is sometimes better than me. (I don't take) so much (of her advice). Most of the ideas are mine.

While the other students had found peer review helpful to varying degrees, Wen-li did not like it at all, providing some of the same reasons Carson and Nelson (1994) gave:

From last semester until now I don't think the peer review would be good because the classmate won't tell you where you did wrong. Even me, I don't feel comfortable because some people try very hard to do it (write their papers), but you just say, 'no, you're wrong, wrong, wrong.' And sometimes it's because everybody have different writing styles, so if you give him your opinion, maybe he thinks, 'that's not my style.'
Wen-li did, however, implement some of the comments her classmates had given her when she revised her paper; she "just added some words the classmate told me in the first draft (that) I didn't say."

Even though the students had had no experience with peer review when composing in China, in addition to appreciating peer review in terms of their own papers, the students also found the reciprocal nature of peer review beneficial; when reading and/or commenting on other students' writings, they found effective strategies that they could implement in their own writing, or ineffective ones that they could avoid. Lap Lee enjoyed reading one of his classmate's paper about her mother, who was also her kindergarten teacher:

All the details make it interesting, it was (a) happy paper. I know her mother when I'm done (reading it). It was a feast of knowledge.

Jia-Tsong had reviewed the same paper as Lap Lee, but had an entirely different opinion about the amount of detail:

It helps to compare (other writing with mine) ... Her writing is too detailed. Every (piece of) information you get: time, place, people, everything. After I read her paper, I have no questions ... I can't use my imagination. (It's) like a report, a police report.

In his experiences with peer review, Ronald often focused on the organization and naturalness of his classmates' papers:
... I find their introduction and the conclusion, these two paragraphs are very good. Compared with my paper, I find my grammar and some idioms and some words not good like the other students.

Even Wen-li, who vehemently insisted that peer review was not useful and who did not like to read her classmates' papers because of their "bad grammar and different style" learned a technique that she liked — using a direct quote from a person when writing a paper describing that person. She implemented this in her second draft of a paper about her favorite teacher, and Daniel commented favorably on this addition.

I had the opportunity to observe peer reviews in both Daniel and Karla's 043 classes, and one of the most interesting reviews happened to be when Wen-li and Ronald had to review each other's paper. The paper which Ronald reviewed was Wen-li's "How To Plan a Trip Across America," which, as mentioned before, Wen-li had liked the best. Ronald did not like Wen-li's concrete, explicit, informational style. He insisted that her thesis statement was not connected or developed enough in terms of the other information in her introductory paragraph, while Wen-li insisted it was. The introductory paragraph in question was as follows (note: numerical markings are provided in the following two examples for ease in reference):

Traveling across America is one of my dreams (1). America is so big that it has many different kinds of sceneries such as mountains, beaches, wilderness, and deserts (2). Also, it
has many interesting cities, including L.A., San Fransisco, New York, and Orlando (3). There are so many interesting places that I can't travel through all of them in one vacation (4). Therefore, I would make a good plan to save time and money, to travel safely, and to have fun (5). Last summer, I had a chance to travel in America (6). There were four people in the trip; we took turns driving so that we would not be tired (7). During the trip, we visited fourteen National Parks and National Monuments (8). I really had a good time because we made a very good plan (9).

Ronald said that (3) seemed more like a thesis than (4), and if (4) was her thesis, what do sentences (1), (2), and (3) have to do with it? He felt that the sentences needed to be "more connected." Wen-li insisted that indeed, they were all connected, that the first several sentences provided background and a purpose for writing. They went back and forth on this point for at least five minutes (and interestingly, this conversation stayed entirely in English) before Wen-li came over to where I was observing and taking notes, explained the problem and asked me what I thought. Ronald immediately joined us with his paper, which was also one of his favorites, to illustrate what he thought. The introduction to Ronald's paper, "The New Immigrants Will Change American Culture" is below:

The USA is a multicultural country; people here are from Europe, Africa, Asia, etc (1). When people immigrated to America, they brought their cultures to form the current American culture (2). Because the USA began about 200 years ago, its culture can always be reformed by the newcomers (3). There are many reasons that the American culture can be changed by the new immigrants to be the advancement culture of the world (4).
As can be seen, focus and cohesion are two of Ronald's strong points; for example, he uses repetition quite effectively: *people* in sentences (1) and (2); *culture* in sentences (2), (3) and his thesis statement,(4). Wen-li asserted that Ronald's paper on how immigrants change American culture was all his opinion and ideas and didn't have any specific examples, and therefore was not good, well-supported writing. Ronald contended that Wen-li's paper was nothing but examples, and hence showed no thought and was boring. They both were very frustrated about the insults to their papers each had to endure from the other, and their inability to successfully communicate their ideas to the other person.

After checking with Daniel, I asked each of them to sit down and compare papers. I pointed out that that while the purpose of both of their essays was to inform, their topics differed greatly. I asked them to describe each other's papers in a more positive light, and Ronald said that Wen-li's paper was very clear; after reading her paper, he felt he could follow her suggestions and plan a trip. Wen-li grudgingly admitted that Ronald's paper was very thoughtful. I had an interview scheduled with Wen-li the following day, and she immediately brought up her peer review with Ronald:

I still don't agree (with him) and won't change my paper. I don't like to write that kind of topic (like Ronald chose). I think if I write that kind of paper I will have a lot of arguing with my
partner ... I think this way is more easier ... I think it (Ronald's topic) is a little political, but that's not what I like because everybody can argue with it.

While Wen-li and Ronald never did appreciate the merits of each other's style, Daniel gave high marks to both papers. Wen-li received an "A," and on her paper he wrote:

I'm very pleased with this paper. You use some excellent examples from your own experience in this final draft.

Daniel gave Ronald's paper a "B+" His comments on Ronald's paper were as follows:

Your paper shows some very profound thought and creative ideas. As I note, you use two examples thoroughly. You did seem, however, to not proofread your paper as carefully as you'd like. Please especially avoid mistakes in noun-verb agreement.

Ronald was a bit disappointed in his grade, saying that he would never get an "A" in English because of his poor grammar, but he did appreciate Daniel's comments on his thoughtfulness and creativity.

Teacher Comments

Comments in Conferences

The students' talk in the conferences with their teachers (see Table 4) was categorized in terms of amount, i.e., willingness to directly answer and/or explain the teacher's questions about his/her writing; agreement, which
was the student's willingness to accept the teachers' comments on his/her
draft as expressed by affirmation ("yes", "okay", etc.); direct disagreement ("but
what I meant was...") or neutrality/passive disagreement (silence, "mm-
hmm", "I see", etc.); and assertiveness, the student's eagerness to raise further
questions or comments about his/her writing, to strongly express a dissenting
view, and/or to develop/expand on a point mentioned by the instructor. I
categorized this data comparatively. The number one means the least
amount of occurrences of that particular category and five means the most.
Therefore, for example, Wen-li was not very talkative (number 2 of the five),
she did not express much agreement or disagreement (again, number 2 for
both of these categories), was passive/neutral in her communication with her
teacher, Daniel, and overall was not very assertive in the conferences.

Table 4: Student Talk in Conferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Shen</th>
<th>Ronald</th>
<th>Wen-Li</th>
<th>Lap Lee</th>
<th>Jia-Tsong</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Amount Talkativeness</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agreement Affirmation</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Disagreement</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Passive Neutral</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assertiveness</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Comments on Drafts

In general, the students paid great attention to the suggestions the teachers wrote on their drafts when revising (see Table 4), which is consistent with the results of Ferris (1995), who found that 93.5% of the 155 advanced ESL writing students in her survey believed teacher feedback helped them to improve their writing. Karla wrote very detailed comments and explicit suggestions on her students' papers at various problematic (or scintillating) spots both within the text and at the end as well. Her comments included references to previous drafts, comments on content ("Why would they rather do this here than in China?") transitions and coherence ("How can you connect these to make your point clearer?") audience ("Will your readers understand this idea?"), and tone and purpose ("This 'analytical' paper is also 'judgemental' ... -- this is o.k. -- I just want you to recognize differences in tone"), as well as grammar. Perhaps because many of her comments were phrased as questions rather than commands, her students found her comments extremely helpful, and implemented them in their revisions.

Daniel's students, however, had much more difficulty accepting Daniel's comments, even though both Wen-li and Ronald implemented his suggestions when revising. When Ronald was asked during the third interview whether he was satisfied with his paper, he replied:
In this paper, I just followed the teacher's comments and changed my paper. I know what the teacher liked, so I changed to the teacher's way, but in my way I don't like my paper ... I just changed my ideas to follow (the) teacher's instructions.

Wen-li thought some of Daniel's comments were contradictory to what she had been taught previously by other teachers, and found this frustrating. She told Da Peng that:

The teacher says "more examples," but I was taught two or three examples are enough. I don't know how to develop or use a transition between examples, just "however," but if I use that too often, it sounds wierd. This is very difficult. It has been more difficult to write this semester because there are no clear instructions and because of the contradictions between teachers.

However, some of Daniel's comments Wen-li found helpful. After Daniel had cajoled her for the entire semester to "try to take some risks in your writing," Wen-li wrote a paper entitled "Taiwan Speak Up" in which she discussed the discrimination Taiwan faces on the "international stage," i.e., Taiwan's lack of a seat in the U.N., not being allowed to participate in the Olympics, etc. Daniel was very enthusiastic about this paper, and commented:

This is by far your most interesting essay. I really appreciate your taking some risks with your writing! Your examples are very good and your analysis is convincing ... very good work so far!
When I asked Wen-li if Daniel's comments influenced her when she wrote this, she replied:

Yes. That's why I wrote it. I am not creative, I don't like brainstorming, I don't like to argue something. (But) if the teacher wants me to do it, I should try.

All the students said that while they took the time to read the teacher's comments on their final drafts, they preferred to have more comments on the earlier drafts, which is again similar to the findings in Ferris' (1995) study; she found that 94% of the students read and paid attention to the comments on preliminary drafts, while 86% read and paid attention to comments on final drafts. Wen-li echoed the opinions of the other students when she said:

I think it (doing drafts) is useful, but I think we need the teacher's comment. For ... the first essay, the teacher didn't give us any comment. He just give us the comment at the final draft. But I think it seems no use. So if the teacher can give us comments during the draft, then I think it's helpful.

Revising

None of the students complained about revising (see Table 4); it was seen more as an opportunity for improvement than a redundant, repetitive exercise. The purposes for their revisions, though, varied as much as the ways in which the students wrote their first draft. All of the students felt revising was difficult, and none were ever completely satisfied with what
they had written. When Da Peng asked Ronald which of his assignments he
thought was most difficult, he replied:

It’s not the issue of easy or difficult, it’s the issue of revising. If
the teacher or the classmates say this isn’t good or this isn’t clear,
I have to sit in front of the computer again and again until the
final draft is done. If the idea is developed enough and thought
through enough, it’s easy. But if I haven’t had enough time or
haven’t thought it through enough, it’s difficult.

Lap Lee considered his greatest problem (outside of writing more text) to be
grammar. In the fourth interview after I had mentioned how much he had
written and how impressed I was with his development in the second draft of
one of his papers, he replied:

Yeah, I kind of improved because of Karla’s and the classmates
comments. (That is) not so difficult. Grammar is tough. I look
at verb tenses and grammar. I’m supposed to but even if Karla
tells me and I read again sometimes I still can’t find (what is)
wrong.

