

**A Comparative Study of EFL/ESL Academic
Writing among Mandarin Chinese Speakers on
Coherence in Discourse: Cross-cultural and
Language Development Effects**

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Abstract

This thesis investigates the effectiveness of a teaching intervention that aims to raise L1 Chinese students' awareness regarding cross-cultural and language impacts on the construction of (British) English academic discourse, and equipping them with skills that they may independently apply to their academic writing.

Two groups of Chinese students, separated by their IELTS written test scores (n=76) were recruited, and taught in a three-month teaching intervention at two British universities, over two consecutive years. This pedagogical practice is based on a syllabus designed by me and focuses on three domains that contribute to global and local discourse coherence: topical development at the discourse level (global coherence), the development of topic sentence at the paragraph level (local coherence), and the application of logical connectors at the sentence level (local coherence). Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from pre- and post-intervention essays, questionnaires and after-study interviews. This study reveals that the explicit teaching of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic factors is beneficial to both groups of L1 Chinese speakers' academic English writing. The findings are that the learners with lower English proficiency benefited more from the linguistic features at the sentence level, compared with their counterparts' evident attainment in both sentences and discourses. Both groups found a positive effect on their grammar in terms of subject-verb agreement when establishing the topical development of a discourse. The group with higher English proficiency also demonstrated a better self-reflection ability by transferring what they had learned into reading strategies. There was a mixed result in the development of topic sentence within paragraphs by both groups.

This study offers the option of integrating a pedagogical practice into the current British and Chinese HE teaching systems. A replication of this syllabus in a Chinese university suggests that the current findings could be applied in a wider context.

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is a presentation of original work and I am the sole author. This work has not previously been presented for an award at this, or any other, University. All sources are acknowledged as References.

Chapter 1 Introduction

“The English language and its related thought patterns have evolved out of the Anglo-European cultural pattern. The expected sequence of thought in English is essentially a Platonic-Aristotelian sequence, descended from the philosophers of ancient Greece and shaped subsequently by Roman, Medieval European, and later Western thinkers.”

Kaplan, 1966, p. 12

1.1 Motivation for this study

My motivation for this research is based on my personal experience of ESL academic writing and the perceived need of many L1 (first language) postgraduate Chinese students I have taught, to improve their academic writing skills in order to maximise their educational outcome. After several years of teaching, it has become clear to me that a large part of the L1 Chinese student population was not being adequately served by UK universities, and that this was causing a great deal of frustration to both them, and the academic staff alike. L1 Chinese students' academic performance in respect of essay and dissertation scores is the weakest among all international students at British universities; based on the available data (Li, Chen & Duanmu, 2010), although they constitute the greatest number of international students studying in British higher education (HE) institutes and the most rapidly increasing group among international students. Based on HESA (Higher Education Statistics Agency) data, there were 91,215 mainland Chinese students studying in British HE institutions in the 2015/16 academic year, almost a 14% increase from 2011/12. I was intrigued as to the reasons for their generally rather low essay and dissertation scores, and whether there could be a practical pedagogical response?

At conferences and on campuses I readily engaged HE EFL/ESL teachers in conversations on this topic, but it seems that the conversations always ended with an open discussion, leading to further questions and involving more complex subjects, such as social equality, education rights, economic diversity, etc. One interesting topic that emerged was about what type(s) of ESL/EFL academic writing composed by Chinese can be called inappropriate or 'poor' writing. This is to some extent related to the discussion regarding whether there exists a Chinese variation of English

(*China English* is regarded by some as a variation of English, whereas Chinese English/Chinglish is treated as English with errors and mistakes made by Chinese students), the details of which will be introduced later.

Discussions with Chinese students about their studies, generally ends with complaints about the lack of particular training for their academic essay writing skills, feeling their need to improve their academic writing and English ability were being neglected. One of the main reasons that they came to an English-speaking country after all, was to ‘improve their English’. Sometimes the conversation concluded with students doubting their own English learning capability. Some of the students attended a pre-session course - or an equivalent - offered by British universities for international students whose English scores do not match up to the requirement of the specific discipline they study. Most of them provided positive feedback on these courses which prepared them for their continuation in the academic world. However, frustration regarding a lack of academic writing skills seems to exist within all types of Chinese students, including those whose English scores have satisfied the entrance requirements. Reportedly, one common word Chinese students often see in their essay feedback is ‘incoherent’, which particularly frustrates them as it sounds so abstract, and they feel that they do not know *how* to make their writing coherent.

Along with discussing this situation with colleagues and talking to students, I also reviewed the literature for a better and clearer understanding of the issue and for a possible solution. One reason that was linked to Chinese students’ weak essay writing performance in British HE is attributed to their lower English proficiencies in comparison with most other international students’. Other reasons have been assigned to cross-cultural and cross-linguistics factors, such as their lack of critical thinking, being unaware of the differences between the requirements of Chinese and English universities regarding academic essays (Li, et al., 2010), lack of awareness of rhetorical style differences between the Chinese and English language (Li & Liu, 2019), L1 transfer (Field & Oi, 1992), the different perceptions of logic (Kaplan, 1966; Milton & Tsang, 1993), lack of sensitivity to register, genre and discipline (Field & Oi, 1992), the misunderstanding of surface logicity and deep logicity when structuring an essay (Crewe, 1990), etc.

Based on the information I gathered, I developed a teaching programme that focuses on raising Chinese students’ awareness of the cross-cultural and cross-language issues that are relevant to the construction of ESL/EFL discourse coherence

in academic writing, and equip them with the skills and tools that they could utilise to facilitate discourse coherence. The programme that I created targets L1 Chinese college students at the intermediate or the beginning of the advanced level, and helps them at this particular stage to notice the issues that may cause challenges in their academic writing; and hopefully, helps them to become independent learners utilising and adapting the skills and tools which will be at their disposal for their future academic life.

Academic writing in this study means academic essays and theses that university students write to achieve their degrees. Readers here consists of university lecturers, tutors, academic staff who may assess and mark students' essays, etc. The intention of this study and the teaching programme design, is to provide L1 Chinese students with basic information and practical ways to look at their own English academic writing from a cross-cultural and cross-linguistic perspective, and *start* to write, revising their writing coherently with a notion of discourse structure. With an awareness of the issues and possessing practical skills, they may produce a type of ESL/EFL academic writing that is coherent, within a specific context, and with a clear pathway.

1.2 Background of relevant studies and students' needs

Research on ESL/EFL academic writing produced by L1 Chinese students have long been conducted by educators and linguists from both inside and outside of China (e.g., Hyland, 2003; Lei, 2012; Mohan & Lo, 1985; Swales & Feak, 2004). Studies have been on almost all types of English academic written products composed by Chinese students, and due to their geographic location, studies have encompassed those studying in the mainland of China, where English is regarded as a foreign language (EFL), those in Hong Kong and Macau, where English is a second language (ESL), and those in native English-speaking countries, where L1 Chinese students use English as a second language for academic purposes. Based on students' study areas, researchers have investigated English academic essays collected from L1 Chinese students in English-related majors, those in non-English majors, and those composed by overseas Chinese students from all types of subjects and disciplines. The underlying assumption behind these studies is that L1 Chinese students' ESL/EFL academic writing generally differs from those composed by their native English speaking (NES) counterparts.

