

How Far Does The Influence of Cultural Differences Go on the Implementation and Outcome of A Pedagogical Approach: Implications from Two ESL Classrooms

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Abstract

Culture shapes beliefs, and beliefs about teaching and learning shape teachers' practices and learners' expectations. To investigate how far cultural differences may affect the implementation and impact of a pedagogical approach, a study was conducted in the naturalistic settings of two ESL writing classrooms at the same grade level in a single-sex girls' secondary school in Hong Kong, with one of the classes being taught by a local English teacher (LET) and the other by a native English-speaking teacher (NET) from the UK. The study aimed to find out whether teachers from different cultural backgrounds would implement the same pedagogical approach differently, and how such differences, if any, affect the outcomes of the approach.

Both teachers were asked to teach their classes English writing using the same multiple-draft process writing approach over a semester. The two classes' changes in terms of their autonomous skills and attitudes in writing, which the process approach was believed to have the potential to foster, were compared after the writing programme. Data from the classes were collected quantitatively through a questionnaire and qualitatively through learner journals, self-assessment forms and case studies. Data from the teachers about their teaching beliefs and actual practices were collected through in-depth interviews and classroom observations. The results suggest that while the cultural background and teaching beliefs of the implementer may have important mediating effects on the overall outcomes of a pedagogical approach, the approach may still have some similar effects on learners of similar sociocultural backgrounds.

Keywords: Cultural differences, pedagogical approach, process writing, learner autonomy

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I. Introduction

The role of cultural factors in teaching and learning

An individual's beliefs are the assumptions the person holds about the world and self (Athos & Gabarro, 1978); the beliefs a teacher holds play a central role in structuring classroom activities, which influences learning input and interaction with learners (Woods, 1996). As beliefs are shaped by life experiences, which are largely influenced by context, context is a key factor in understanding a teacher's beliefs and therefore actions (Kulinna, Silverman, & Keating, 2000; Nespor, 1985). Contextual factors may include the more immediate ones, such as those related to the classroom environment, the school and the students; however, more macro contextual influences, such as nationality and cultural factors, may have more fundamental bearing on beliefs about teaching and learning, and have received more scholarly attention in recent years (e.g. Hinkel, 1999; Palfreyman & Smith, 2003; Zhou & Pedersen, 2011). While it is generally agreed that teacher beliefs are powerful forces in affecting teaching and learning, it is not clear how far such influences could go.

The reported study therefore aimed to explore the extent to which different teacher beliefs, particularly those shaped by different cultural backgrounds, affect the outcome of a pedagogical approach. The study focused on how two teachers from very different cultural backgrounds implemented the same pedagogical approach, which was the process writing approach, and how far their differences in beliefs and teaching practices affected the outcome of the approach in terms of students' development of autonomous skills and attitudes in writing.

The importance of learner autonomy in writing

Autonomy is essential for second language learners, and writing is an area where the development of learner autonomy is especially desirable because of its important role in language learning. Research has shown that the ability to write is often accompanied by enhanced acquisition of the language (e.g. Cumming, 1990; Smoke, 1994), and literate second language learners may also tend to introduce new syntactic forms more often in writing than in speaking (Weissberg, 2000). In other words, writing is an important modality for the development of language competence; autonomy in learning to write, therefore, could bring about development not only in writing skills but also in overall language competence. The question is: how can we foster autonomy in terms of students' writing development?

The potential of the process approach in fostering learner autonomy

Among various approaches to teaching and learning writing, the process approach theoretically holds the greatest potential in encouraging the development in learner autonomy. In practice, the process approach brings the student writer through the process of pre-writing, drafting, revision and editing. Peer feedback, teacher feedback and self-evaluation are integral aspects of the composing process and may play an important part in developing autonomous writers (Hyland, F., 2000). At the heart of the process approach is a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (Zamel, 1983). Advocates of process pedagogy therefore emphasize the importance of

teaching writing not as a product but as process of helping students discover their own voice and of encouraging feedback and revision (Matsuda, 2003). While some may argue that there is little hard evidence that process pedagogies actually lead to significantly better writing in L2 contexts (e.g. Hyland, K. 2002, 2003), the strength of process pedagogy may lie in its acknowledgement of the cognitive dimensions of writing and the potential it has for fostering such autonomous attitudes and skills as self-discovery, self-reflection and inner-directed exploration.