Karla often labeled Lap Lee's grammar problems, such as "VT" for verb
tenses, but Lap Lee wanted to know exactly what tense to use. He didn’t have
confidence in his ability to make the correct grammatical choice. This, too
reiterates Ferris’ (1995) findings; 16 of the 96 students who answered the
question on whether they had difficulty understanding corrections or
comments said they had problems with grammar symbols, terms and
abbreviations. Wen-li’s major struggles were with her difficulty in producing enough text, cohesion, and coherence:

I think this introduction is not good. Here I talk about the teacher’s appearance, and then I write he taught us English, it seems (to be) different things, but I don’t know how to make it more similar. If I just write about (his) appearance in one paragraph, it seems I haven’t enough things to say. I don’t know how to connect and I’m not satisfied.

Jia-Tsong also felt his major problem was cohesion:

I revise this a lot. The idea is good, but the sentence idea to connect to the other ideas is not very smooth. Not so easy to read.

Shen not only tried to attend to his grammar and rhetoric when he revised, he also kept in mind such global concerns as making his writing interesting for his readers:

I pay attention to my grammar problem(s) ... and also the idea(s), I want to make my idea(s) more clear. When the people read this paragraph, I want to encourage the people to read my article (and say), ‘oh, this is very interesting.’ I want to attract their attention.

To summarize, as a result of the feedback from their teachers and their peers, the students were all very aware of their strengths and weaknesses as writers when they were revising, and tried to focus on those specific areas. The only exception to this was Shen, who continued to ignore his grammar
problems in favor of more sophisticated concerns such as "enticing the readers." This may in large part be due to his understanding of audience as a successful writer in Chinese; as mentioned before, he had won awards for his writing in China and was a reporter for his college newspaper. And in fact, Shen was rewarded for the level of sophistication exhibited in his writing. Karla gave Shen an "A-" on his final essay. Her comments are as below:

In terms of the essay requirements you highlighted on the topic of the question sheet, you have done a very good job of satisfying these requirements. There are grammatical errors in this paper, but the errors do not confuse your meaning.

**In-Class Writing**

Even though all the students' writing experiences in their native language in Taiwan and China were in-class essays, they (with the exception of Shen) dreaded in-class writing in English and felt they were not prepared to do it well and/or comfortably). They felt the process skills they had been learning in their class, such as freewriting, drafting, and utilizing comments from others, could not be used for in-class writings because of the time constraints. Therefore, the importance of the topic on which they had to write became even more acute because they felt they didn't have access to idea-generating strategies.
Richard felt his most difficult assignment was one of his in-class essays on the topic, "Why Do You Live Where You Live?" He explained his difficulty with the topic to Da Peng:

Because I only live in Chinatown so I can only say how the culture suits me, the food suits me, the traffic and the rent suit me. The teacher said it was very boring, and I think so, too. I didn't know what to do (with the topic). It's very simple. I got a C+. Usually I get an A or B.

Jia-Tsong encountered problems with his midterm because he wasn't very interested in nor had much experience with any of the topic choices:

I didn't have a lot of information on each topic. I wasn't interested in any of the topics. So I have a so-so topic and a so-so paper.

In addition, the topic he chose was too large to cover in the time given. He thought his thesis, why English is more important than Chinese history in the Taiwanese educational system, would be relatively interesting to write about and easy to develop. However, while he was writing he discovered:

I write about the English education in Taiwan. I write too much introduction to describe it, how the English education is. I don't have a lot of time to present my ideas, I ran out of time. Not enough development, my conclusion (was) not good.

All of the students commented that they did no pre-writing at all for their in-class essays -- there was no outlining from Shen or Ronald, nor brainstorming or freewriting from Wen-li, Jia-Tsong, or Lap Lee. All of their
planning and organizing went on in their minds. Ronald expressed what he does as follows:

I take about fifteen minutes (to decide what to write about). This topic, it takes a long time, because I compared it with another topic, and every topic I tried to outline (in my mind), but every topic is difficult because I don't have any examples. But this topic I organize my outline and I find I can get examples, so I choose this. It takes about fifteen minutes.

Ronald was unsatisfied with this method because he only had time to think of the organization and examples, but couldn't think about and hence write about any other development; he couldn't "give any suggestions about it."

Similarly, Lap Lee said,

(I) just directly write. Think about (the topic) a little. What kind of material, what kind of information. I thought maybe twenty minutes before I write.

Wen-li also said that for her in-class writings:

No pre-writing at all. I think about it first and then I first of all think what kind of thing I want to write, ... and then I write something.

These four students (Wen-li, Ronald, Lap Lee and Jia-Tsong) also complained about the lack of drafting and feedback in their in-class writings. Ronald declared:
This (in-class writing) was stressful, because only one paper, one draft, no revise, so I should think carefully. But for the other kind of paper, a lot of revise, a lot of drafts, so first draft, second draft, I can change my mind and develop, develop, but this I didn’t have that opportunity, so it was stressful ... For me, I think I write all of my idea, but for you, you like it or not I don’t know, nobody talked with me (about it), give me suggestions so I don’t know if it’s good for you or not. But what can I do for only one paper? I don’t get any instruction from another people or another student, so I just repeat my experience on paper.

Only Shen felt that in-class writing was not particularly stressful. In fact, he thought his midterm, "Is America Really a Dangerous Country?," was the easiest paper to write. This may be because he did not have his paper completely outlined in his head before he wrote; he thought the way to approach the in-class writing was similar to free-writing, but with more control:

I think a little, and then I write. But, I don’t have the whole idea when I write the article. When I write the first paragraph, and then I think what I’m going to write in the next paragraph, I have to focus. So I think, I write one, two, three or four paragraphs ... to give something to support the main idea.

Shen introduced the topic of his midterm in the first paragraph with a personal anecdote about visiting a friend in Hong Kong the day before he came to the U.S. This friend had warned him not to wear good clothing. He quoted his friend as saying, "When some criminal see you dress in nice suit, they might think this is my food." He further explained that his friend had been to the United States several times and had said that this large
midwestern city used to be a center for the KKK. He concluded his introduction by writing, "I thought what he said was true. America was a really dangerous country."

The next several paragraphs gave strong support for this idea. He told how he was accosted by beggars downtown near the dorm, and how he heard sirens at all hours of the day and night. He thought all the sirens were from the police arresting all the criminals. Shen then had a transitory paragraph describing how in addition to his fear of danger, the frigid weather kept him in the dorm. His concluding sentences were:

After winter was over, spring and summer were coming. It was the first time for me to go out in the city. This time was completely changed my opinions of the city.

In the next few paragraphs Shen talked about visiting a beautiful city park, taking public transportation home late at night safely and conveniently, finding an apartment with friendly neighbors, and realizing that the sirens could be helpful, too -- not just police taking criminals away:

Sometime Fire Department of (the City) was driving quickly to a fire. Sometime ambulance car went rapidly to save people. After I knew these, when I heard siren again, I didn't afraid anymore.
This paragraph immediately precedes his conclusion, which brings his experience up to the present and re-introduces the theme of friends coming to the U.S. for the first time:

Right now, I have been here over one year, I feel very comfortable to live in (the city). From my over one year experience to live in the United States, I know America is a safe country. When I talk to my friend who just came, I will not say America (is) dangerous.

The first part of his paper, where he just talked about how dangerous it was to live in the U.S., was very well-written, and since it was three pages, it alone would probably have received a high grade: his organization was very clear, his examples of support were explicit and entertaining, and he did not waver from his thesis statement: the U.S. is a dangerous place. What impressed the writing teachers and Shen himself was the natural and sophisticated way his thesis evolved to the opposing view; while he was writing, he realized that in his experience, America was not such a hazardous place after all. Because he could develop the ideas in his midterm fully and well, and felt he had control while he was writing, Shen was not only satisfied with but also extremely proud of this piece of writing.

Shen's experience stands in stark contrast to the confusion and stress which marked the other students' experiences when writing the midterm. In the 043 composition class all the students, including Shen, had been instructed in and used the process approach for their out-of-class assignments.
They had all to some extent expressed frustration at their inability to use this approach when writing under a time constraint. Perhaps because they had not been explicitly taught strategies to use in a timed setting, the students reverted to the strategies they had been taught in China and Taiwan; namely, almost completely thinking through their compositions in their minds before beginning to write.

Despite their discomfort in using Chinese strategies to write in English, this strategy basically worked for each student. Ronald received an "A-" on his midterm, which mirrored the grades he was receiving on his other classwork; Jia-Tsong received a "B", which was lower than his "A/A-" average; Lap Lee received a "C+", which was slightly above his class average of "C"; and Wen-li received an "A-" which was consistent with her "A/A-" average. However, none of them except Shen expressed satisfaction with either the way they wrote nor the piece of writing itself. For example, Ronald said his organization was good, but he hadn't developed his thoughts and ideas enough:

I write about the reading comprehension, listening comprehension, and writing comprehension. For these three things I write details ... and I express it very clearly ... but I'm not satisfied, I cannot give the suggestion for Chinese teaching system to be improved ... I don't write the future of (the) Chinese teaching system ... If I don't put the suggestions inside, it's like half a jump.
In sum, all the students wanted to know explicit strategies to use in an in-class writing situation in English; they knew the limitations of process writing under these circumstances and no longer felt comfortable using the same strategy that they had used when writing in Chinese. Shen's success may be attributed to the fact that he had discovered a new strategy himself; to wit, he had modified the freewriting technique that he had learned in class. He had realized that he could think of ideas and develop these ideas while he was writing as he did when he was freewriting, but because was writing his midterm, he had to remain more focused and controlled than in a genuine freewriting context. This strategy proved very successful in terms of the grade he received, the satisfaction of his teacher, and perhaps most importantly, the satisfaction with himself.

Changes in the Use of Chinese over the Semester

One of the most fascinating phenomena I observed through the semester was the students' reporting in their interviews of the decrease in their use of Chinese in their writing processes throughout the semester, and in which specific circumstances they used Chinese and in which circumstances they used English (see Tables 5 and 6). Under the category language use, the number one (1)) means that the use of that language was primary and the number two (2)) means that language was used secondarily.
For example, at the beginning of the semester (interviews 1 and 2), Jia-Tsong primarily used Chinese when thinking about his writing in English. By the middle of the semester (interviews 3 and 4) he was using Chinese and English about equally. By the end of the semester (interviews 3 and 4), Jia-Tsong primarily thought in English when composing for his 043 class. Comments by each student concerning these changes follow Tables 6 and 7.

Table 5: Changes Over the Semester
(Karla’s Class)

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<tr>
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(English)
Table 6: Changes Over the Semester

(Daniel’s Class)

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<th></th>
<th>Ronald</th>
<th>Wen-Li</th>
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In the first interview, Shen commented to Da Peng:

It's kind of like culture shock. I think in Chinese, I use the Chinese way of thinking but I know in English I must have a different approach. I can't express exactly what I mean in English, I can't use a lot of support. I can't use the same rhetorical devices in English as I can in Chinese.

In the second interview, all the students said that they used both English and Chinese when drafting. Ronald was trying to reconcile his thinking in Chinese when writing in English:

The writing organization and the writing skills (are) in English, but the ideas in Chinese. But the first draft, always in Chinese. But the final draft, writing way is from English writing way, but my ideas in Chinese. I should organize this, both connect together.

Jia-Tsong also said that he thought in both English and Chinese when writing:
(I use) both. If it's a sentence I know, I use English. But if the sentence I don't have the idea in English, I will think in Chinese. I stop and get my dictionary to find out which words I can use.

Because Wen-li composes directly on the computer, she said that she tries to think in English:

If I can remember and I use IBM or Mac and so some writing, so I just type ... if I can write quickly then I think in English word(s), but if I don't know what else, I have to say I will think in Chinese, I can get more ideas and translate.