These differences have been attributed to the cultural distance between these two languages, their writing systems, thinking patterns, etc. The way an individual, and more generally a society thinks, is reflected in their writing. Kaplan (1966) simplified the thinking pattern of five cultures (English, Semitic, Oriental, Romantic and Russian) into five types, in which Chinese logic was described as circular and English logic was linear-like. He later added that the particularity of logic and rhetoric and the specificity of culture were dynamic in the sense of time and circumstance, which means that rhetoric and culture are not static and change along with time and context. His descriptions regarding the differences between Western and Oriental thinking patterns have been strongly supported by language researchers and scholars in China, although Western scholars have criticised it for its simplicity (e.g., Ji, 2006; Ji, Lee & Guo, 1996; Thorsten, 2013).

The different thinking patterns

Ji, et al. (1996) described Chinese thinking patterns as being holistic, whereas Western thinking is analytical. The fundamental distinction between these two thinking systems is the ability to perceive and analyse things *with or without* a context. Holistic thinkers consider everything as being interconnected and interactive in some way, whereas analytical thinkers tend to penetrate the abstract and inner meaning from the surface information. Although their descriptions are different from Kaplan's, it seems that they agree that thinking directs writing, and that there is a difference in thinking patterns between L1 Chinese and L1 English speakers, and this difference results in a separation of Chinese and English discourse patterns. If the language used in a written discourse changes to one from a different culture, but the thinking pattern stays the same, it may cause challenges for readers trying to process information. For example, ESL/EFL writing by some L1 Chinese students have been criticised as being 'foreign-like' and 'incoherent' in the eyes of native English-speaking readers.

Lack of academic writing training in both contexts

In addition to this inherent factor, the lack of academic writing training in both Chinese and English languages in the Chinese education system is also perceived as one of reasons for the inadequacy of Chinese writing and ESL/EFL writing. Kirkpatrick and Xu (2012), in their noteworthy book *Chinese Rhetoric and*

Writing, analysed the most popular Chinese composition textbooks, and concluded that Chinese students lack adequate academic writing instructions from the Chinese language education systems. They pointed out that there was some training for students studying Chinese majors but little for non-Chinese major students. They reported that ‘the focus of Chinese university composition textbooks appears to be more on practical writing rather than training students to develop skills in argumentative essay writing for the academy’ (p. 202). For example, training contents are such as ‘short articles with memory-based historical facts or evidence, but not research-based academic essays’, and limited to practical ‘bureaucratic’ genres (p. 202).

English practitioners in China, both native English-speaking teachers and Chinese English teachers, have also reached the same conclusion in the context of the EFL teaching system. A writing teacher in an American-Chinese university co-operation programme, Matalene (1985) witnessed the struggles that Chinese students experienced when trying to accept Western academic writing styles, and the little English academic writing training provided by the Chinese English teaching system. She predicted that this situation would not change fundamentally while the whole Chinese education system still dwelt within an exam-centred idyll, and her prediction still seems to reflect the current situation more than three two decades later.

Likewise, Li (2008), a Chinese American and a professor of English in an American university, reviewed his English learning experience in both China and America, highlighting the lack of relevant academic writing training for international students in both HE societies, particularly for those from distanced typologies and cultures. He reflected on the lack of EFL teaching at the discourse level and the neglect of rhetoric and cross-cultural and cross-language factors in Chinese English teaching systems. He was also very concerned about the ‘academic culture shock’ (Godwin, 2009) that Chinese students may experience after enrolling in an American university, due to the differences of academic writing requirements and criteria. ‘Academic culture shock’ is a type of cultural shock that normally occurs when students leave their own education system and enter another education system with different academic culture and requirements (Godwin, 2009), such as the variation in ways lectures are given and the standards expected in the written work of students.

Li (1996) discussed this topic from the perspective of tutors teaching in HE. He examined the perceptions of ‘good writing’ from both L1 Chinese and L1 English composition experts in his book *‘Good Writing’ in Cross-cultural Context*, and concluded that cross-cultural factors and readers’ expectations were inseparable values when determining the criteria for ‘good writing’. He suggested the inclusion of classes on teaching cross-cultural and cross-language factors, and the difference in rhetorical styles, to L1 Chinese students.

Chinese students’ needs

The literature also suggest that it is Chinese students’ desire to understand and learn the academic English norms acceptable to NES higher education institutes. Studies investigating the rationale behind L1 Chinese students choosing to study in the UK or other NES countries, revealed that *the opportunity to improve their English language, higher quality education*, the desire to *understand Western culture* (Bodycott, 2009; Wu, 2014), and to learn ‘NS-based English norms’ (NS, native speaking) (He & Li, 2009), are all within the top few reasons on the list.

Notwithstanding L1 Chinese students’ needs, scholars and education practitioners feel concerned about the use of the word *improving* by L1 Chinese students, as it seemed to confer a high, and Anglo-centric social and lingual status (Chang, 2014; Shi, 2009) on the speaker. They also worried about Chinese students’ lack of perception regarding the variety of English outside of American and British English. In a survey conducted by Kirkpatrick and Xu (2002) with Chinese university students in English majors and non-English majors, they found that Chinese students generally regarded American and British English as the ‘correct’ and ‘standard’ English. Similar results were obtained from He and Li’s (2009) survey with non-English major students from four other Chinese universities.

In these circumstances, it is reasonable to clarify what can be improved in L1 Chinese students’ English, and in what aspects or circumstances, ‘adaptation’ might be a better word to describe the situation rather than, ‘improvement’.

English produced by an L1 Chinese speaker can generally be categorised into two types. China English¹ (*Zhongguo yingyu* 中国英语) is normally used to describe the English language produced by L1 Chinese speakers and characterised by Chinese cultural, social, and ideological influences, including specific linguistic expressions. Chinese English or Chinglish (*Zhongshi yingyu* 中式英语) is a term used to describe the interlanguage produced by L1 Chinese speakers of English. Interlanguage is an intermediate state of a learner's acquisition, which contains both the features of L1 and L2 (second language), and is a transitional stage that L2 learners may or may not be capable of overcoming (Selinker, 1972). It generally consists of ill-formed, misused or ungrammatical linguistic features, that would be judged as 'incorrect English' or contrary to basic English features.

Hence, the interpretation of L1 Chinese students' need of 'improving their English language' might be explained in two aspects. One is their desire to improve their use of English by reducing the production of Chinglish - the mistakes - in the application of English. The other domain is their need to adapt their China English into the NES academic contexts, satisfying the requirements of an NES HE society, in order to realise their academic potential in a Western academic context. These needs are particularly strong in L1 Chinese students who study or intend to study in NES countries based on the surveys conducted (Bodycott, 2009; He & Li, 2009; Wu, 2014).