This view about the strength of the process approach has found some support in research. For example, Curtis (2001) found that student teachers benefited from the approach in terms of their self-confidence as writers, and Cresswell's (2000) study showed that university students trained to self-monitor their writing in a multiple-draft process writing programme could self-articulate their concerns in composing and paid more attention to content and organization. These studies, however, were mainly conducted among more proficient learners at university level or above; more importantly, they did not set out to focus on the development of learner autonomy in learners. The present study therefore adapted this approach for young ESL learners and explored its potential effects fully from the perspective of learner autonomy development.

Defining learner autonomy

There have been diverse approaches to the conceptualization and different views on the components of learner autonomy (e.g., Holec, 1981; Wenden, 1991; Scharle and Szabó, 2000; Little, 1991; Benson, 1996). For the purposes of this study, a theoretical framework of learner autonomy was developed with reference to Oxford's (2003) taxonomy. Using an approach which Benson (2007) metaphorically called the "kaleidoscopic strategy", Oxford's (2003) taxonomy amalgamates various definitions and perspectives of learner autonomy into a "macro-definition", incorporating technical, psychological, sociocultural and political-critical perspectives on autonomy. Four important themes, namely context, agency, motivation, and learning strategies run through each of these perspectives. By embracing these various perspectives and themes, the taxonomy acknowledges learner autonomy as a multi-dimensional construct.

Taking reference from the psychological perspective of Oxford's (2003) taxonomy, which sees autonomy as a combination of characteristics of the individual, learner autonomy in writing was proposed as a construct embracing factors that constitute autonomous attitudes, including motivation, self-confidence and independence from the teacher, as well as those that constitute autonomous skills, including strategy use, particularly metacognitive strategy use, and its prerequisite of metacognitive knowledge. This general framework was used for the development of a questionnaire and the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

Learning strategies are considered to be autonomous skills as they are often viewed as a psychological gateway to L2 learner autonomy (Dickinson, 1992; Oxford, 1990, 2003; Wenden, 1991). For the purpose of this study, mainly use of strategies for writing and the learning of writing, such as planning for writing and making self-initiated revisions, were considered. Since metacognitive knowledge has been increasingly acknowledged to be fundamentally important in self-regulated learning

(e.g. Wenden, 1998; Little, 2004; 2007), it was also incorporated in the construct even though they are not highlighted in Oxford's (2003) taxonomy.

Another major component in the construct which is not directly addressed in Oxford's (2003) taxonomy is independence from the teacher. In the literature on learner autonomy, the role of the teacher is often debated. Although it is agreed that learner autonomy does not mean total independence from the teacher, there is little dispute that in order to foster the development of learner autonomy in the classroom, teachers have to learn to relinquish control to their students and "wean" their students away from teacher dependence (Sheerin, 1997, p. 63). Independence from the teacher was therefore incorporated in the framework as an attitudinal component.

II. Methods

Research question

Putting together the literature reviewed above, the present study was designed to answer the following question:

To what extent do cultural differences affect the outcome of the process approach in terms of learners' development of autonomous skills and attitudes in writing?

The study design

The study was conducted in the naturalistic settings of two ESL classes (the NET Group and the LET Group) in a Chinese medium girls' school in Hong Kong using a simultaneously mixed method pretest-posttest (pre-experimental) design. The two groups were taught by two teachers with different cultural backgrounds as described below. The two teachers taught their respective groups English writing using the process writing approach over a semester (three and a half months) during which data collection was carried out. The researcher briefed both teachers on the procedure and provided them with the same peer review form, editing checklist and self-assessment form for use in writing instruction.