Only Lap Lee said that at times he was comfortable thinking and writing completely in English. This is doubtlessly due to his many years of taking writing courses and his being in the U.S. for fifty years:

Before (I thought in Chinese). Right now, both. I'm still not completely able to in English yet. (But in this paper) right now, I'm able to write in English without Chinese first.

By the time of the fourth interview, all the students mentioned that they not only were using more English in their writing, but were more comfortable using English as well. When talking to Wen-li about a particularly fluent and well-written essay, she noted:

I was thinking in English ... in one way, I think it's, you know, from class and from the book I get some idea to write, how to write English well. And I just write the homework assignment,
and I practice more. I feel more comfortable to write more in class and in English.

Lap Lee also expressed satisfaction in the progress he was making over the semester, and attributed his progress to his use of English exclusively when he writes:

I’m improving ... I write English directly. For myself, I think it’s a good paper for me. I say what I want to say. I have a good idea. I like all the paper. Now I’m able to write for myself.

As discussed previously, one reason why Shen was so pleased with his midterm was that the ideas evolved as he was writing. He mentioned another reason in our fourth interview:

No prewriting, no too much thinking, I just had the idea and I started to write. And this time, I think in English, total in English.

Also in the fourth interview, Ronald and Wen-li mentioned that if they were writing about a particular experience that they had in Chinese, i.e., in China or Taiwan, that they naturally thought about it in Chinese. Wen-li explained:

When I wrote this paper, it’s based on this book. I read this book in Chinese so I have to think what this book talks about (in Chinese), then I translate.

Ronald had a similar experience when writing his midterm on the Chinese teaching system:
I try to think in English. But I thought, it's the things, the experience (is) in China. The experience in my mind was in Chinese, but I organize in English.

Interestingly, both Wen-li and Jia-Tsong thought writing about previous experiences that happened in Taiwan was the most difficult precisely because they naturally thought in Chinese. Wen-li discussed the paper she thought was most difficult in the fifth interview, which was the final interview with Da Peng:

"Taiwan Speak Up" was definitely the most difficult. I had to think and organize in Chinese, and then I translated. The whole content and my whole experience (with the topic) was in Chinese. I wasn't sure how to translate it all. I don't know if my meanings were so clear.

Jia-Tsong stressed in the fifth interview that he thought it was "safer" to use English in every phase of his writing. He also felt relatively satisfied with the progress he had shown throughout the semester. He told Da Peng:

I use much less Chinese now. When I can't think of a specific word in English, I'll use a Chinese word. But overall, I use English. It's very dangerous to use Chinese; when I use Chinese, I always write wrong. So I try to use English to think. I've used more English over the semester. ... I try to think basic ideas and structures in English. If it's a sentence or structure I've never used before, I probably use Chinese. But when I do use Chinese, I'm nervous. I hope I can translate exactly what I want to say into English.
Wen-li, Lap Lee, and Shen also expressed satisfaction with the decrease in the amount of Chinese they were using in their writing during the fifth interview. Shen mentioned:

The amount of Chinese I'm using is definitely decreasing. I'm now thinking in English, and I only consult the dictionary sometimes for specific words. It makes me feel more comfortable (when I write).

Wen-li acknowledged that it wasn't always easy to write in English, but she felt her writing was better if she tried:

Compared with before I use less Chinese now, but it's still easier to think and write in Chinese. But when I write for class, now I outline and pre-write in English. Sometimes ... because I lack creativity, I write very simply.

Lap Lee showed the greatest change in attitude about writing over the course of the semester. When I asked him if he felt more comfortable writing in English, he replied:

Yeah, I'm more comfortable writing now than before. Actually, I didn't enjoy writing before. Now I'm starting to enjoy (it). I can write down and express myself more (but I'm) still not perfect ... I don't use Chinese at all (when I write).

Only Ronald was not very pleased with the amount of change from Chinese to English in his writing. He felt he was still bridging two different styles and undergoing the process to write "more American." He told Da Peng:
My Chinese usage has decreased a great deal. But even if I try to think in English and organize in English, my grammar is still heavily influenced by Chinese. I'm still using a lot of Chinese-style linkings and transitions ....

Neither Daniel nor Karla overtly encouraged or discouraged the use of either language in class. In fact, since Daniel had lived in China for two years, he sometimes tried to to speak to Ronald and Wen-li in Chinese, which would seem to express approval of its use. In our interviews, I rarely had to explicitly ask about their choice of language in their writing processes. However, in almost every interview, the students themselves often brought up the topic. Although none of the students enunciated the reason why they felt doing the entire process in English was crucial except for Ronald, I believe all the students would agree with the explanation Ronald gave Da Peng in his fifth interview:

If the original idea is in Chinese then this Chinese is very influential in the whole writing process. It's very hard to get rid of it. But if it (the original idea) is in English, I don't have that problem. Writing in the American style is much, much easier.

This desire to primarily to think in English while writing in English was a definite help to the students' overall improvement in writing over the semester. By the end of the semester, all of the students were writing more fluently and more naturally, and hence exhibited overall better quality in their compositions.
Summary

In this section, different aspects of composing were discussed from the students' perspectives. They found topic selection to be very important, and preferred to write about subjects they had had previous experience with and/or knowledge about. They enjoyed writing personal narrative, and most preferred the topic to be assigned by the teacher.

The students all felt the process-approach provided valuable skills, such as free-writing, to be learned. While the actual process varied greatly from student to student, most of them did a great deal more revising and drafting than may have been assumed by their teachers -- the first draft was in reality often their fourth or fifth. They additionally found peer review helpful, not only in terms of problems within their compositions, but also in terms of larger, sociocultural, discourse-related concepts, such as purpose, audience, and reader-based writing. They did not, however, feel that the process-approach methods they learned in class were useful in their in-class writings, and hence (with the exception of Shen) found these writings extremely stressful and frustrating.

All of the students welcomed and implemented the teacher's comments in their writing, although sometimes with resistance. And interestingly, all the students wanted to use more English and less Chinese in
their composing processes in order to make their writings "more in the American style," even though this topic never came up in their class discussions or their textbook. Because all of the students believed that using Chinese when composing in English impeded their efforts, they felt they would be better writers if they used English as much as possible in every stage of their composing process. By the end of the semester, the truth of this assumption was confirmed -- the students were using very little Chinese, and writing much more fluent and natural English prose that showed much improvement over their compositions written in the beginning of the semester.
... academic writing tasks are realized as concrete, historical activities situated in the classroom and institutional contexts of the disciplines and in the personal and social lives of the participants (Prior, 1995, p.48).

As previously discussed in Chapter Two, I, like other ethnographic researchers (Dumont, 1978; Rabinow, 1977; both in Marcus and Fischer, 1986; Rosaldo, 1987; Wolf, 1992) firmly believe that to provide a complete and realistic account of ethnographic research as many as possible of the voices involved in the research should be presented. Due to the fact that the participants in this study were not just the students, Da Peng, and me, but also the teachers, this section will first examine the teachers' own perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses in teaching the 043 class. Through my observations, participant observations, interviews with the students involved, and conversations and interviews with the teachers, I was also clearly a part of the study. Therefore, I will additionally explore the impact of my research on Daniel's and Karla's teaching, on their classes as a whole, and on the individual students involved in the study. As I discussed in the
previous section, all of the students showed impressive progress this semester. Therefore, in this section I will discuss the possible reasons for this success from both the teachers' and the researcher's points of view. In order to provide an overview of each student from the teacher's perspective, I will then discuss the teachers' opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of the individual students. I will examine the results of the students' final exam and their placement in the freshman composition sequence (basic writing or freshman composition), because the main purpose of 043 is to serve as a transition for undergraduate students out of the ESL writing courses and into the freshman composition courses. I will then discuss some implications of the data concerning the use of the process approach as an instructional model.

Classroom Problems and Successes

In order to provide a smooth transition for the undergraduate ESL students from their ESL classes into freshman composition, the 043 class focuses on developing academic essays that feature rhetorical forms such as personal narrative and persuasive and argumentative writing. It emphasizes concepts such as audience, purpose and appropriate development, and gives students practice in classroom writing activities, such as peer review and in-class writings, that are found in composition and content courses. Both Karla
and Daniel worked hard towards the goal of preparing their students for freshman composition, although as mentioned previously, in my classroom observations I had noted that Daniel and Karla were very different teachers with very different teaching styles and classroom personalities. Daniel is somewhat of a performer, who uses his energy and charm to motivate his students. In our interview Daniel discussed his personal teaching philosophy as follows:

... I want to foster creativity, but not unbridled creativity. I want to foster an organized form of creative expression ... for creativity to be effective, it needs to be a little more structured.

In terms of this philosophy, Daniel thought he taught his 043 class this semester quite successfully:

A lot of students who had done poorly in the past did well in this class. 93 (the research paper class) is not conducive to (students) expressing themselves. In 110 they were able to do that. I was happy to see people write about their own experiences, and I thought I learned a lot ... I was happy to see people taking risks and succeeding at that.

When asked about her teaching philosophy, Karla answered in terms of the students; in our interview she talked about her successes and weaknesses by referring to the students' participation and their success in understanding the concepts presented in class and in the book:
I was basically pleased, this spring semester was better than last fall. This class was more talkative, and willing to discuss the readings ... I like the book, the way she talks about writing and the kinds of assignments, but it's kind of out-dated, I'm not completely happy with the readings ... I would say, 'Use these class discussions to help you in writing your paper,' but it seemed that they rarely did.

Although Karla did not think that her students found the readings very helpful, all of her students (Jia-Tsong, Shen, and Lap-Lee) told me that they found the readings in the textbook helpful since Karla always related the readings specifically to their writing.

Daniel also expressed that his major problem was with the reading selections in class. Karla had begun the semester with newspaper articles and other more current readings, and since this was the first semester Daniel had taught 043, he followed her example. He said in our interview at the end of the semester, however, that he wouldn't have assigned some of the the outside readings that Karla had given him at the beginning of the semester, but instead would have started in the book, and been more selective in choosing which readings to use in class. He said that he wouldn't have assigned so much of the reading or spent so much time on it, because he didn't have a chance to get to the analysis section (or other parts) of the textbook. Daniel's students echoed this assessment. As discussed in Chapter 4, Part 1, because Daniel spent so much time on the reading selections, Wen-li had complained that 043 was more like a reading class than a writing one.
Ronald also found the time spent on some of the readings wasted, as the readings (specifically, those on American culture) were difficult to understand and relate to his own writing. Unfortunately, Daniel did not explicitly relate the readings to the students' own writings, and the students were unable to link the readings to their writing on their own.

The Study's Impact on Teaching and the Classes

In the accounts of many educational case studies the researcher seems to be an almost invisible entity in the classroom. As previously mentioned, I believe that in order to present a complete ethnographic account the effect of the researcher on the researched must also be discussed. Therefore, I was interested in discovering what if any effect my being in their classrooms had on the teachers and their students in general. In my interviews with them, both Karla and Daniel remarked that they felt the influence of my being a participant-observer in their classroom was minimal. As Karla stated:

The classroom was not really impacted. The first time was most striking; since we didn't know each other, it was the most intrusive. But after the first fifteen minutes, things went on as normal. There was no big effect.

David's opinion of my effect on his class was the same as Karla's:
You sitting in my class didn't actually change my approach ... I do feel a little uncomfortable being observed, and being new here, especially so. But the fact that we've been able to communicate and we're on good terms, that may have been a little easier. To be honest, I don't think I did anything that different when you were in there. If I wanted to be flamboyant, I went ahead and did that. I didn't really change that much.