Therefore, due to the differences in thinking patterns in culture and language, the lack of academic writing training in both NES and Chinese education contexts, and L1 Chinese students' need to improve and adapt their English writing to meet the requirements of NES academic society, it seems to be reasonable to introduce a teaching programme or teaching programmes to Chinese students that can help them with their ESL/EFL academic writing. It is clear that this teaching will not be a one-off project, as language learning is always a developmental process. As in all teaching designs, the choice of teaching content at a particular stage is of the essence for the effectivity and maximum benefit, in order to fulfil the purposes of teaching. In the next section, I will discuss the choice of teaching content and the reasons behind this.

¹ Scholars also debate about the status of *China English* (*Zhongguo yingyu* 中国英语) as a variation of English. Some linguists, particular those from China, endeavour to find evidence for the recognition of a 'China English' (e.g., He & Li, 2009; Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002).

1.3 Identifying gaps in the literature

The teaching programme that I designed focuses on the construction of discourse coherence in L1 Chinese students' academic writing and is related to cross-cultural and cross-linguistic factors. The target groups for this teaching intervention are Chinese students who were awarded their undergraduate degrees in China, which indicates that they must be at the intermediate or advanced level of EFL. There are three reasons for this. The first reason is the lack of training in the notion of discourse in the Chinese English education system. The second reason is that the change of potential readers of Chinese students' English compositions from Chinese English teachers to academic staff in British HE institutes leads to a change in the notion of discourse coherence, which is an essential factor related to the identification of coherence and closely linked to the cross-cultural and cross-linguistics issues. It is therefore worth being raised in a pedagogical context. The last reason is that the 'incoherence' and 'foreign-like' feature of Chinese students' academic writing seems to be one of the most widely criticised.

With the focus on discourse coherence and the relevant cross-cultural and cross-linguistics factors, what or which domains should be included in this teaching programme is the next concern.

In a text analysis, Wikborg (1990) categorised 11 types of *coherence break* that may result in a situation 'when the reader loses the thread of the argument while in the process of reading a text' by examining Swedish students' EFL compositions (p. 133). Of the 11 types, the five most frequently occurred are, *uncertain inferences*, *misleading paragraph division*, *missing or misleading sentence connection*, *unjustified change of topic or drift of topic*, and *unspecific topic*, representing three-quarters of the coherency breaks in texts. Inappropriate topic development and logical connectors, as well as inappropriate paragraphing seem to be the primary causes leading to a break in information conveyance between ESL/EFL learner writers and NES readers or highly proficient English readers.

Witte (1983a) related text coherence at the discourse level to global coherence at the sentential level, to local coherence. In other words, the construction of global coherence dwells within the scope of discourse, whereas that of local coherence is embedded within global coherence, serving at the sentence or paragraph levels.

Studies regarding global and local coherence in English discourse are abundant. For example, Lautamatti (1978) developed topical structure analysis (TSA) to identify the topical development of a discourse, which has since been adopted by L2 researchers to compare the differences and similarities of topic development in various languages, and taught to ESL/EFL learners as a revision tool to improve discourse coherence. Reid (1996) identified six categories of inappropriate development of the topic sentence in paragraphs by ESL learners, in order to help ESL/EFL learners develop local coherence within paragraphs. Milton and Tsang (1993) studied the construction of local coherence at the sentence level, by employing *ratio of occurrence* to identify the frequency of logical connectors in ESL/EFL users' written products, based on the perception that, if used properly, logical connectors could contribute to the construction of local coherence of a discourse.

Burneikaite and Zabaliūtė (2003) suggest that 'a most suitable method for analysing coherence' is to 'consider both global coherence (the meaning of the essay) and local coherence (how sentences build meaning in relation to each other and the overall thesis) of the discourse' (p. 69). However, I am yet to encounter a study that constructs a teaching intervention aimed at raising L1 Chinese English speakers' awareness of the rhetorical differences, and cross-cultural and cross-language impacts on the construction of global and local coherence in ESL academic discourse, in the context of British higher education. I have also not encountered a study that analyses ESL/EFL written discourse coherence by integrating topical development, the development of topic sentence, and the application of logical connectors together. Most studies generally concentrate on one dimension of discourse coherence, either at the global level or at the local level. For instance, Chen's (2007) study of topical development on L1 Chinese students or Leedham and Cai's (2013) study regarding the use of logical connectors. Therefore, it is worthwhile conducting an empirical study on L1 Chinese students' academic essays in respect of the impact of cultural and language factors on their construction of discourse coherence.

The principle thrust of this research is to explore whether a customised teaching programme can raise L1 Chinese students' awareness of factors that impact the construction of discourse coherence in respect of cultural and language differences, in order to help them understand the requirements of coherence in academic writing, and equip them with appropriate skills and tools for the assessment of academic essays. The ultimate goal is that by raising their awareness of these

issues, L1 Chinese students may become independent learners and gain the most benefit from their academic life in British HE institutes.

It would thus be of interest to a) learn whether a customised intervention teaching programme can be constructed to teach coherence in written discourse among English speaking Chinese learners, and b) should this teaching approach prove successful, can it be integrated into the pedagogical life of the majority of Chinese learners.

1.4 The structure of the study

Chapter 1 provides a holistic picture of this thesis, by briefly introducing cross-cultural and cross-linguistics differences and their impact on Chinese and English academic writing, the lack of explicit teaching of rhetorical styles and discourse coherence in Chinese English education systems, and the needs of L1 Chinese students studying in English-speaking countries to understand the requirements of Western HE society.

Chapter 2 provides the background of English teaching, as a first language (L1) and a second language (L2) in Chinese and British education systems (here specifically in England and Wales). It points out that L1 Chinese students are generally unfamiliar with the common criteria of English academic writing and the requirements of British HE society for academic essays.

Chapter 3, 4 and 5 consist of a review of three key domains that serve the purposes of this study: the topic and subject in the Chinese and English languages, the move structure and the development of the topic sentence in paragraphs in Chinese and English texts, and the application of logical connectors in Chinese and English. The corresponding analytical tools will be introduced: the topic structure analysis (TSA), Reid's categorisation of the inappropriate development of topic sentence, and the presence or absence of logical connectors. Chapter 5 ends with a summary of the literature review and an introduction to the research questions.

Chapter 6 presents the research methods engaged to generate data and to answer the research questions. Participants are introduced. The design of the teaching intervention is revealed with the introduction of the procedure of this teaching programme. Post-teaching questionnaires and after-study interviews are also used to

generate in-depth information to fulfil and complement the quantitative data collected from the discourse analysis on the pre- and post-intervention essays.

Chapter 7 explores the results of data analysis and illustrates the findings of this study in respect of these three domains. It is arranged in the following sequence, the impact of learners' English proficiency on the pre- and post-intervention essays, and the impact of teaching intervention on the three domains of the essays produced by both groups. The possible awareness-raising of the issues regarding the cross-cultural and cross-language issues will be revealed in the findings of the questionnaires and with any possible delay effect from the findings of the interviews.

Chapter 8 briefly introduces a duplicated study that was conducted at a university in China. It focuses on the differences between these two studies in their processes and findings, and its implication on the possibility of adapting the designed teaching programme.