The participants

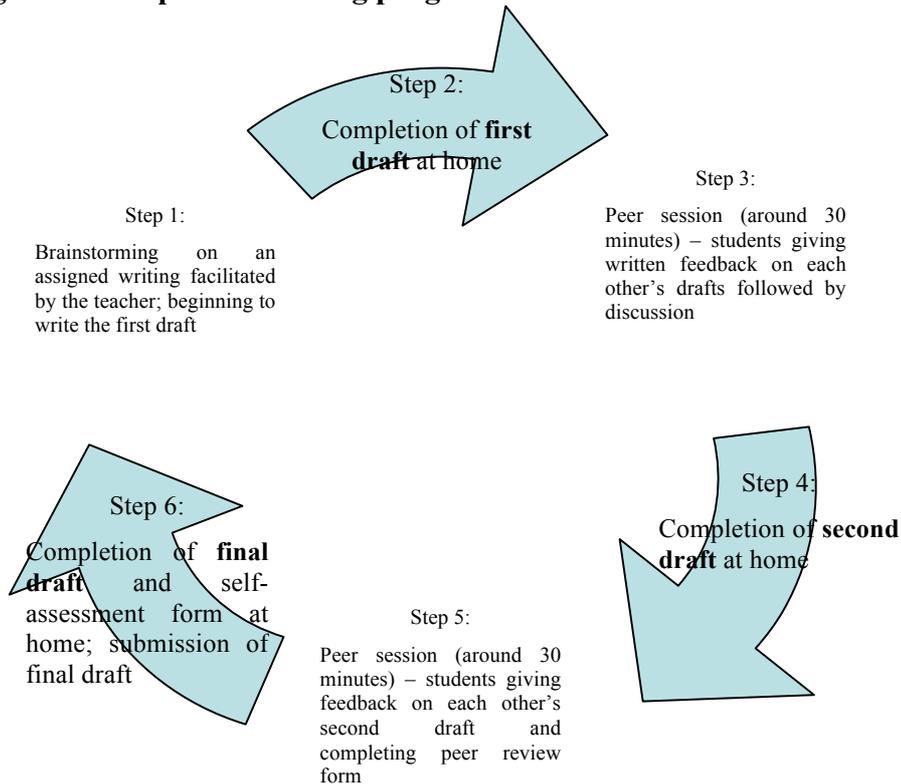
The NET Group and the LET Group had 19 and 21 students respectively. All the student participants of this study were local ethnic Chinese aged between 12 and 13 speaking Cantonese as their mother tongue. The student participants were therefore largely homogenous regarding their gender, age and sociocultural background.

The NET Group was taught by a male native English-speaking teacher (NET) identified here as Sam, while the LET Group was taught by a female local English teacher (LET) identified as Jessica. Sam was born and brought up in the United Kingdom and a native speaker of English, while Jessica was born and educated locally in Hong Kong speaking Cantonese as her mother tongue. Both teachers were master degree holders with English teaching qualifications and two to three years' experience in mainstream teaching. As they were comparable in terms of qualifications and teaching experience, the major differences between them lay in their places of origin and education and the resulting cultural differences.

The writing programme

Both groups completed three writing tasks on the same topics over the semester. Each writing task was completed in three drafts within around a month's time. There were peer sessions between drafts, and the students were allowed to complete the drafts at home. The writing cycle is shown in Figure 1 below:

Figure 1: The process writing programme



Data collection

Quantitative data

Quantitative data were collected from the student participants using a questionnaire, which was administered twice in each group, once before the programme (as the pre-test) and once after (as the post-test). The questionnaire was developed based on the conceptualization of learner autonomy in the area of writing with reference to the instrument developed by Cottrell (1995) investigating learners' readiness for autonomous learning and Oxford's (1990) Strategy Inventory for Language Learning (SILL). As the participants of this study were young learners with limited linguistic competence in their L2, the questionnaire was translated into their L1 (Chinese) with the length of the questionnaire kept short and level of complexity kept simple.

The questionnaire was designed with writing as the focus and included three sections with a total of 66 five-point Likert-scale questions (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Factor analysis identified the following nine factors: Self-

directedness, Motivation, Degree of Dependence on the Teacher, Peer Help and Feedback, Revision, Planning, Direct Strategies for Learning Writing, Metacognitive Strategies and Knowledge, and Social Strategy Use. After factor analysis, a paired-sample t-test was conducted on the data from each class, by which the pre-test and post-test mean scores of all the nine factors were compared to find out if any significant changes had taken place after the writing programme.