While the impact of my research may have been quite slight in the classroom itself, my working with their students did have an effect on their teaching. In general, Daniel felt the influences more strongly than Karla did:

My knowing you were working with Ronald and Wen-li, certainly I was paying more attention to them. I think I gave them special care. As I considered what they were doing, I think that was good because it helped me bring out the kinds of concerns that you were considering in their writing to all my students. For example, the challenge for Ronald to let him do his thing, and be mindful of the grammar but not too explicit about it all the time — that helped with other students, (such as) Park and Sergey ...I think the long and short of it is that it helped and really benefited everybody.

Karla didn’t think my talking with her about Lap Lee, Jia-Tsong, or Shen influenced the way she worked with them individually:

Sometimes after talking with you after class or after the interviews or something, it would make me think what that student was doing in his writing, but I don't think it changed what I did or how I responded to their writing, ... it made it interesting to look at their writing, but I didn't really change.
Karla did become more aware, however, of some of the experiences the students were having with their writing outside of the classroom. For example, I remember mentioning to her offhandedly after the second set of interviews how much writing the students were actually doing before handing in their first drafts. Karla remembered this in our final interview and commented that:

(Before) you get the first draft, (and I would think) yeah, there's problems here, but that's to be expected, it's the first draft. Maybe it's almost a put-down sometimes, you forget what could have gone into it, where it came from.

My working with some of the students also made Karla wonder whether all the students equally benefited from her instructions and the classmates' comments, i.e., whether they were interpreting her comments the way she intended, and whether they were introspective enough of their own writing. She gives an example of another student who was not involved in the study:

Anne's first papers were very good, strong description and narrative, she did a really good job. In the second half of the semester, for the more informational and judgement papers, she wanted to rely on narrative, and her grade went down. It was unresolved with her. I wonder what she thinks, I really don't have a clue. Did she feel she was graded unfairly? Did she have a clue? There was a lot missing. What did she think?
She further explained that while she didn’t do anything different in commenting on their papers, compared to the other students, the students participating in my study:

... were forced to think of some of these issues, while the other students were left only with the classroom and the comments on the paper. Although I tried to direct them, it’s very different when you’re just left to do that and then when someone other than the teacher is outside of the classroom asking you ‘What did you think?’ and ‘Why did you do this?’ Obviously it’s going to make them reconsider what they’re doing, maybe do it differently.

Perhaps because of the discussions I had with him and his students that were participating in my study, Daniel became more aware of the importance of contextual and rhetorical aspects, such as experience and topic choice, when asking students to write, instead of putting primary emphasis on grammar. He said in our final interview that he thought that some of the topics provided in the textbook for the students to write about were unfair; and like Ronald and Shen, felt that asking ESL students to “describe how Americans do this thing” was especially unjust:

I think we’re fostering a kind of arrogance if we ask them to do that, and we need to give them another chance to show what they’ve got. Even in modifying the final exam, to ask them to analyze American culture, I think that’s unfair to do that, but we changed, and asked them to write about their own culture, and I think the finals were really better as a result.
The Five Students Involved In the Study

In our interviews both Karla and Daniel agreed that taking part in the study was a beneficial and enjoyable experience for all the students involved. Although Karla said that her students did not discuss the specifics of my and/or Da Peng’s interviews with her, she did comment that:

They’d say, 'Oh, I'm meeting with Cynthia today' and it would never be a drag, it was always 'Yeah, we're gonna meet, and we're gonna talk about this,' and it always seemed positive to them.

Karla also mentioned that participating in the study fostered a sense of community and worth among the chosen students:

The fact that you were investing time in them and what they were doing, and that they knew that there were other Chinese students here that were being studied, somehow that raised the importance of what they were doing, I'm sure that made a big difference in what they did in class and how they approached each paper ... I almost wish all the students could have been studied in the same way because I think what they did for themselves by talking to you, they studied their writing ... in much different ways or more carefully than any other student in the class.

When I interviewed the students I constantly asked them why they had made the choices they made in every aspect of their writing. I consciously avoided drawing my own implications or making my own
assumptions about their writing; I was most interested in hearing what the students themselves had to say about their writing. While the purpose of my questioning was to get student-centered answers, it certainly had another effect -- it forced the students themselves to question and decide why they had made the choices they did. Many of those choices had apparently been made unconsciously and answering my questions required them to analyze their writings more intensely. Whether these students would have placed so much emphasis on their drafting or have been so thoughtful of the choices they made in their writing if they hadn't been in the study is, in my opinion, unclear, in spite of Karla's comments. They never mentioned to me or Da Peng that they were consciously "working harder" at their writing than they had in their previous writing classes. In fact, Shen, Jia-Tsong, and Ronald all mentioned that the writing they did for the 043 class was easier than that for the research paper writing class they had taken the previous semester. In the 043 class they could use their own previous experiences and/or previously acquired knowledge. They did not need to find outside sources, such as newspaper articles on American culture that were difficult to understand both in terms of language and cultural knowledge. In addition, the readings that they did have to do were discussed in class as an entire class, so difficulties and misunderstandings could be directly addressed and cleared up.

Wen-li, who had worked hard in her research paper writing class the previous semester and had received an "A," was actually disappointed in the
043 class. When I asked her if she felt the class had helped her in her academic writing, she replied:

It hasn't done much ... I think for me 043 is more reading than writing ... the teacher didn't teach us many skills about writing. Most of the time we just read the text and discuss it in the classroom, and then talk about the writing style or something. He (Daniel) mostly talked about the readings.

I found that while the students themselves felt the writing required for the course was easier and hence did not demand the expenditure of energy and thought that the previous research paper writing class did, both teachers remarked on the increased diligence and thought put into the writing of the students in the study, especially when compared to the other students in the class. Perhaps the students in the study did not consciously consider the analysis of their work they did for my study as work; it was just answering my questions the best way they knew how. Evidently, the thoughts they had expressed about their writings in the interviews stayed with them after the interview was over: both teachers felt that the students in the study had put forth extraordinary effort to achieve the progress that they all did. The teachers' comments on each individual student's lingering weaknesses and progress I noted will be discussed below. Furthermore, I will compare these opinions with my own and those of the students themselves.
Karla felt that Lap Lee's participating in the study definitely helped him feel like a member of the classroom community, in spite of his age and reticence in speaking:

He never did say much in class, but I think of how Shen was helping him translate (in the first interview) and later, and (these) things bonded him to the class.

While Lap Lee did not speak much in whole-class discussion, he would talk during peer review, especially if he were directly addressed. Shen looked after Lap Lee, and often helped him to be sure that he had all his belongings before he left the class. Even though Lap Lee rarely talked, Karla commented that:

He chuckled sometimes, you could feel that he was 'in there.' In terms of weaknesses, was it because of his age or because of English being his second language? He worked much slower (than the other students.)

In spite of his slowness and/or his age, Karla mentioned that he showed much improvement, probably due to willingness to "learn and develop, and keep his brain working." She emphasized that it was clear that he really liked learning:

As a writer I really saw progress with him. In the beginning, he couldn't generate a lot of material. By the end of the semester, he comparatively maybe wasn't generating a lot of material either, but he certainly was able to say more and express more. He said more than the basic things, he was developing. He's still
got lots of grammar problems, and problems with sentence boundaries, but he’s really shown improvement these some eleven weeks.

I am in complete agreement with Karla’s assessment of Lap Lee, and Lap Lee agreed as well. At the end of the semester, he decided to take 043 again in order to further strengthen his writing skills. After repeating 043 in the next semester and practicing some of the strategies such as brainstorming that he learned during the semester of the study, he should be able to pass his basic writing requirement and hopefully graduate.

Like Lap Lee, Jia-Tsong was relatively quiet in Karla’s class and was plagued by grammar problems until the very end of the semester. Karla commented:

He didn’t take initiative often. He was a little shy in class and could have asked more (questions). Sometimes he waited until the last minute (to turn in an assignment), but that’s because he was more worried about his music, that’s his priority.

The rhetorical aspects of his writing, however, "took off," as Karla phrased it. She commented further:

He really seemed like he enjoyed writing, especially his trip across Canada. He showed humor in his writing ... He put a lot of energy in his first draft so that revision wasn’t so difficult. He was very thoughtful, he wrote the very first draft for himself. He really grasped the concept of reader-based vs. writer-based writing, and he could change the focus of his writing from him to others. He didn’t realize this before. And this was evident even in his final, when he used parentheses to explain a point
he didn't think his readers would be familiar with. I was really pleased to see that.

Over the semester, Jia-Tsong mastered techniques and strategies, such as incorporating previous experiences and using metaphor, to help him during his composing process. And according to Karla, and again, I am in complete agreement with her assessment, he mastered larger, more sophisticated concepts of discourse, such as audience and purpose, as well. Jia-Tsong also agreed: in our final interview, he said he had learned "important things like audience," and although "writing is very difficult, but actually I learned a lot this semester."

When I asked Karla what she felt were Shen's strengths and weaknesses, she didn't hesitate in replying that his weaknesses were that:

He talks too much sometimes, and although he needs more time sometimes for things to sink in, he wants to find out the point immediately. He grabs for his dictionary as soon as feels a bit confused. He can't let things roll off of his back.

But when asked what Shen's strengths were, she realized that these weaknesses often were his strengths as well:

He talks a lot, asks a lot of questions. He's thoughtful and interested, and thought it (the class) was valuable. As a writer, his grammar was weak, but I don't think he really cared. He really studies a piece of writing, and could apply what he learned from it into his own writing. He was really organized, and thought about his audience, he was concerned about this person he's talking to. He's very communicative.
As with the other students, Karla and I basically agreed on Shen's strengths and weaknesses as a writer. We both admitted that while it would be nice if Shen would pay a little more attention to his grammar problems, in all likelihood he would not, especially due to the fact that in his interview with me he had explicitly said that he was not interested in spending the time necessary to improve his grammar when it was much easier to have an American friend proofread his papers. However, both Karla and I felt that he would end up being a successful writer, due to the sophistication of his rhetoric and content.

When I asked Daniel what were the strengths and weaknesses of Ronald and Wen-li, he replied, "I think they're about as different as two students could be." When talking about Wen-li specifically, he noticed that Wen-li had already been "established as a quality student, albeit a pedantic one." Her strengths were obviously her organization and grammatical "precision," but Daniel clearly felt it was quite a struggle for her to develop and expand her writing:

She needs to take risks, to be more creative. I don't think it was her inability to do that, but her reticence to do that, because she proved on her last paper that she's very capable of analytical and creative insights. It was just a matter of her taking that risk. I don't suppose it's any coincidence that she chose to take that risk when her 'A' was more or less securely in hand ... (That essay about) the political situation in Taiwan, I thought it was a
fabulous essay. It took a lot of encouragement from myself ... for her to do that, and I hope that carries into her future writing.

I basically agreed with Daniel's assessment of Wen-li's strengths and weaknesses; however, I did not feel her essay on Taiwan was in truth, "fabulous." Wen-li herself, while acknowledging that she had worked hard on this particular essay, did not particularly like it, either. She was not comfortable writing about abstract ideas and preferred to write information-based essays, such as the one in which she explained how she planned her trip across America. Although she had taken a stand in her writing, the opinions she put forth had been common public opinion in Taiwan; I had heard them often when I was there in 1987-1989. In fact, there are articles and columns in the Taiwanese newspapers almost daily about how Taiwan has been politically insulted since losing the UN seat to China in 1976. What was seen as provocative writing by Daniel seemed rather pedestrian and mundane to me. Perhaps Wen-li's skill was in thoroughly knowing her audience -- Daniel -- and persuading him that she had indeed taken a risk in her writing by expressing a controversial opinion.