Chapter 9 offers a discursive and forward-looking response to the principal findings corresponding to the research questions. It starts with a general discussion and then discusses in detail the impact of language proficiency on the three domains related to the construction of discourse coherence, then the aspects of the teaching intervention. It discusses the necessity for the explicit teaching of these three domains to Chinese students and the unexpected benefits that students gained from this teaching programme. The online discussion panel will also be discussed for its implications in peer support and academic discourse socialisation.

Chapter 10, the concluding chapter, summarises the principal findings with a general discussion, reiterates the contribution made in respect of raising L1 Chinese students' awareness of the cross-cultural and cross-language factors on their academic writing, and ESL/EFL academic writing practice, acknowledges the limitations of this study, and identifies emergent aspects that would likely repay further research.

Chapter 2 The English academic writing of L1 Chinese college students

This chapter introduces the differences between Chinese and British English education systems; the English composition experience of L1 Chinese students, and their unfamiliarity with British English academic writing requirements and criteria. It aims to provide readers with background information and introduce the rationale for conducting this study and introducing a teaching intervention to L1 Chinese students.

2.1 English teaching and learning in the Chinese English education system

Since the 1980s, English has become one of the required test-subjects nationwide (the other two are Chinese and Mathematics) (MOE.gov.cn). English teaching officially starts from Grade 3 (roughly 10 year olds) in the national education system, but much earlier in big cities and developed areas where a lot of bilingual kindergartens exist. A Chinese student normally has studied English for 8 years before entering university. The diagram below illustrates the contemporary Chinese national education system (Figure 2-1).

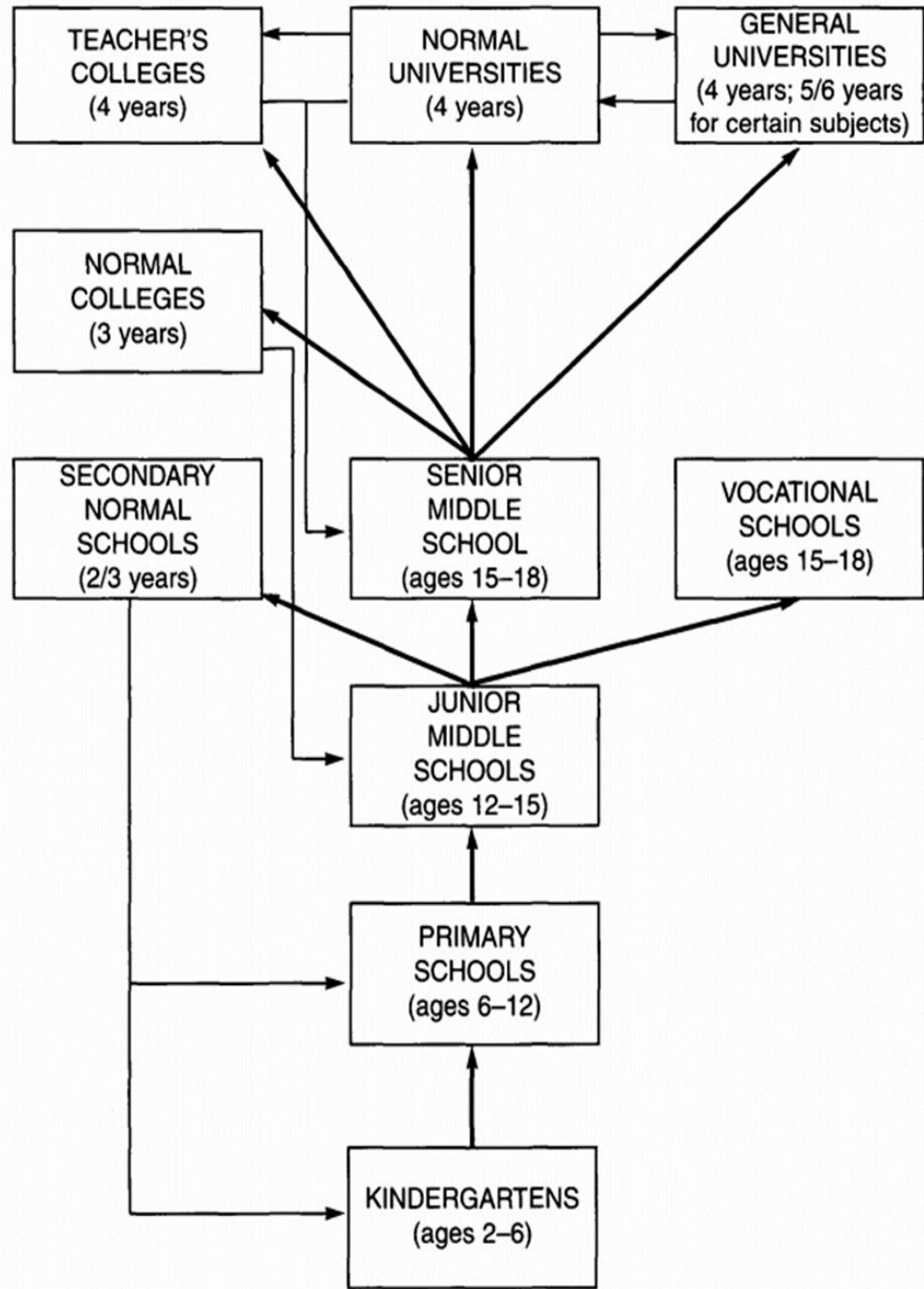


Figure 2 - 1 Chinese National Education System

(Adopted from Cortazzi and Jin, 1996, p. 62)

At the pre-tertiary level, the choice of genre is rather limited in Chinese English compositions. Topics are generally restricted to narrative prose, different from their British counterparts, where not only narrative and expository prose are explored, but also poetry and drama are included. (For details, see the Standards & Testing Agency websites.) Chen and Foley (2005) appealed for the teaching of expository writing in the Chinese English pedagogy, and also criticised its focus on linguistics factors and the neglect of reasoning and logic embedded in expository texts. Notably exam-oriented, the Chinese national curriculum is fully integrated with Gaokao (national university entrance examinations), the ultimate examination at the end of secondary school. The English composition requirement in *Gaokao* is to write 100-150 words on a descriptive topic such as *Changes in my hometown* (2004). Consequently, the teaching of English composition, if it exists, focuses on the production of a descriptive style.

English teaching at the tertiary level has been divided into two systems in China. One system targets non-English major students, who make up the majority of the student population in Chinese HE. Taking Beijing University as an example (one of the top universities in China). The total number of full-time students recruited in 2015 was 8301, including 4006 undergraduates (bku.edu.cn). Among these, undergraduate students majoring in English numbered just 141, less than 4% of the total. In China, students studying non-language related majors are required to produce their dissertations in Chinese, and their English ability is tested by a national examination.