Qualitative data

In addition to the quantitative data collected with the questionnaires, qualitative data were also collected from the student participants from the following sources:

- Open-ended questions that follow the Likert-scale questions in the questionnaire;
- Self-assessment forms from the three writing tasks;
- Writing journals from individual students in each group.

The open-ended questions in the questionnaire and the self-assessment forms were designed to elicit information corresponding to the various aspects of learner autonomy in the theoretical framework, such as whether they learnt to write on their own (reflecting motivation), whether they planned and revised their writing (reflecting use of writing strategies), and how they evaluated their writing (reflecting metacognitive knowledge).

Qualitative data collected via the open-ended questions in both the questionnaire and the self-assessment forms were categorized and counted for comparison within groups and between groups. Data collected from the writing journals were analyzed qualitatively to provide evidence for triangulation with other data sources.

Data from the teachers were collected through in-depth interviews (once before the programme, once after the programme and once after each writing task). The teachers were asked questions about their beliefs in teaching English and English writing, their perceptions of the process approach and their reflections on their own teaching and learning. All their writing lessons and a few other non-writing lessons were observed to find out about their general approaches to teaching and the actual implementation of the process approach in their classes.

Case studies

Five students, two from the NET Group and three from the LET Group, were invited to participate in the case studies. In the case studies, semi-structured interviews were conducted before and after the writing programme to find out about the participants' approaches to writing and their reflections on their learning of writing.

All the drafts of the three writing tasks completed by each case study participant were collected for analysis. The revisions, particularly the quantity and quality of the self-initiated revisions on the drafts were examined as they were considered to be an indicator of the student writer's effort to take charge of the writing process, thus suggesting writer autonomy.

III. Findings and discussion

Similar changes in both groups

Both qualitative and quantitative data suggested that the two groups underwent some similar changes after the writing programmes as follows.

1. Decrease in dependence on the teacher after the programme

There was evidence to suggest that the process writing programme had the effect of reducing the students' dependence on the teacher in both groups. The mean scores of the factor of Degree of Dependence on the Teacher in the NET Group and LET Group decreased by 0.34 and 0.47 respectively in the post-test at 0.05 level of significance (Table 1). This factor included three items that reflect heavy reliance on the teacher, such as "I like the teacher to tell me what to write", so the decrease in the mean score certainly indicated a step in the direction away from spoon-feeding.

Table 1 Changes in the mean scores of the factor of Degree of Dependence on the Teacher in the two groups

	Paired Differences					t	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
	Change in Mean (Post-Pre)	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
				Lower	Upper			
NET Group (n=19)	-.34	.64	.15	.03	.65	2.33	18	.032
LET Group (n=21)	-.47	.81	.18	.09	.85	2.57	19	.019

We can see this growing independence from the teacher in the case of one of the case studies, Kelly from the LET Group. Before the implementation of the process approach, Kelly said that she needed the teacher's language input:

..... my standard may not be high enough. If the teacher doesn't give me vocabulary items for reference, I may find it difficult to write.

However, she started to enjoy the freedom she had in the writing process. In her last writing journal entry, she actually expressed her dislike of the teacher's "control":

In fact, I don't quite like the teacher to give us hints on a writing topic. This would limit my thoughts, making me unable to rely on my own ideas in writing. I realize I am the master of my own writing, and the content of my writing is mine, so I can write whatever I like.

Kelly's changes suggested that the writing programme had developed her self-confidence in writing as well as her sense of ownership of her writing.

2. Greater self-sufficiency in writing

In addition to becoming less dependent on the teacher, the students' responses to the question about what they would do when faced with difficulties in writing suggested a decrease in the tendency to seek help from others among both groups (Table 2). This indicates that after the programme, instead of seeking help from others, particularly the teacher, students were slightly more self-sufficient in completing writing tasks.