Daniel mentioned several times in our final interview how much Ronald reminded him of himself before he went to college. Perhaps because he was unaware of Ronald's full-time work schedule, and never questioned him directly about why he did not produce all the required assignments,
Daniel considered Ronald somewhat lazy and immature. When asked about
Ronald's strengths and weaknesses, Daniel first replied:

He's only motivated in what he wants to be motivated in, and
does not want to do stuff he doesn't want to do. Sometimes he
didn't pay attention in class real well. Sometimes he reminded
me of someone on drugs. Not that I think that he is, he doesn't
have that glazed-over look; he's just very much in his own little
world sometimes ... he can be sloppy, and not try as hard, and be
satisfied with less than he is able to do.

When talking about Ronald's strengths, Daniel's comments centered
around Ronald's intelligence and creativity:

He's very creative, and very insightful, a very insightful person
... (He received) a solid 'B,' and he could start seeing what he's
capable of, and hopefully, he won't be satisfied with what he
had. He's very creative, very insightful, I think he's a very
bright person. He needs to learn that being smart and creative is
not an excuse for not being diligent.

I disagree fairly strongly with Daniel's assessment of Ronald. In my opinion,
Daniel could not resolve Ronald's profundity of thought and ability to write a
rhetorically strong essay with the seemingly trivial grammar mistakes, such
as verb agreement and article usage, that littered Ronald's writing. He
thought Ronald's grammar problems were solely related to editing, a lack of
"carefulness." Daniel thought that Ronald's writing consisted of him
brainstorming a bit, quickly writing a draft, and then turning this draft in.
However, from what he told me in our interviews, I know that Ronald spent as much, and often more, time and effort on his writing than Wen-li did. Wen-li thought and then composed on the computer. Ronald would brainstorm, outline, write several drafts by hand, and then type what he had written into the computer, again revising as he went along. I think Ronald's apparent lack of interest in grammar was similar to Shen's in that he was more interested in communicating effectively and persuasively with his reader than having a grammatically perfect paper. In addition, like Shen, I am not sure that Ronald was completely proficient in some of the basic grammatical forms of English. What Daniel mistook as laziness I believe could be more accurately seen as a lack of grammatical control. As they had mentioned in our interviews, Shen and Ronald were much more interested in addressing content, form, and other global concerns such as audience in their writing than structure.

Outside the Classroom: Shen's Experience With the Writing Lab

In general, students taking ESL composition courses are actively discouraged from taking their papers to the writing lab, since it is felt that the students need to work on addressing their writing problems either individually or with the help of their teacher. Karla mentioned during our final interview that on one occasion, however, Shen took his paper to the
writing lab for help (Interestingly, Shen had not mentioned this to either me or Da Peng during our interviews). Karla was not sure of Shen's reasons for going to the lab, i.e., whether it was out of frustration with his grammar or because of his difficulty in coming to terms with the assignment -- the assignment in question was the "Americanization" paper, which Shen considered the most difficult to write. In any case, neither he nor Karla were particularly satisfied with the results of his visit. As Karla explains:

(Shen's) paper was almost grammatically perfect, but it didn't show much improvement in any other way. He (Shen) didn't say it helped him very much. I think the tutors just don't know where they (ESL students) are coming from. I guess the writing lab is okay for (help with) grammar, but it's not very useful for other things, such as expression.

This assessment holds true in many writing labs, where the tutors are most often students who are English literature majors, and have little if any training in addressing the different kinds of discourse and rhetorical difficulties ESL students have.

Final Verdict: English Department Placement

To review, the main purpose of 043 is to help undergraduate students make the transition from the ESL writing courses into the freshman composition courses. To meet this purpose, the 043 class focuses on
developing academic essays that feature rhetorical modes such as using personal narrative, and persuasive, and argumentative writing. It emphasizes concepts such as audience, purpose and appropriate development, and gives students practice in classroom writing activities, such as peer review and in-class writings, that are found in composition and content courses.

Whether a student is placed in freshman composition, basic writing, or is required to repeat 043 is judged primarily on the student's performance on the final exam. After the student finishes his/her exam, the 043 instructors recommend a placement and then reviews the recommendation with the Composition Coordinator. The essays are next passed on to the Director of Composition in the English Department, whose recommendation is usually final, though she is agreeable to discussing her decision with those concerned in the ESL program. To emphasize the fact that the student’s experiences in the ESL composition class were not isolated, but instead impacted their placement in the freshman composition sequence, I will relate the results of the students' final exam and their placement in this sequence, and also discuss the relevance of the student’s final grades and final placement in terms of the theoretical assumptions of the process approach.
Lap Lee received a "D+" on his final exam and was recommended by the 043 instructors to repeat 043. Karla wrote the following comments on his essay:

You have the focus of your response clearly stated, but by the time you reach the "heart" of the essay -- p.3 -- (of a four page essay) you don't have time to develop/support your good ideas.

I as composition coordinator agreed with the placement. The Director of Composition recommended the basic writing class. After talking the placement over with Karla, Lap Lee decided to repeat 043.

Shen received an 'A-' on his paper and was recommended for freshman composition, with which again, I agreed. Shen's final essay was tightly written, with a very strong introduction and clear conclusion. Karla's comments were as follows:

In terms of the essay requirements, you highlighted on the topic of the question sheet, you have done a very good job of satisfying those requirements. There are grammatical errors in this paper, but the errors do not confuse your meaning.

The Director of Composition placed Shen in basic writing, in all likelihood because of the aforementioned grammatical errors.
The grade Jia-Tsong received on his final essay was a "B+." Like Shen, he was recommended for freshman composition, and again, I agreed. Karla felt fairly strongly about this placement, because she wrote the following note to the Director of Composition on the cover of Jia-Tsong's final essay:

There are some grammatical problems here, but this essay shows control of ideas, organization, and good use of supporting material.

Karla believed that Jia-Tsong's overall rhetorical control and discourse-level sophistication was a much more important representation of his writing ability than his grammar problems; however, like Shen, Jia-Tsong was placed in basic writing. The Director of Composition had circled Karla's comment on grammatical problems and written, "This is why basic writing is appropriate."

Ronald was given a "B" on his final essay. The 043 instructors had difficulty in choosing a recommended level for Ronald and ended up recommending either freshman composition or basic writing, and I concurred. While parts of Ronald's essay showed flashes of brilliance, in other parts, Ronald veered too far away from the major focus of the paper and hence, these parts were rather obscure. Daniel's comments included the following:
You use good personal examples ... (you have) some very interesting points and examples, although some parts are hard to follow.

The Director of Composition placed Ronald in basic writing. (Note: Wen-li had been admitted to graduate school and therefore did not need to take freshman composition. She received an "A" both on her final essay and as her final course grade.)

Discussion

The theoretical foundations of the process approach are assumed to value the exploration of ideas, the fostering of creativity, the primacy of content over form and the primacy of form over structure. Reid (1993) quotes Zamel (1980), one of the leaders of the process movement in ESL, as follows:

the act of composing should become the result of a genuine need to express one's personal feeling, experience, or reactions, all within the climate of encouragement (p.31).

Further in the same discussion of the process approach, Reid also mentions George Jacobs' encouragement of the use of "quickwriting," which is based on the ideas of Peter Elbow (1973), whom she quotes:
Concentrate on ideas. Forget about mechanics, grammar, and organization. Take care of those at another stage in the writing process.

As mentioned previously, at Franklin both the ESL programs' writing courses and the freshman composition sequences are taught by this approach. The process approach has its roots in native English speaker composition, where grammatical problems can logically be assumed to be 'editing' problems, since theoretically, at least, most native speakers have mastered the grammar of their language by the time they reach college. From this perspective, grammar mistakes can be dismissed as oversights or "carelessness" that can relatively easily be resolved by the student writer. However, for the ESL students in this study, grammatical mistakes were not due to carelessness, but instead due to incomplete control of the particular grammar points in question; in the case of these students, these points were appropriate use of the articles, *a, an* and *the*, and verb tense usage. And as discussed previously, the reason why these grammar points remained problematic for these students is that Chinese does not have the grammatical equivalent of the English article system, and in Chinese, verbs are marked for aspect, not time. For example, in the sentence "Ta mai le yi ben shu (literally, He-buy-inchoactive marker-one-folder-book),” the inchoactive marker *le* simply signals that there is a change in the situation, i.e., He was/has been/will buy a book; it does not mention the time the book was bought.
Zamel (1983) also observed the difficulty her case study subjects had with grammar:

... it became obvious that these errors were more a result of an incomplete control of the language than the result of carelessness. For example, observing one student grapple with alternative forms for words revealed the source of her difficulties, difficulties that were not obvious from the erroneous forms that appeared in her final draft (p.175).

Yet clearly, grammar and organization were ultimately the determiner of the student's grade: witness Ronald's "B+" in spite of the insightfulness and profundity in his paper, and Wen-li being rewarded with an "A" for her "organization and (grammatical) precision," in spite of her instructor's dissatisfaction with the level of sophistication presented in the content of her paper. Grammar was the ultimate determiner for placement in basic writing as well, although its purpose is not primarily as a grammar course. All of the students were placed in basic writing, independent of the organization, development and sophistication of their final essay: Lap Lee's thesis in his four-page essay was extremely underdeveloped, while, as mentioned previously, both Shen and Jia-Tsong showed a high level of sophistication in their writing as evidenced in the complexity of development, understanding of and writing for a particular audience, and a clearly-stated purpose in their final essays. This emphasis on grammar at the expense of sophisticated discourse and rhetoric is especially disheartening, not only because this
emphasis is contrary to the theoretical assumptions of the process approach being taught, and hence sends the students mixed messages, but also in terms of writing across the curriculum, i.e., outside of the writing classroom, where research has shown that faculty are not so concerned with grammatical error unless it interferes with the understanding of the content of the paper; for example, word order and word choice errors are judged as much more problematic than verb agreement and article usage (Janopoulos, 1992; Santos, 1988; Vann, Meyer, and Lorenz, 1984, 1991).

Perhaps because of their understanding of the reality of the grading situation, none of the students expressed surprise at the result of their placement, nor felt undue disappointment. They all felt that they had learned a great deal in their 043 class and expressed hope that they would continue to learn a great deal in basic writing.

Summary

In Part One of this chapter I presented my subjects' life histories, writing histories (in both English and Chinese), and views of writing because these experiences and beliefs have impacted and continue to impact their composing in English today. In Part Two I discussed the students' experiences and opinions concerning topic selection, process writing (including revising,
peer-review and teacher comments on drafts) and in-class writing; other factors that have influenced what and how the students wrote, such as the students' opinions of their teachers; and the students' expectations of and satisfaction with themselves as writers. In this section I also discussed the changing role of their native language in their process of writing. In Part Three of this chapter I examined the teachers' own perceptions of their strengths and weaknesses in teaching the 043 class, and investigated the impact of my research on Daniel's and Karla's teaching, on their classes as a whole, and on the individual students involved in the study. I also discussed the possible reasons for the success of the students from both the teachers' and the researcher's points of view and the teachers' opinions on the strengths and weaknesses of the individual students. I then mentioned the results of the students' final exam and their placement in the freshman composition sequence, and discussed the relevance of the students grades and final placement in terms of the theoretical assumptions of the process approach.