The national CET (College English Test) is convened for non-English major students in order to evaluate their ‘general English ability’ (cet.edu.cn). It requires a composition of 120-180 words in 30 minutes. Topics generally belong to descriptive prose, such as *A course that has impressed you most in college* (the topic issued in December, 2014; MOE.gov.cn). The teaching of English conducted in colleges for non-English major students has been criticised as being merely a preparation course for the CET test, and has raised some concerns from educators about a ‘test washback effect’ (Han, Dai & Yang, 2004; Gu & Liu, 2005; Ren, 2011; Sun, 2016). That is to say, the foci of college English teaching is predominantly on language knowledge and test-taking skills that CET demands, rather than fulfilling students’ needs. You (2004) pointed out that Chinese English teachers ‘made the choice from no choice’ and that

‘correct form rather than well-developed thought is the most valued in the CET writing section’ (p. 104).

Another system is aimed at English major students. Chinese students majoring in English and its other related courses such as English Literature are the only group expected to produce essays and dissertations in English in mainland China. To secure a graduate certificate, they need to pass a TEM (Test for English Majors) plus a dissertation in English. TEM Band 4 is an essential minimum requirement, and successful students can then progress to a Band 8 test which is a prerequisite for entrance into most top universities.

In TEM-4, students are instructed to produce a composition of approximately 200 words, taking 15% of the total score of 100. TEM topics involve both descriptive and expository prose. In June of 2016, the topic was to summarise an excerpt and make comments based on the main information; an argumentative writing style was requested. The assessment criteria were based on ‘content relevance, content sufficiency, organisation and language quality’ as printed on the test paper. In a TEM-4 exam in 2015, the topic was *How I deal with stress*. Examinees were expected to write a three-part discourse; the first part was to describe the stress one suffered from, the second part was to explain the way one dealt with it, and the third part was a summary.

In this situation, the dissertation that English major students produced might be the only type of EFL composition that can be analogous to the academic essays and/or dissertations in British HE. This is generally an argumentative topic, requiring 3000-5000 words, with a reference list. However, no research methods or data analysis is required in most cases. The choice of dissertation topic is by individual Chinese HE institutes within national guidelines issued by the Ministry of Education, China. For example, *Reflections on Group Interaction in an EFL Class*.

It is not surprising that research concerning EFL/ESL academic writing by Chinese speakers are generally conducted by Chinese English-major students, along with scholars and researchers who publish in English and live in one of the English-speaking countries (e.g., Yang & Sun, 2012; Zhang, 2001). There are very few studies focusing on academic writing produced by Chinese non-English major students in mainland China. Liu and Braine’s (2005) case study of an inclusive academic writing course offered by Tsinghua University is one of the rare and valued studies, and even they admitted that students in this university were granted exclusive

privileges due to the fact that Tsinghua University is one of the top universities in China. The majority of Chinese non-English major students do not have such opportunities.

Therefore, it can be safely claimed that non-English major Chinese students will be unfamiliar with academic writing in English, if they have not immersed themselves in it as self-learners. Only those who are English-majors have conducted EFL academic writing in China. However, the majority of Chinese students who study in English-speaking countries are from non-English majors (UKCISA.org.uk), those studying language and linguistic related majors only make up a small proportion of Chinese students in British HE institutes at the tertiary level.

In addition, English teaching in China has been greatly criticised as being grammar and vocabulary focused, sentence-oriented and lack any notion of discourse. A discourse is normally treated as a combination of sentences rather than a coherent and organic whole in Chinese English teaching classes (Tsao, 2004; Zhang & Liu, 2014). In contrast, at Key Stage 3, 4 and 5, the concept of structuring discourse into a coherent piece of writing is highlighted, as is a consideration of readers' expectations. Students are required to amend 'the vocabulary, grammar and structure of their writing to improve its coherence and overall effectiveness' (National Curriculum in England, 2003, p. 5).

The teaching and learning of academic writing starts at a comparatively early stage in the British school system. At Key Stage 2, year three to six in primary school, a series of writing assessments and exemplifications are issued to teachers as guidelines to direct composition teaching and assessment. At Key Stage 3, 4 and 5, year 7 to 13 in secondary school, expectations and requirements concerning written language, grammar and vocabulary that build on the previous stages have been introduced with concise and detailed requirements for both teachers and students.

Based on English Programmes of Study: Key Stage 3, students are required to be capable of writing 'well-structured formal expository ... essays' and 'supporting ideas and arguments with any necessary factual detail' (National Curriculum in England, 2003, p. 5). In the dimension of enhanced readability, they should be capable of 'considering how their writing reflects the audiences and purposes for which it was intended' (ibid). In identifying registers, they should be capable of 'knowing and understanding the differences between spoken and written language, including differences associated with formal and informal registers' (ibid). The

national curricula regarding English programmes in Scotland, Wales and North Ireland are similar to those in England.

In conclusion, the concise requirement of British schools encompasses the structure of discourse, cohesion and coherence in logic, the accurate use of grammar and vocabulary, and the effectiveness of argument and its supporting evidence. Through years of training, students who have gone through the British school system should have acquired some extent of academic writing knowledge consciously and subconsciously. This situation can place international students at a disadvantage, particularly those from different academic education systems such as Chinese students from mainland China.

2.2 Perceptions of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic issues by Chinese English teachers

A lack of writing training and the inefficiency of English teacher training has been criticised by Chinese English practitioners (e.g. Hu, 2003; Zhang & Liu, 2014). Where teacher training is provided, the cross-cultural factors that influence Chinese English teachers' perceptions of the teaching content and approaches and the way of evaluating students' needs have been surveyed (Gan, 2012; Gu, 2005, 2010). Gu conducted two surveys in a teacher training programme organised by the British Council, China. One was in 2005 and used questionnaires to compare Chinese English teachers who had attended the training with those who had not. The other survey was organised in 2010 of Chinese English teachers and their British trainers in the teacher development programme held by the British Council. In both cases, he revealed to some extent the resistance of Chinese English teachers to 'authentic' English teaching approaches and contents introduced by British trainers, and on the other hand, a lack of awareness of the teaching contexts in China by British specialists.

Gu (2005, 2010) argued that 'the culturally relative concept of teaching effectiveness recognises culture as an invisible lens through which teachers make judgements of their students' needs and then decide ways of delivering their personal stock of knowledge' (p. 42). In other words, due to the influence of cross-cultural factors, English teachers in China and Britain might have different perceptions of what their students' needs and how they should teach and deliver information in a

particular cultural context. He highlighted context sensitivity and cross-cultural factors in language teaching, and the need for teaching approaches and content to be evaluated in context, appealing for compromises on both sides, British HE academics and Chinese English teachers.

To summarise, Chinese English pedagogy is characterised by a neglect of teaching register, decontextualised vocabulary teaching, an emphasis on the size of a learner's vocabulary while neglecting the depth, the inadequate teaching of the topic sentence, the emphasis on the frequency of logical connectors in students' essays and the exam marks achieved, as well as the neglect of the semantic functions of logical connectors.

L1 Chinese students are unfamiliar with the academic writing criteria and the requirements of British HE institutes, and they also lack academic writing training in the Chinese English education systems. Chinese English teachers have different perceptions of what they should teach in English classes from their British counterparts. It is therefore necessary to introduce a teaching programme that introduces the notion of discourse, and raises their awareness of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic factors in academic writing, helping them adapt to the English academic culture in a British HE context.