Table 2 Counts of mentions of sources of help in face of difficulties in writing (In response to open-ended Question 2 of the questionnaire - *When you come across difficulties while writing, what do you do?*)

Source of help	NET Group			LET Group		
	Pre-test	Post-test	Change	Pre-test	Post-test	Change
The teacher	13	8	-5 (38.5%)	13	6	-7 (53.8%)
Peers	14	11	-3 (21.4%)	14	13	-1 (7.1%)
Specific family members or friends	8	2	-6 (75%)	5	2	-3 (60%)
Others (anyone who can help)	0	2	+2	0	2	+2
Total	35	23	-12 (34%)	32	23	-9 (28%)

This growing self-sufficiency was also revealed by some students' self-initiated revisions over the tasks. For example, Polly from the NET group made progressively more self-revision attempts over the three tasks. In Task 1, she only added one sentence to her writing; in Task 3, she made three attempts to improve the content, modifying ideas and adding necessary details. She also made seven attempts to refine the language, all being alternative ways of expression or modifications for variety, clarity or style except one, which was an actual grammar correction. Below are some examples of her self-initiated revisions:

Adding an opinion:

First version: *My school start at 8:15a.m. so everyday I woke up at 6:00a.m.*

Revised version: *My school start at 8:15a.m. so everyday I woke up at 6:00a.m. I think it is so early.*

Filling in necessary details:

First version: *(No party details were given.)*

Revised version: *My birthday party start at 11:00 am and 9:00pm finish. And the party is holding at my place.*

Modifications of language use:

First version: *If you're free at that day, can you go to my birthday party? I think you can...*

Revised version: *If you're free on next Sunday, may you go to my birthday party? I hope you may...*

Although some of Polly's self-revisions contained errors, it was evident from the overall quality and quantity of her self-initiated revisions that she was becoming more self-motivated to improve her own writing and was confident enough to do so.

3. Development in metacognitive knowledge

Evidence of growth in metacognitive knowledge was found in both groups. The following entries in the writing journal by a participant from the NET Group, identified as Jane here, illustrate the gradual development of metacognitive knowledge over the course of the writing programme:

2nd entry

I feel my writing contains many mistakes. I feel the ending is very bad. I think I can be good at writing the ending. I should work more on writing the ending.

3rd entry

My writing is very boring. I don't know how to make my writing fun, how to make it good. I think I need to read others' writings to make my writing good. I need to make a real effort!

4th entry

My writing has not been good. Sometimes I think of words to use but I don't know how to put them in sentences, so I can't express my ideas. I hope I can increase my understanding of English sentences.

5th entry

I will read more articles and books, and even the lyrics of English songs. I have liked listening to songs ever since I was a child, including Chinese, English and Japanese songs, and I would be able to sing them after a while, but I seldom read the lyrics. Even though I may not learn much about sentences through lyrics, I would at least learn more words from them.

6th entry

I need to use more conjunctions and new words in my writing. Some sentences need to be presented better for better expression, and I need to check the dictionary more often and read to increase my vocabulary.

From the general comments about her own writing in the initial entries to the more detailed and specific remarks about how to improve her English in the latter ones, Jane's reflections evidenced the development of her metacognitive knowledge of writing and of herself as a writer.

Different degrees of change

While the above common changes suggest that the process approach helped these two groups of young learners develop into more autonomous writers, the data also revealed some changes that mainly occurred in the LET Group as follows:

First, more than half of the students in the LET Group appeared to have become more used to writing in multiple drafts by the end of the writing programme. After the programme completed, 13 out of the 21 students opted to carry on with the multiple-draft writing approach even though they were told that they no longer had to. This suggested the development of a more sophisticated approach to writing, which did not seem to have taken place in the NET Group.

Second, the LET Group showed more conspicuous development in some aspects, such as their reflectivity. Students in the LET Group were generally more persistent in reflecting upon their writing, and their reflections tended to be more elaborate revealing more metacognitive knowledge development than their counterparts in the NET Group. This could be illustrated with their responses to some open-ended questions in the questionnaire as shown in Table 3.