In Chapter Five, basing my discussion on the research questions presented in Chapter Three, I will examine the findings and implications of my research in terms of contrastive rhetoric, academic discourse community, and the process approach as it relates to ESL composition. I will then discuss limitations of my study, and finally, offer suggestions for future research.
CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

Overview

Reflecting back to when I first began collecting data and talking with Ronald, Wen-li, Jia-Tsong, Shen, and Lap Lee, I was interested in discovering if what they would tell me would consist of affirmations of what I had suspected to be true in terms of how these students felt about writing, what they knew about writing, and what processes they underwent as they were writing. I wondered if I would find justifications for my various theoretical beliefs and pedagogical practices, since they were based on years of composition teaching experience in China, Taiwan, and the United States, and years of schooling in the field. In order to address these concerns, I looked for theoretical groundings in research that had been done in contrastive rhetoric, in order to see what commonalities in Chinese, their native language, may be responsible for the way these students wrote. Research in academic discourse community informed me of other larger, sociocultural factors in the classroom that may have influenced the students
as they wrote. I found it necessary to investigate studies on the process approach, since that was the approach assumed by the textbook and the teachers and hence taught in class. Finally, I studied ethnographic methodology, since I strongly believe that it is the sum of a student’s history, prior experience, and personality in tandem with the full experience of his or her present situatedness that influences why they write, how they write, and what they write.

I attempted to show this completeness of the students’ experience by presenting first the students as individuals, their individual writing histories, and their own opinions on writing. I then explored their opinions of, beliefs about, and experiences with writing which occurred during the semester in which this study was conducted. And in order to present a full picture, to acknowledge the fact that the students’ experiences with me, and their teachers’ expectations of, opinions of, and experiences with these students may also have greatly impacted these students’ writing, I presented the teachers’ perspectives on the study itself and the students’ strengths and weaknesses as writers. To emphasize the fact that the student’s experiences in the ESL composition class were not isolated, but instead impacted their placement in the freshman composition sequence, I related the results of the students’ final exam and their placement in this sequence, and discussed the relevance of the student’s final grades and final placement in terms of the theoretical assumptions of the process approach.
In this chapter I will first summarize my findings and discuss implications of my research for the classroom according to the following categories: contrastive rhetoric, academic discourse community, and the process approach as it is applied in ESL composition. I will then discuss limitations of this study and provide suggestions for future research.

Contrastive Rhetoric

In regards to my first research question, which asked if the processes the Chinese students use when writing in English are similar to those used when writing in Chinese, I found that unlike subjects in two contrastive rhetoric studies that consider the writing process (Hall, 1990; Friedlander, 1990), the students in my study did not transfer revision strategies from Chinese when writing in English. A related finding which answered my second question about which languages the students used while composing, is that the students in my study did not want to use Chinese when writing in English because they would then worry about their translation in terms of grammatical and lexical accuracy. In their studies, Hall (1990) and Friedlander (1990) proposed that the students' use of their native language at certain points in their composing process is beneficial in terms of their final product. Hall (1990) found that advanced ESL students could make use of a single system of revision when writing in either English or their native language.
Friedlander (1990) found that Chinese students wrote better compositions in English if they were allowed to plan and pre-write in Chinese.

The students in this study, however, expressed different opinions. None of the students had had previous experience using the process approach when writing Chinese, and with the exception of Shen, none had done any academic writing in Chinese that was not in-class; they had had very little experience revising in Chinese and therefore had no revision strategies to apply to their writing in English. And unlike Friedlander's subjects, by the end of the semester these students did not like to free or pre-write in Chinese. They felt using Chinese at this stage was adding an unnecessary and complicating step to their writing because they had to worry about the accuracy of their translations, both in vocabulary choice and structure. In addition, they thought pre-writing in Chinese wasted time, since they would often have to consult a dictionary to find a correct translation. These students therefore strived to and were eventually successful at completing their pre-writing in English.

Another finding, which relates to my third question about the aspects of written Chinese that may influence the students' writing in English, is similar to a finding of Mohan and Lo's (1985). Both Mohan and Lo's (1985) study and my own found that in terms of organization, Chinese and English essays are basically the same. The one significant exception to this rule is the introduction: Shen, Wen-li, Jia-Tsong and Ronald all commented on the
differences between an English and Chinese introduction, and how these differences made writing a good English introduction difficult.

The students believed that there were three major differences between a Chinese introduction and an English one: purpose, explicit thesis statements, and length. In English, an introduction often serves to orient the reader and introduce the topic and stance of the paper, while in Chinese the introduction often uses a quote or a proverb to entice the reader to read further. An English introduction usually includes an explicit thesis statement, while mentioning the thesis directly is avoided in a Chinese introduction. Finally, while an introduction in English is approximately one-fifth or less of a piece of writing, in Chinese it can be as much as half of the length of the essay. Besides the introduction, the main influence from Chinese that the students felt affected their writing in English was in grammar, and this was interpreted as interference and not positive in any way. These students generally felt using Chinese at any stage of their English writing was a hindrance, not a help.

A third, related finding is that, with the exception of grammatical aspects such as verb tense and article usage, there were no major factors in how they wrote, what they wrote or why they wrote that could be labeled as "Chinese." This finding, which answered my fourth question addressing student understandings of and the influence of their personal histories on their own writing, emphasizes that each of the students in this study were
highly individual people and writers. Richard, the philosopher and dreamer, uses his writing as exploration, and has great difficulty confining his words to a few pages. Wen-li, the self-proclaimed unimaginative, practical student views English writing solely as a tool for academic success, doesn't really care about personal exploration, and is barely able to squeeze out the required amount of words. Jia-Tsong, the insightful, gentle musician, has a wonderful sense of humor and strong desire to share his experiences which manifest themselves in his writing, in spite of his negative writing experiences in the past. Shen, the consummate storyteller, views writing as an enjoyable craft in both English and Chinese, and like Richard, finds it difficult to limit his writing to the required length. And finally, there was Lap Lee, the old-fashioned scholar/gentleman, who had a deep and abiding respect and affection for the written word, yet had great difficulty in producing his own. I found that throughout my study, the histories and personalities of these students greatly and continually impact how they write, how much they write, what they choose to write about, and even their satisfaction with their writing.

Academic Discourse Community

A major finding which relates to my fourth question about academic discourse communities was that within the classroom, the students felt that
in each individual class, they together with their peers and their teachers constituted a community. Shen made an effort to help Lap Lee, and all the students but Wen-li acknowledged that peer review increased their understanding of and importance of audience and community when they wrote. For example, Jia-Tsong wrote about traveling in Canada instead of in Taiwan because he felt it would be more interesting for his classmates to read since they knew more about the West - i.e., America and Canada, then about Taiwan; they had the background knowledge necessary to understand his topic.

This finding is gratifying in that the approach taken by the instructors to teach 043 assumes the class is, to some extent, an academic discourse community; namely, "a group of individuals bound by a common interest who communicate through approved channels and whose discourse is regulated" (Porter, 1986, p.38). Much of the discussion of the class centered around sociocultural factors, such as role, audience, and community; both teachers took peer review seriously — the draft that was peer-reviewed was not handed in to the teacher until its subsequent revision; and both teachers aimed at simulating the kind of writing the students would encounter in their freshman composition and non-ESL courses.

However, a related finding was that the students had no clear idea about the concept of academic discourse community outside of their ESL composition course. When considering what constituted academic discourse
community as a larger entity, i.e. academia outside of the ESL and/or freshman composition classroom which has a common language use which is regulated by stylistic conventions and canonical knowledge (Bizzeli 1992), the students showed a great deal of confusion. Perhaps because the concept of academic discourse community outside of the ESL classroom was not explicitly addressed in their 043 composition class, none of the students had a clear idea of what kinds of writing they would be expected to do in their content courses. When questioned about what writing they would be required to do outside of English, the responses ranged from none (from Jia-Tsong, a music major) to not very much (Shen and Ronald, who were pre-business majors). When asked if they knew what kind of writing they would have to do, or if they were familiar with what kind of writing they would have to do outside of class, I more often got a puzzled look or a muttered "I don't know" in response than not.

And interestingly, Lap Lee could write well enough to write papers and reports that were of passing quality in content courses, yet he failed basic writing three times. Bartholomae (1988) notes that basic writers especially have a "fragmentary record of the comings and going of academic discourse" (p.284). That is, basic writers have difficulty writing academically because they must "appropriate (or be appropriated by) a specialized discourse ... as though they were easily and comfortably ... members of the academy" (p.273).
Therefore, scholars such as Bizzell (1992) and Bartholomae (1988) argue that one of the purposes of basic writing should be to:

- determine just what the community’s conventions are, so that those conventions can be written out, ‘demystified’ and taught in our classrooms (p. 279).

Lap Lee was justifiably frustrated because he clearly could write academically enough in every class within the community except for his English classes. He felt that the definition of “academic discourse community” in his English classes included much more emphasis on grammar and rhetorical conventions than his content-area academic discourse communities did.

Wen-li also was quite vocal in her dissatisfaction with the ESL academic community as a group that shared "stylistic conventions;" while the very basic information of what was necessary in good writing may have remained the same from teacher to teacher, the importance of each part fluctuated greatly -- exactly how much support is necessary for each point? When does being explicit become too obvious? Why is an introduction that follows the rules of starting generally and ending specifically with a thesis statement "clear and well-organized" to one 043 teacher and "too formulaic" to another?

While I still very strongly agree that focusing on the sociocultural discourse aspects of writing (such as reader vs. writer responsibility, audience, and purpose) in an academic discourse community is an important lesson for
advanced ESL students to learn, I find myself agreeing with Prior (1995) in his study of a sociology seminar:

Given the multiplicity of interpretations, the situated nature of participants' goals, and the multidimensional intersections of private and public histories in this seminar, I concluded that its academic writing tasks were indeterminate historical moments in human relationships, which, like all such moments, combined elements of order, convention, and continuity with elements of chance, anomaly and rupture (p.53.).

What Prior found true in a graduate sociology seminar, I (and perhaps more importantly, the students) found equally true in the undergraduate ESL classes I studied. The participants' goals ranged from Lap Lee's only wanting to pass basic writing to Wen-li's determination to get an "A" in 043. The private and public histories and the influences of these histories on each individual student's writing has been a major theme throughout this study. And I cannot help but wonder what kind of writing Ronald would have done and what grade he would have received if Karla had been his teacher instead of Daniel. Interestingly, the students were quite aware that much of the success of their academic writing tasks depended on "the luck of the draw," -- i.e., whether the topic was accessible, whether their particular teacher graded primarily on content or grammar, and/or whether their classmates understood what they were trying to communicate in their writing or not. For them, understanding the demands of the "academic discourse community" consisted of constant interpretation and reinterpretation. I was
truly amazed not only at their implicit ability to realize this fact, but also their
determination to try to adjust their writing and themselves to meet these
ever-changing demands.

The Process Approach

The major finding related to my first and fifth questions about the
process approach is that most of the students in this study felt that learning
this approach was invaluable in helping them to write well in English. They
believed that using the process approach lessened their dependence on using
Chinese when they wrote and hence allowed them to write more quickly,
more naturally, and with more sophistication stylistically in English.

As discussed in Chapter Two, ESL composition may be on the verge of
a shift away from the process approach to one based more on sociocultural
concerns, such as critical pedagogy, or one based more on form, such as
Swale's (1990) work in genre analysis. While the process movement has been
critiqued for several years for some of its weaknesses, namely, its total focus
on the process and the student and its lack of concern for context, task, and
other realities of the classroom that play important roles in how and what
students write, recent criticism such as Johns (1995) has become increasingly
sharp. Johns (1995) quotes Christie (1993), who says process pedagogies are:
cruelly unfair, for those not posessed of the (English) language patterns of schooling ... are left to deduce for themselves (p.181).