In the next three chapters, I will introduce the three domains that contribute to the construction of global and local discourse coherence, comparing the similarities and differences between English and Chinese, assessing the impact of the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic factors on these three domains. The corresponding analytical tools will also be advanced.

I will start to introduce the concepts of *subject* and *topic* in chapter 3, the semantic value of topic and the contribution of topic development to global discourse coherence. I will then discuss the preferences for the type of topical progression in Chinese, English and EFL/ESL academic writing. The analysis tool of topical development, TSA (topical structure analysis), will be introduced along with its applications in English compositions by L1 and L2 users.

Thereafter, I will move to the local coherence of a discourse at the paragraph level. I will introduce the common structure of text in Chinese and English academic writing, and compare their similarities and differences. Then I will analyse the development of topic sentence within paragraphs, as paragraphs are perceived as a microcosm of the text. The reasons that this study emphasises coherent development

from the topic sentence to its immediate sentence, rather than a whole paragraph are practical. One is that because the development of the topic sentence seems to have attracted more attention in research, the comparability of this study to previously identified resources is at any researcher's disposal. The other reason is due to the fact that the development of the topic sentence has an essential influence on the development of the whole paragraph. The analytical category of inappropriate development of topic sentence established by Reid (1996) will be introduced in this chapter.

Chapter 5 discusses local coherence at the sentential level. I will discuss information conveyance within and beyond sentences in respect of the application of logical connectors. I will then discuss the mis-, over- and underuse of logical connectors in ESL/EFL compositions, in comparison with the use of logical connectors in NES compositions. Analytical tools will also be discussed, along with a qualitative discussion in respect of wrongly used logical connectors by L1 Chinese students.

Chapter 3 The subject and topic in Chinese and English (global coherence)

The concepts of *subject* and *topic* will be introduced in this section, along with the characteristics and features that the Chinese language possesses - such as the phenomenon of null subject in the topic chain - in order to make a comparison with English in corresponding areas. The topic development of a discourse reflects the way in which information of the teaching intervention conducted in this study is to raise L1 Chinese students' on is conveyed, and the cultural influences on the construction of discourse coherence. The first awareness of the construction of discourse coherence and topic development that will meet the expectations of a British HE reader. The analytical tool for assessing topic development will also be taught to students, as well as be applied by me to identify the possible impact of English proficiency on the topic development of a discourse, and the effect of the teaching intervention.

3.1 A dynamic line of subject- and topic-prominent languages

The *topic* is the focus of the sentence semantically and the *subject* is the element that agrees with the verb(s) syntactically. *Topic* is 'what the sentence is about' (Li & Thompson, 1981, p. 15) and must be definite or generic since it is the theme of the discourse (Chafe, 1976), whereas *subject* does not need to be definite (Li & Thompson, 1976, 1981). The examples below taken from Li and Thompson (1976) demonstrate the differences between these two concepts.

This field, the rice is nice.

'This field' is the topic of this sentence, which is a definite 'field' that the interlocutor has in mind.

A piece of pie is on the table.

The subject of this sentence is 'a piece of pie', which is an indefinite noun phrase. The subject can also be definite. If the sentence is altered to 'The piece of pie left on the table is for John', the subject 'the piece of pie' is definite in the interlocutor's mind.

Li and Thompson (1976) categorised languages into four basic parameters, based on the function of the topic and the subject in a language, as shown below (p. 457):

- Languages that are subject-prominent; (SP)
- Languages that are topic-prominent; (TP)
- Languages that are both subject-prominent and topic-prominent;
- Languages that are neither subject-prominent nor topic-prominent.

Typologically, the Chinese language is categorised as topic-prominent whereas the English language is subject-prominent² (Chao, 1968; Li & Thompson, 1976; Shi, 2000). However, Li and Thompson (1976) admitted that there was no clear-cut boundary between categories, as language is a division of science that invariably consists of exceptions to every rule and regulation. Hence, the continuum diagram below might reflect a more realistic view of this dynamic and ever-changing language field.

² Some researchers (e.g., Hyams, 1987a, 1987b, 1989) claims that early age English-speaking children go through a stage of ‘speaking Chinese’, by which she means the stage of English speaking children produce utterances with an absence of subject-verb agreement and the tendency to produce subjectless sentences. These observations resonated with other scholars’ hypothesis that there exists a universal stage in the language developmental process regardless of the typologies of language, that is to say, the topic-comment distinction is a premature stage of the language developmental process in native English speaking children (e.g., Bloom, 1990; Chomsky, 1986; Greenfield & Smith, 1976).

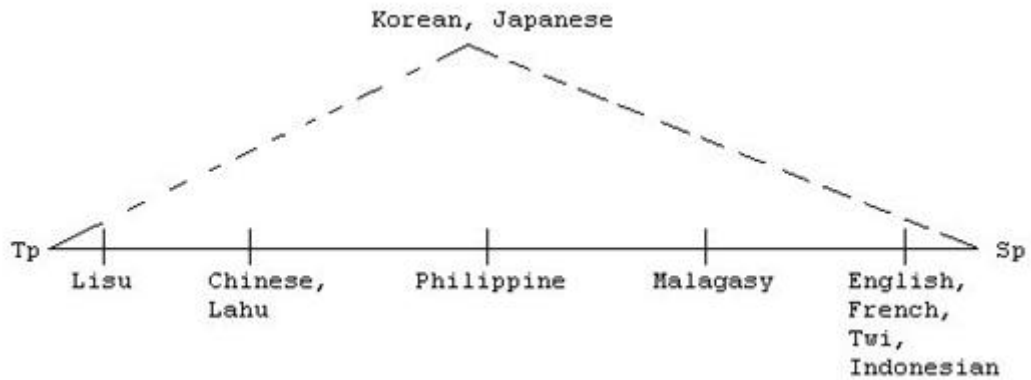


Figure 3 - 1 A dynamic line of subject- and topic-prominent languages; Notes, Tp = Topic-prominent language; Sp = subject-prominent language

Chinese, labelled as a topic-prominent language, also has the same basic grammar SVO (subject + verb + object) as English does. This supports Li and Thompson's (1976) observation that all the languages they have investigated have 'the topic-comment construction, although not all languages have the subject-predicate construction' (p. 459). In the Chinese version of example (1)1, *Anne* is the subject and also topic, *chile* (ate) is the verb, and *yige pingguo* (one apple) is the object of the sentence. Likewise, English, labelled as a subject-prominent language, contains sentences with the topic in the initial position, particularly in spoken discourse. In the example (1.2), 'About the problem we discussed last meeting', 'problem' is the topic and 'we' is the subject of the whole sentence. The following examples are equally acceptable in both English and Chinese.

(1)

1. Anne ate an apple.

Anne chile yige pingguo

Subject verb object

2. Guanyu zhege wenti, women shangge huiyi taolun guole.

About the problem we discussed last meeting.