Table 3 Comparison of responses to the questions “Do you have a clear goal in learning to write” and “Do you have any plans to improve your writing” before and after the writing programme:

	NET Group	LET Group
Having a clear goal in learning to write	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3 changed from “No” to “Yes”; - Positive responses remained generic: e.g. “write well/better”, “do my best”, “get higher marks” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 5 changed from “No” to “Yes”; - Development of more specific goals in some cases (e.g. “To write well enough to be understood by native speakers”; “Be able to write error-free on my own devices”)
Having plans to improve writing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Those who responded “No” before the course kept responding “No” after; - Positive responses remained generic: e.g. “read more”, “write more”, “write drafts” 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 4 changed from “No” to “Yes”; - Development of more specific plans in some cases (e.g. “Revise till it is best”; “To read more good articles and story books”)

Furthermore, the LET Group also showed more obvious development than the NET Group towards self-reliance in writing. In addition to the evidence discussed earlier, the LET Group’s decrease in tendency to ask for help from others was further supported by the decrease of 0.45 at 0.05 level of significance in the mean score of the factor of Social Strategy Use. This factor included two items about asking others questions related to writing and having others read their writing; the decrease in tendency to do these suggested their desire and confidence to take charge of their own writing, which concurred with findings from other sources of data. While both groups

became less dependent on others' help, this tendency was more noticeable in the LET Group.

Possible reasons for the differences in outcomes in the two classes

The LET Group's greater degree of change in certain aspects suggested that the process approach may have been more effective in fostering learner autonomy in the LET Group than in the NET Group. This could be attributed to cultural and teaching differences as illustrated below.

1. Negative perceptions arising from the clash between teaching style and learner expectations in the NET Group

The implementation of the approach in the NET Group could have been affected by the students' increasingly negative feelings about Sam's teaching. Their general dissatisfaction may have affected their perceptions of the process approach and feedback, as revealed by the fact that the positive views about the approach expressed by about one-third of the students at the beginning of the programme were replaced by a few rather negative remarks at the end of it.

This was largely caused by the clash between Sam's teaching style and the expectations of his students. As teachers' teaching approaches are shaped by cultural backgrounds and past learning experiences, so are learners' expectations; when the teacher and the students are from different cultural backgrounds, there may be mismatch between the two, which would inevitably affect the learning outcome (Kern, 1995). Sam's students had conflicting feelings about him as their teacher as illustrated by one student's change of attitude. In the second writing task, "My school", this student described Sam in a very favourable light:

Mr Sam is our English teacher...He is so cute and handsome! In English he is always plays tricks on ours. But he makes us happy. I think he is a good teacher because he is very kind. After he has touch us some new things and then he will make a dictation and some listening for us. It is good for us! [...] In the school I feel very happy when I have English lessons because Mr Sam makes me happy! When we feel boring and then he will sing some songs for us. It is very funny! I like him very much!

However, in a later entry in her writing journal written after a major test near the end of the semester, she blamed her poor performance in English on Sam:

Mr Sam spent extremely little time in the first semester on teaching English. This makes me very angry! My English has got worse, a lot worse since the beginning of secondary school (i.e. since Sam became her English teacher). Perhaps it is because Mr Sam seldom teaches!! I don't like him!! I want to change classes!!

Similar dissatisfactions were expressed by a few other students in the writing journals. One student brought up the need for grammar instruction, and she commented that Sam did not address grammar teaching sufficiently.

These students' comments and responses reflected that the students generally expected the teacher to teach them English grammar and help them prepare for tests

and examinations. These expectations are not uncommon among Hong Kong students, and Chinese students in general, who attach high importance to the learning of grammar in the learning of a foreign or second language (Fan, 2008); this is however contrary to Sam's own beliefs.

Sam's beliefs about effective teaching and learning could be summarized in three words: motivation, interaction and production. His idea of motivating students was to let them have fun so that they would be interested in learning; he liked the students to talk in class and would not mind the noises. As he believed that students would naturally acquire the language through using the language in context and in production activities, he did not like teaching grammar explicitly; he did not like "over-explaining things", in his own words. He was much keener on demonstrating ideas than explaining them in words or in handouts. Applying the same principle in teaching writing, he would not provide a lot of input for the students as he liked the students to "generate things themselves".