However, I believe re-establishing the old process vs. product dichotomy in order to stress the primacy of form over the traditional focus on self-expression of the process approach is akin to "throwing the baby out with the bathwater;" the basic, core advantage of the process approach, namely, teaching ESL students explicitly strategies that they can use when composing in English, does not need to and should not be abandoned in the search for a pedagogy that takes into account the myriad other factors (such as genre) involved in completing a writing task. The students in my study found that brainstorming and free-writing gave them independence from worrying over form and grammar, and allowed them, for the first time, to explore their ideas by writing in English. Peer review brought home the importance of community and writing for a reader. Revision allowed them to learn to develop their thoughts more fully. These students greatly appreciated being explicitly taught about the various stages in the process of writing, and having opportunity to practice strategies such as brainstorming and free-writing in class.
Problems Encountered in the Process Approach

This is not to say that I found no weaknesses in the process approach. To some extent, the process approach fostered a type of dependence on teacher and peer comments for revision. Ronald, Shen, and Jia-Tsong all expressed that one of the reasons why in-class writing was stressful was that they had no input or feedback to guide them. Before they began to write they did not know specifically what their teacher's expectations were, and additionally, because of the time constraint they could not implement the idea-generating strategies (freewriting and/or pre-writing) that they had been taught to use. If one of the goals of teaching the process approach is to encourage self-confidence and independence in writing, this goal may not be being met when students are provided with outside comments on every draft before revision. Perhaps asking students to respond to peer and/or teacher comments after they are received may lessen this dependence: the students could explain what comments they would implement and which ones they would not, and the reasons for making those decisions.

In-Class Essay Writing

An additional finding related to my fifth research question is that this study underscored the dichotomy between process writing and in-class essay writing. For the students in my study, these were two very different kinds of
writing, and they felt what they had learned from the process approach failed
them miserably in an in-class essay setting.

To further acerbate this problem, in general, advanced ESL writing
textbooks provide at most a chapter or two (Leki, 1994) in the back of the book
dedicated to in-class essay writing; many don’t address this type of writing at
all (Smoke, 1992; Smalley & Ruetten, 1990; Schenk, 1988). This lack of
instruction on in-class writing strategies is extremely unfortunate because so
many of an undergraduate’s writing tasks are timed, and these writings are
often heavily weighted in a student’s overall course grade. This importance
of timed writings is true even in the ESL composition classroom -- in 043, the
midterm and final essays accounted for 25% of a student’s grade, and a
student’s placement in the freshman writing sequence was almost entirely
based on his/her performance on the final essay. The students were
frustrated at their inability to apply what they had been learning about the
process approach when they had to write a heavily weighted, in-class essay.
Moreover, they were no longer satisfied with using the strategies they had
used when writing in-class essays in Chinese, i.e., thinking a paper completely
through before writing a word. This study clearly indicates that in advanced
ESL compositions classrooms, teaching process writing alone does not deal
with the reality of writing for other educational purposes.
The Role of Grammar In the Process-Based Classroom

Yet another problem with process pedagogy in an ESL setting is the uncertainty over the role of grammar. Perhaps because it was borrowed from native English speaking (NES) composition theory, process pedagogy assumes that grammar problems are relatively minor errors that can be easily "cleaned up" in the final draft. After all, the students have learned before and/or are learning grammar in grammar class now, and therefore writing, i.e., rhetoric, is what needs to be focused on in writing class.

However, again, in the case of these students, the reality of the importance of grammar in evaluation is not so easily relegated to a subordinate position. Wen-li, with her uninspired, safe, relatively undeveloped writing had little-to-no grammatical error. Shen, Ronald, and to some extent, Jia-Tsong, constantly strove to write increasingly sophisticated prose on increasingly sophisticated topics and to express increasingly sophisticated ideas. Their writing was full of major grammatical errors, such as appropriate verb tense and word form, as well as "minor" ones, such as subject-verb agreement. And interestingly, the more complex the writing or the ideas they wanted to express, the worse their grammar became. Ronald, for example, was dissatisfied with the development and style in his in-class writing, "Why I Live In Chinatown." He considered it too simple, and so it was for his usual level of writing. Yet, it was grammatically cleaner than any of his other in-class writing. On the other hand, on his final exam he had
tried to explain that the most important attribute of a good parent was an overall spirituality based on love, hope and philosophical and/or religious underpinnings. Needless to say, his final was a melange of grammatical inaccuracy.

In the case of these students, as well as the students in Zamel’s (1985) study, the assumption that grammar problems in the writing classroom can be solved by simple editing appears to be misinformed; grammar error is not simply carelessness, i.e., the failure to apply the rules, but much more tightly entwined with other writing concerns such as expression of advanced, abstract ideas and thought, which requires control over more sophisticated syntactical structures, such as variations in embedding, subordination and coordination (Soter, 1990). As such, grammar needs to be addressed differently than how it is currently addressed in the ESL composition classroom.

It is of primary importance to acknowledge the difficulty of grammatical control when writing, and to emphasize that knowing how to successfully complete a sentence or fill in the blank of a grammar exercise is not equivalent to grammatical control when composing. Grammar needs to be taught as an integral part of rhetoric by focusing on why and how a particular grammatical aspect may influence the meaning and/or clarity of what the student has written. To achieve this, instead of dismissing grammar, teaching it from a separate textbook, or focusing solely on those
grammar points discussed in the writing text in tandem with a particular assignment, grammar instruction should be text-based, preferably within a student's particular piece of writing. For example, if a student does not use the appropriate verb tense when writing a narrative essay, instead of writing "VT" over the mistake, the teacher should first determine if the student wants to write in the narrative present or the narrative past, and why. If the student chooses to write in the narrative past, s/he can then be informed when the use of simple past, present perfect, or past perfect would be most appropriate in terms of that particular piece of writing. This piece of writing could serve both as a basis for class discussion on verb tense usage in a particular rhetorical form, e.g., the narrative essay, as well as a model for other students.

**Grading**

Those students who took risks in their writing yet had relatively severe grammatical problems were in double jeopardy. Jia-Tsong's, Shen's, and Ronald's more sophisticated writings were consistently marked down a third of a grade or more because of their grammar. This seems inconsistent because all of these students were taught in the textbook and in class to take into account larger discoursal concerns such as audience and purpose, and attempted to incorporate these concerns in their writings. When revising, Jia-Tsong thought it important to focus on coherence and strategies to make
his writing "reader friendly;" Shen revised to make his writing more interesting for his readers; and Ronald focused on idea development when revising so that his readers could clearly understand the points he was trying to make. Yet when these students wrote an essay that was very well organized and relatively clean grammatically, such as Ronald’s Chinatown essay, they were not rewarded; Ronald received a "B" on that particular essay because "it didn’t say anything."

The importance of grammar, which is often relatively downplayed in process pedagogy, is often used as a deciding factor when evaluating a student either on an individual assignment or for an entire semester's worth of work. Therefore it is crucial to establish explicit grammatical criteria on which each writing task will be evaluated. For example, which particular mistakes will not be tolerated: subject-verb agreement? verb tense usage? article usage? These criteria should not only be based on what has been explicitly taught and/or reviewed in class, but should also consider the larger academic community -- if content-area professors do not think appropriate article usage is such a big deal, (Janapoulos, 1992; Santos, 1988); why should we (Zeki and Hisnay, 1994)? Because content-area faculty are more concerned with global errors that impede comprehension, such as appropriate word choice and word order, these are the aspects of grammar that should be focused on in the advanced ESL composition classroom.
There are other problems with assessment raised by the process approach. If one teaches and evaluates within the theoretical framework of the process approach, how should the process be graded? Should each draft be graded, or should a grade be given solely on the final product? If so, what should be the criteria? Effort? Overall improvement? The "quality" of the writing in terms of other members of the class, or by another, "more objective" standard? If grades are based primarily on an individual's progress, how can a class standard be maintained, if it is desired? In my experience both as an ESL composition teacher and coordinator, I have found these questions to be problematic for many ESL composition teachers, and moreover, not easy to resolve.

One reason why in-class essay exams are so popular in ESL writing classrooms is that they do allow for common criteria to be established when grading -- every student spends the same amount of time on the same topic. And as mentioned previously, in the 043 classes in my study, the in-class essays made up at least 25% of the grade. However, instruction in and practice with in-class essay writing plays a very small role in most process-oriented instruction. Strategies that students can use to help them in their in-class essay writings need to be researched, practiced, and developed. For example, one possible strategy may be the modified free-writing technique that Shen employed in writing his midterm. Because he could develop the ideas in his midterm fully and well, and felt he had control while he was
writing. Shen was not only satisfied with but also extremely proud of this piece of writing. All the students in this study directly benefited by being taught the stages of the process approach explicitly. If the stages and/or processes of effective in-class writing could be similarly delineated and the students given time to practice and refine these skills in class, they could probably become as successful in their in-class writing as they do in their process writing.

Limitations of the Study

Since the population was small, namely ESL 043 students, and my non-random sample size consisted of five students, generalizations made about the data can only refer to these participants. While this study examined from an ethnographical perspective what these five ESL students themselves think about various aspects of their own academic writing, why they make the choices they do when they write, and what role other parts of their lives outside of their classroom may affect their writing in English, all inquiry was conducted on the college campus: interviews were held in my office, and the students were only observed in their ESL composition classroom. Since one of the aims of ethnographic research is to conduct research in as naturalistic a setting as possible, i.e., "in the field" it would be interesting to see if what the students told me would have been different if the interviews had taken place
in an environment where it was not so obvious that I was indeed the composition coordinator; for example, in the student's home and/or in a coffee shop where the students could have possibly been more relaxed and hence more open in the information they shared. In order to compensate for the artificiality of the interview environment and increase the comfort of the students, I worked with a Chinese informant who could speak with the students in their native language. The students appreciated the opportunity to talk freely about their writing in their own language.

Similar to the interviews being conducted in a somewhat unnatural setting, research on the composing process, including this study, has almost entirely been done within the confines of the classroom. When students have actually been observed composing, it has been when the students are composing in class. This is somewhat artificial since much of process writing is done outside of the classroom setting. For example, while two of the students in the study, Wen-li and Shen, primarily compose directly on the computer either at home or in the computer lab, my observations of their composing was limited to what they were writing by hand in class. Observing their actual process in front of the computer may have provided different and/or fuller information than what I had observed and what they had told me about their individual processes.

Additionally, while my informant-interviewer was a member of the same large cultural community as my students, i.e., he was a native-speaking
Chinese student, and I therefore obtained much valuable information because he was a member of that community, since he was not a student at Franklin he was not a member of the actual community being studied. Having an informant-interviewer who was truly a full-fledged member of that community could have perhaps provided fuller, richer data than what Da Peng and I obtained.

Implications and Suggestions for Future Research

Clearly, future research in ESL composition should examine the complex and varied relationships between theory and practice more closely not only in terms of the suitability of the theory behind the approach, but also in terms of the textbooks that advocate that approach and how that approach is translated in the classroom. As presented in this chapter, both teachers in this study were strong, knowledgeable advocates of the process approach who taught from a textbook that was also process-oriented. Yet in practice, they both placed emphasis on grammar and other rhetorical concerns that the process approach not only did not emphasize, but actually de-emphasized. Future research should continue to explore writing using ethnographic methods such as participant observation, interviews, and triangulation of data. However, instead of focusing solely on what is happening in terms of the researcher’s theoretical assumptions, research should focus on the
theoretical assumptions that underly what is being taught and how it is being taught from the perspectives of both the teacher and the textbook.

Additionally, although much recent ethnographic research focuses on what is happening in a particular classroom or academic setting within a socio-cultural context, as discussed previously, most of this research is conducted and discussed from the researcher's and/or teacher-researcher's perspectives. This, of course, is natural, and much knowledge has been obtained concerning the myriad factors and complexities undergone by ESL students when engaged in completing a writing task within a particular community. However, assumptions which these researchers have often made about the students which may not be accurate. For example, Leibman-Kleine (1986) thought that if students were made aware of the basic concepts of contrastive rhetoric and some of the rhetorical styles of their native language, their writing in English would improve. However, after instruction she did not find a significant difference in the students' writing. She had assumed that the students: 1) had no idea of the concept of contrastive rhetoric, and 2) were not consciously aware of the written discourse and rhetoric of their native languages.