Topic subject subtopic

3.2 The subject and topic in Chinese

3.2.1 The characteristics of topic in Chinese

Shi (2000) defined *topic* based on its syntactic value and discourse function, in which he highlighted the *definiteness* of topic by pointing out its feature of re-occurrence within an entity (p. 386).

A topic is an unmarked NP³ (or its equivalent) that precedes a clause and is related to a position inside the clause; a topic represents an entity that has been mentioned in the previous discourse and is being discussed again in the current sentence, namely, topic is what the current sentence is set up to add new information to. The clause related to the topic in such a way is the comment.

Li and Thompson (1976) listed seven properties of Chinese topics that they suggested could be used as ‘guidelines for distinguishing the topic from [the] subject’ (p. 466) as a) definite, b) selectional relations, c) verb determines ‘subject’ but not ‘topic’, d) functional role, e) verb-agreement, f) sentence-initial position, and g) grammatical processes. These guidelines are summarised into six properties of a topic as follows; by Tsao (1990) (Shi, 2000, p. 384).

- i. The topic invariably occupies the S-initial position of the first clause in a topic chain.
- ii. The topic can optionally be separated from the rest of the sentence in which it occurs overtly by one of the four particles *a* (*ya*), *ne*, *ma*, and *ba*.
- iii. The topic is always definite.
- iv. The topic is a discourse notion; it may, and often does, extend its semantic domain to more than one clause.
- v. The topic is in control of the pronominalisation or deletion of all the coreferential NPs in a topic chain.

³ Unmarked NP takes five forms in English: singular definite, singular indefinite, plural definite, plural indefinite, and the bare plural. L1 Chinese speakers tend to interpret an unmarked NP as definite.

vi. The topic, except in clauses in which it is also [the] subject, plays no role in such processes as true reflexivisation, Equi-NP deletion, and imperativisation⁴.

The examples below demonstrate the properties, previously mentioned, that a Chinese topic generally has.

(2)

1. Guanyu zhege wenti, women shangge huiyi taolun guole.

About the problem we discussed last meeting.

The topic ‘the problem’ is in the sentence initial position and definite, as example (2.1), which confirms property i and iii listed above. This topic can also be separated with ‘ma’ without changing the sentence semantically nor the information conveyance – satisfying property ii of *topic* listed above, as example (2.2).

2. Guanyu zhege wenti *ma*, women shangge huiyi taolun guole.

About the problem we discussed last meeting.

A (ya), ne, ma and *ba* here are used as the sentence final particles; they do not add or change the meaning of the sentence, only working as interrogative tones. Its English translation does not change.

Semantically, the entity of ‘this problem’ is the object of the verb ‘*taolun*’ (discuss), as shown in example (2.3). There is only one focus of this sentence – this problem. ‘The functional role of the topic as setting the framework within which the prediction holds, precludes the possibility of an indefinite topic’ (Li & Thompson, 1976, p. 464). This satisfies property iv.

3. *About the problem we discussed (it) last meeting.

The example (2.4) below demonstrates the property v of a topic; that is, the presence and absence of the topic controls the coreferential NPs of a topic chain. A topic chain means that in a chain of clauses, all clauses serve the same topic.

4. *Ta xia le juexin, bu gen ta chao, bu gen ta nao, daotou jiu shui, mingtian zhaojiu chulai lache,*

⁴ For the definitions, see Keenan, E. (1976). Towards a universal definition of "subject". In C. Li. (Ed.), *Subject and topic* (pp. 303-333). New York, NY: Academic Press.

He had made up his mind, ~ not with her quarrel, ~ not with her fight, ~ lie down and sleep, tomorrow ~ would go out to pull ~ rickshaw (as he did today),

Property vi of a topic demonstrates the differences of topic and subject as subject play a role of reflexivisation⁵.

To summarise, the nature of topic is that a topic is definite, has the appearance of NP or its equivalent, and is discourse-dependent. It is worth noting that being regarded as a discourse notion, rather than merely as semantic and syntactic notions, the topic is affixed with the great responsibility of conveying information throughout the whole discourse, and making a contribution to the construction of coherence. Li and Thompson (1976) suggested that topic ‘can be understood best in terms of the discourse and extra-sentential considerations’ (p. 466). Consequently, the development of the topics within a discourse can be used to evaluate the consistency of the discourse. An inherently coherent discourse contains appropriate topical development from discourse topic to the sub-topics of paragraph and then to sentence topics. Mis-developed topics may indicate an improper understanding of the main topic, or divergence from the main and/or sub-topics while processing the writing. From this dimension, the development of the topic can be employed as an analytical unit for the study of discourse coherence.

3.2.2 Chinese as a pragmatic word order language

Chinese is also characterised as a *pragmatic word order* language in comparison to English which is a *grammatical word order* language (Bardovi-Harlig, 1990). The Chinese language is notable in that even when arguments are missed out of sentences, it is still acceptable if given an appropriate discourse context. Pragmatic, explicit and implicit meanings embedded in discourses are the essential factors that facilitate the understanding of a discourse; grammar and word order only provides limited information in Chinese. This can be illustrated by example (3) below, taken from Shi’s study in 1989 (p. 240):

(3)

a. *Lisa maile yizhigou, zongshi luanjiao.*

Lisa bought a dog, (and it) always barks for no reason.

⁵ See footnote 3.

b. Lisa shadiao Zhangsan, taozoule.

Lisa killed Zhangsan (and) fled.

c. Lisa maile yizhi gou, taozoule.

Lisa bought a dog, (and it) fled.

Lisa bought a dog, (and) fled.

In examples *a* and *b*, the deletion of subjects (*it* and *she*) in the second clause cannot cause any ambiguity based on its semantic/pragmatic context, as human beings do not bark in example *a* and the corpse of *Zhangsan* in example *b* does not flee. Logically readers will, without a moment's hesitation, understand it is a 'dog' barking and 'Lisa' who fled. However, in example *c*, due to the reduction of the subject, readers may feel it to be ambiguous, as both Lisa and the dog were able to flee. In this case, Chinese readers will naturally seek further information from the proceeding and preceding clauses or sentences, in an attempt to clarify any possible misunderstanding of this topic chain.

The topics in example (3) are also subjects in each sentence. The absence of subject is against the strict subject-verb agreement in English, so the literal translation of these Chinese sentences will be regarded as being ungrammatical.

3.2.3 Null subject in a Chinese topic chain

A topic chain refers to a cohort of sentences or clauses sharing the same topic where the subjects can drop out from the second sentence but are still identifiable with a prompt from the discourse or context (Huang, 1984, 1989). The topic chain is evidently a type of language construction that demonstrates the importance of pragmatism in Chinese. Hawkins (2001) was in agreement with Tsao's (1979) conclusion that the existence of a topic chain may be the cause of null subject in Chinese, as Chinese always applies 'the highlighting or foregrounding of a particular constituent which is already known from the discourse or context of the utterance, and then use the rest of the sentence to say something about it' (pp. 210-211), in accordance with observations made by other scholars (e.g., Chao, 1968; Shi, 1989). In the following topic chain, topics are italicised in both English and Chinese versions, with the symbol ~ placed where the subject would be.