It is quite clear that most of the beliefs that Sam held about teaching and learning were rather cognitivist and typically "western". His style of teaching was however not very well received by some of his students as discussed above; for these students, he was simply not "teaching properly".

2. Different learning environments created by different teaching approaches

The variations in outcomes could also be explained by the differences in the two teachers' overall approaches to teaching and their input into the writing process. While the two groups essentially followed the same programme, the teachers created rather different environments for it to take place because of their underlining beliefs about teaching and learning.

Jessica managed to cultivate a more effective classroom environment for many reasons, but her consonance with and understanding of the local culture was probably the major one. Being a local herself, Jessica naturally met the expectations of most of the students. She believed in the role of practice in learning, and her idea of language learning was closely tied to grammar learning. In addition, although Jessica also considered motivation to be of prime importance for learning, her way to foster it was different from Sam's. Instead of cultivating a fun-filled environment, she believed in helping her students to achieve a sense of satisfaction by setting immediate achievable goals and giving students little awards for good performance, in the hope that they would gradually grow to like learning English. In view of her students' general positive perceptions of her teaching, her overall teaching approach was probably more acceptable to the students.

Another obvious difference between Jessica and Sam, which may or may not be caused by cultural differences, was Jessica's belief in modelling. She believed that modelling was an effective way to demonstrate her thinking process to her students:

I want them to know what I know, and take it from there. I tend to demonstrate to the students how to select and organize ideas, and then how to flesh them out... I can't tell the students what it is like, so I need to show them, hoping that they will gradually get the idea.

Jessica did make some effort to model students on the writing process, particularly in the brainstorming sessions. In other words, while essentially using the process approach, Jessica blended in some strategy instruction in her delivery; strategy-focused instruction could arouse learners' awareness of text structure and help improve writing quality (Fidalgo, Torrance, & Garcia, 2008), and Jessica's emphasis on modelling in her teaching may have been one of the reasons why her class showed more growth in reflectivity and development in their metacognitive knowledge of writing.

IV Conclusion

It is interesting that despite having different teachers, both classes demonstrated similar changes through the writing programme. These changes suggest that, subsequent to the writing instruction using the process approach, students may become less dependent on the teacher and more self-sufficient in writing. In addition, the process approach may foster the development of metacognitive knowledge, which indicates greater reflectivity and use of metacognitive strategies. These could all be signs of development of learner autonomy in writing. Findings from this study therefore provide further evidence in support of the strength of the process writing as pedagogy for fostering learner autonomy. They also suggest that some general effects of a pedagogical approach may transcend cultural differences and manifest themselves in different contexts.

However, as teaching does not take place in a vacuum, cultural and contextual differences may have important intervening effects on the actual implementation and therefore outcomes of a teaching method. Differences in beliefs about teaching could lead to the creation of rather different classroom environments for a pedagogical approach to take place and thus differences in its effects. This study illustrates some of the ways in which cultural differences could affect learning outcomes. First, cultural differences between teachers and students may lead to mismatch of teaching approaches and learner expectations, which may be a source of tension and inevitably undermine the overall effects of any teaching efforts. Second, teachers from different cultural backgrounds may interpret and apply key concepts, such as motivation, rather differently. The decisions made accordingly will in turn affect the overall learning environment.

Overall, the study shows that cultural differences may affect the outcomes of a pedagogical approach to a certain extent, but not to the point of offsetting all its benefits. The outcomes of a pedagogical approach may also be attributed to some idiosyncratic beliefs held by the teacher, which may or may not be cultural specific. Whatever differences may exist, as long as teachers can attend to students' affective and cognitive learning needs and develop suitable pedagogical techniques, they may still be able to increase both the students' commitment to learning and their chances of success in it (Mantle-Bromley, 1995). Although the generalizability of the findings may be compromised by the small sample size and the contextualized settings, the study has pointed out that pedagogical research could aim for greater universality while recognizing the intervening effects of cultural and individual differences. This should warrant further investigation of larger scale across different cultural contexts.

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