While the students in my study may have been unfamiliar with the term, they were certainly aware of the concept of contrastive rhetoric. At the beginning of the semester they constantly compared the differences in rhetoric, style, and discourse in English and Chinese, and, for example, could
enunciate clearly and specifically differences in the way introductions are written, the role of the reader in Chinese, etc. Future research should therefore attempt to question and uncover the assumptions the researcher has about the students being studied, and carefully check the accuracy of these assumptions.

Not only may researchers have inaccurate and/or incomplete assumptions about the students’ knowledge and background, but research conclusions are also drawn about students which may or may not be true. For example, Johns (1995) concludes:

Teaching issues in academic discourse is demanding. Because they (the students) are still naïve about academic language and values, ...making decisions about what and how to teach becomes problematic ...Thus, though the contributions of the Process Movement have enriched the teaching of ESL greatly, adopting them as a core for an academic discourse class can only shield students from real-life writing only temporarily (italics mine, p.289).

Like the assumptions discussed above, these conclusions about ESL students, namely, that they are naïve about academic language and values and that they are shielded from real-life writing in the ESL classroom, did not hold true in the case of the students in this study. They were very much aware of what their teachers valued -- good grammar, implementation of teachers’ comments, even whether a teacher seemed to have a preference for a personal anecdote, concrete fact, or a funny story for support in their
writing. Moreover, for these students, ESL writing was real writing -- they received a real grade that was factored into their real GPA, and they therefore had a very real and serious desire to do the best that they could. Future research needs to continue to discover and define what students do and do not know about the various factors, including socio-cultural ones, that come into play when writing in English.

Other studies in academic discourse community have looked at what tasks students are asked to do (Horowitz, 1986) and how students negotiate and complete those tasks (Leki, 1994; Casanave, 1994). These studies have not focused on finding out why the students chose to negotiate and complete the tasks the way they did in terms of their knowledge of extratextual factors, such as their understanding and interpretation of the teacher's values and what factors outside of that particular classroom or task influenced the negotiation and completion of the writing task(s) being studied. Future research should attempt to uncover these whys in order to define what does and does not need to be taught explicitly in the advanced composition classroom. We may learn that our students are more knowledgable about these extratextual factors than we ESL composition teachers and researchers have traditionally assumed. Being aware of the knowledge our students bring with them into the classroom would allow us to spend our class time more efficiently. Instead of "teaching" the students information they already know, we could
focus on those aspects of writing and academic discourse community that we recognize they do not know. As Prior (1995) comments:

If academic discourse and academic environments are complex, constructed and unfolding events and not closed systems susceptible to taxonomic and rule-oriented description, then we cannot simply specify and teach 'academic writing tasks' (p.77).

Summary

Further research needs to be done that specifies which of the assumptions that teachers and researchers make about the kinds of knowledge and skills ESL students bring into the classroom are accurate. Future research should also continue to examine what kinds of extra-textual, socio-cultural knowledge ESL students as individuals bring with them to and utilize in their classes, and what of this kind of knowledge can be learned or acquired without explicit instruction from the ESL teacher. Answering these questions can help to limit and define what parts of the "complex, constructed and unfolding events" (Prior 1995) should be explicitly taught. These questions can only be answered by framing research questions from the students' perspective; i.e., instead of only asking students what they did in a particular situation, asking them to explore why they did it, for example, by having them consider their own histories, their own socio-cultural influences, and other choices they could have made. Posing questions from
this perspective in this study has helped me to learn much about the accuracy of the assumptions I had previously made and the conclusions I had previously drawn about how ESL students negotiate writing tasks. It has helped me to refine, question and check my own theoretical perspectives and practices, and increased my respect for the particular, individual students involved in my study and all other advanced ESL writing students as well. Just as we have much to teach them, from them we have much to learn.
APPENDIX A

INTRODUCTORY LETTER AND CONSENT FORM
Dear 110/111 Student Writer:

My name is Cynthia Zeki and I am full-time teacher in the ELP and a graduate student in English Education at Ohio State University. I am conducting a research study to try to better understand how Chinese students such as yourself write in English. I am interested in Chinese students specifically because I taught English in Chongqing and Hangzhou, China, and in Taipei, Taiwan. While I was in Taiwan I also studied Mandarin Chinese intensively at the National Teacher’s University in Taipei. My experience has shown me that writing in a Chinese academic setting may be very different from an American one. In order to learn about these differences and how they may affect your writing in English, I will be attending many of your 110/111 classes and possibly watching some of your 110/111 conferences. I hope to learn more about what you do in class and what other kinds of resources you use when you write your 110/111 assignments.

I will also be asking what you think about writing in both English and Chinese, and asking your opinion of the importance of your writing experiences in Chinese and in your home country on your English writing here at Roosevelt. I would like to know your thoughts and ideas about working with your classmates, about your teacher’s comments on your papers, and about what processes or habits you have when you write.

I will be asking these questions mainly through interviews. I will ask you some questions in English, and a colleague of mine, a graduate student from China, will ask you some questions in Chinese. We will have an interview where both of us will talk to you in both Chinese in English, too. I will also ask for your permission to photocopy your written work so I can study the changes you make on your drafts.

By listening to your thoughts and opinions about your writing, observing what you do in your class and in tutorials, and studying your writing itself, I hope to be able to provide an accurate picture of how you complete your writing assignments in your 110/111 class in my final report. Before I turn anything in, I will show it to you and have you tell me whether I have accurately represented your views and thoughts. Everything you tell me will be completely confidential, which means that I won’t be able to tell people that I am writing about you, your class, or your writing. I will ask you to choose a "pen name" (or if you like I can give you one) that is different from your own so as to protect your identity. When I am done writing my report I will also erase any audiotapes I have recorded of your class sessions, your conferences, and your interviews.
Since everything you tell me will be held in confidence, your classroom instructor will not know about any of the things you share with me and/or my Chinese colleague unless you yourself decide to tell him or her. I also want you to know that it is okay if at any time you want to quit taking part in my study for any reason. As for me, I am really looking forward to talking with you and learning about you this semester.

After you read this letter and feel that you completely understand the things I am going to ask you to do, please indicate your desire to participate in my research project by signing and dating your agreement on the lines below. Thank you very much for your cooperation!

Signature:________________________________________
Date:__________________________

Witness:_____________________________
Date:__________________________
APPENDIX B

QUESTIONNAIRE
Writing Questionnaire

your name: __________________________
043/044 Instructor: ______________________

Please think about and then answer the questions about your writing practices below. Please answer the questions as thoroughly and as honestly as you can. There are no wrong or right answers, and this information will not be used in any evaluation of your performance in this class.

1. What country are you from? What language is your first language? What other languages do you speak and/or know?

2. Before you write, what do you do to prepare yourself?

3. Do you go through any "rituals" or do you have any habits that you do when you are writing?

4. Do you enjoy writing in general? If so, why? If not, why not?
5. Do you enjoy writing in your native language? What kinds of writing in your native language do you enjoy the most? The least?

6. Do you enjoy writing in English? What kinds of writing in English do you enjoy the most? The least?

7. Are you comfortable writing in English? Do you consider yourself to be a good writer? Why or why not?

8. Where and for how long have you studied English? For example, how many years did you study English in your home country? How many years in the United States or other English speaking country?

Thank you very much for your cooperation.
Interview #1

Chinese

First, try to elicit any information you can about their general views on writing, studying in the U.S., etc. Then ask the following questions:

1. How soon after the diagnostic topic paper was given to you did you start to write? Did you do any pre-writing?

2. Why did you choose this particular topic?

3. How difficult was the diagnostic test for you to write? Are you happy with it?

4. Which of the two writings -- your response to MLK or the diagnostic was more interesting to write? Why?
   Which one was easier? Why?

5. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your writing?

Xie Xie!
Interview #2

English

1. Where did you get the idea or topic for this draft? Did you come up with it yourself, or did you discuss your ideas with others? If with others, who?

2. Did you do any pre-writing or other planning? Which language(s) did you do most of this work in?

3. Describe the changes you plan to make in this draft. Why will you make those changes?

4. Who did/will you talk to about these changes? Your teacher? Your classmates? Friends or others?

5. Do you enjoy peer and small group work? Do you feel it is helpful? Why or why not?

6. What did you and/or didn’t you like about this writing?

7. Is there anything else you’d like to tell me about your writing or your writing class?
Interview #3

Cynthia (English)

1. Why do you think this paper received the grade it did? Do you agree with this grade? Why or why not?

2. Do you understand your teacher's comments and corrections on this paper? Do you agree with his/her assessment of your work?

3. Now that it's midterm time, do you think this class has helped you in your academic writing? Do you feel more aware of your strengths and weaknesses of your writing in English?

Jun (Chinese)

4. I would like you to reflect a moment on your experiences in these interviews, and to discuss some of your opinions about them. Do you feel more comfortable talking about your writing in English, in Chinese, or in both languages, depending on what you had to say? Can you give me some examples and some possible reasons why?

5. Did you notice a difference in the type of information you provided depending on the interviewer and/or the language? If so, can you give an example or two?

6. Is there anything else you would like to tell us in either language about your writing?
Interview #4

English

1. Why did you choose this topic to write for your midterm?

2. Did you do any pre-writing or other planning? Which language(s) did you do most of this work in?

3. Was your pre-writing for your midterm the same as for your diagnostic and/or any other in-class writing?

4. How difficult was this to write? Do you feel happy with it? Why or Why not?

5. What do you like best about this paper and/or your writing of this assignment?

6. What part of the paper and/or the writing did you have the most problem with (or like the least)?

7. Is there anything else you’d like to tell me?

Ronald/Wen-li
Did you find the conference with David helpful? Why or why not?

Do you agree with his observations and/or critiques about your writing, either in general or about a specific paper? Why or why not?
Interview #5

Chinese

1. Which of the assignments for this class was the most difficult? Which one was the easiest? Why?

2. What is the most helpful skill or most valuable information you have learned in this class?

3. Has your comfort and/or enjoyment of writing in English increased as a result of this class?

4. Has your use of your native language in the completion of your writing assignments in English increased, decreased, or stayed about the same throughout the quarter? Are there particular stages in your writing where you feel that using your native language is most appropriate?

5. Is there anything else you would like to tell me about your writing or about your writing class?
Interview #6

English

1. What would you like me to say about you when I write up my study? How would you describe yourself as a person? As a student?

2. What has been your greatest success in the U.S. in general? At Franklin in particular?

3. What has been your biggest problem in the U.S. in general? At Franklin in particular?

4. What are your goals after you finish at Franklin? Have those goals changed since you first arrived?

5. I would sincerely like to thank you for your help with my study this semester. I really enjoyed learning about you and your writing. Do you have any final comments you would like to tell me?
Karla/Daniel Final Interview

1. What would you like me to say about you when I write up my study? How would you describe yourself as a person? As a teacher?

2. Are you pleased with your teaching Spring semester? What were some of the class' successes (and failures)?

3. How did my being in your classroom/ your being involved in my research impact your teaching?

4. What do you think are [Richard, Yu-Mei / Hao, Wu-Ching, Chu-Lap]'s strengths and weaknesses as students? As writers?

5. Where do you think they made the most progress? What would be your prognosis for success in their future academic writing tasks?

6. I would sincerely like to thank you for your help with my study this semester. I really enjoyed learning about your students. Do you have any final comments you would like to tell me?
References


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Spack, R. (1994). **Controversial issues in the teaching of writing: An**
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