(4)

Ta xia le juexin, bu gen ta chao, bu gen ta nao, daotou jiu shui, mingtian zhaojiu chulai lache, ta aizenyang zenyang! Yi jin wenmen, Huniu zai waijianwuli zuo zhe ne, kan le ta yiyang, lian chen de yao di xia shulai.

He had made up his mind, ~ not with her quarrel, ~ not with her fight, ~ lie down and sleep, tomorrow ~ would go out to pull ~ rickshaw (as he did today), she could do what she liked! As soon as ~ enter door, Huniu was sitting in the outer room, ~ glanced him, ~ face so deep in storm it seemed as if torrents would pour out of in that instant.

(Adopted from Li, 2004, p. 33)

The above examples demonstrate that a full comprehension of Chinese relies on pragmatism even though no subjects exist at the sentential and discourse levels, if an appropriate discourse is established. W. D. Li (2004, 2005) even claimed that the topic can be absent from an initial sentence clause without damaging the comprehensibility of the sentence. He supported his assertion with a significant number of examples from a famous and influential Chinese novel *Luotuo Xiangzhi* (Rickshaw), and disproved the conventional perception that subject is only dropped from the second and following sentences.

3.2.4 Non-subject produced by NES children and NNES learners

Interestingly, null-subject or subject-drop can also be observed in utterances of ‘early child’ (around 2 years old) English, and bears comparison to the null-subject feature of the Chinese language. For instance,

Play bed.

[I play in the bed.]

Writing book.

[Daddy is writing a book.]

(Bloom, 1990, p. 491)

Bloom (1990) re-analysed the data collected in Brown’s (1973) study, which contain the utterances of three children between one and three years of age, and unveiled the tendency to subject-drop in longer sentences by early age NES children. Bloom (1990) argued for the existence of a learning dynamic process, from the end of topic-comment to the other end of subject-predictive. She attributed this process to the immaturity of children’s cognitive ability. Children at that age may not be capable of handling the information load, because handling information demands effort, a

possession of knowledge, and a maturation of perception and cognitive competence. This is supported by Hornby, Hass and Feldman (1970) in their study of NES children at the ages of 5 to 7 years. They also noticed the progression of their use of language from being subjectless to being grammatically correct, and they regarded this as a manifestation of syntactical development along with child maturity.

Although the features of subjectless utterances occurs in both English and Chinese children, null subject is more acceptable in spoken form or oral utterances of English. It occurs in certain situations; for instance, both interlocutors know the subjects involved in the interlocution, or immediate information is provided. Conversational skills and strategies such as body language, code-exchange are generally engaged to facilitate understanding. For example,

Wait!

Look out!

In the majority of cases, the strict subject-verb contract in English prohibits the occurrence of null subject such as the finite clause. For instance, **ate an apple*. Not only is this discourse regarded as grammatically defective, it also constructs incomplete information that leaves readers to ponder who ate the apple.

The subjectless discourse produced by early age NES children is attributed to the incomplete development of their cognitive ability, while the absence of subject in English discourses produced by ESL Chinese speakers could be analysed in a variety of ways. L1 transfer, cultural influences, and English proficiency could all be taken into consideration. Xiao (2002) conducted an 8-month longitudinal study regarding the ESL syntactical development of three Chinese children (6-7 years old) who had just settled in the USA. She observed the existence of null subject in their oral discourses at the initial stage, and then an increase of correct subject-verb agreement in these children's output, but little reduction of topic-comment Chinese features, by the end of her 8-month observation. She regarded this as an intermit stage of the development process and anticipated viewing an increase of target language-like products accompanied by a reduction of home-language-like products at their next developmental stage. The omission of the subject in ESL/EFL academic writing does not only occur in students with a lower English proficiency, it can also be frequently identified in the essays of postgraduate students majoring in English (Fu, Yu & Liu, 2013).

3.2.5 Reader's expectations

Due to this characteristic of Chinese as a pragmatically-dependent language, i.e., the meaning is embedded in the context, Chinese writing is perceived as reader-responsible whereas English is writer-responsible (Hinds, 1987). In Chinese, it is the readers' responsibility to establish inter- and intra-networks of information in order to comprehend a discourse. Writers generally provide hints and implicit information that readers can link. A direct explanation of a concept or a subject would be regarded as demonstrating a low level of writing skills, with redundancy and in some circumstances, unnecessary details (Hinds, 1987; Hinkel, 1994).

L1 writers and L1 readers generally share the same cultural and rhetorical values; L2 writers, if writing for L1 readers, need to be aware of the different cultural and language backgrounds between themselves and the readers. English writers normally signal certain types of landmarks in discourses in order to direct readers, such as the construction of topic sentences and application of cohesive devices. For example, the establishment of a topic sentence will help readers anticipate and facilitate their understanding of the content of the corresponding paragraph. The use of logical connectors will signal and prepare readers for a change of topic or direction. When Chinese students produce academic essays in British universities, a good understanding of the target readers' expectations would help L1 Chinese students to construct coherent texts as both readers and writers are involved in determining discourse coherence.

The potential readers of L1 Chinese students' academic writing are British HE - lecturers, tutors and academic staff, who are perceived as highly-knowledgeable readers with relevant knowledge background, based on McNamara, Kintsch, Songer and Kintsch's (1996) categorisation. McNamara et al.'s (1996) categorised readers in general as being either with high-knowledge or low-knowledge. High knowledge readers are those possessing the relevant knowledge to decipher written products in their relevant fields, whereas low knowledge readers are regarded as lacking one or all types of knowledge that they need to profoundly comprehend a text. McNamara et al. (1996) pointed out that knowledge-equipped readers can benefit from low coherent discourse and comprehend more than those with insufficient knowledge can, by accelerating an 'active processing', thus an inconsistent article may make more sense to readers capable of adding and remedying the gaps between the information. This conclusion was supported by McNamara's study in 2001. Nevertheless, it does

not mean that the academic readers in British universities are highly equipped with all types of knowledge regarding international students' cultural and rhetorical style backgrounds, or have the capability of handling all types of incoherent discourse.

Hinds (1987) suggested that Chinese writers should learn writing skills as English writers do, and predicted that when L1 Chinese speakers try to write in English and/or when English readers try to understand their compositions, the differences of cultures and readers' expectations, and a lack of relevant corresponding training for Chinese students would lead to difficulties. This prediction still seems relevant today.

In summary, the Chinese language consists of the notion of subject and topic. Topic is normally placed at the initial position in sentences and is context-dependent. It can be omitted in a topic chain as Chinese is pragmatically dependent; readers are able to make sense of a discourse without the presence of the topic, provided that the discourse is logically organised. There is no strict subject-verb agreement in Chinese. It is also reader responsible; it is a readers' responsibility to understand writers' meaning embedded in their written products. In comparison, English is a type of writer-responsible language; it is a writer's duty to deliver clear and readable information to readers, which require them to be aware during the process of writing, of their readers' expectations.

In the next section, the notion of *subject* and *topic* in English will be introduced, along with their positioning in sentences. The types of topic development in a discourse will be discussed, and their contributions to discourse coherence. Topical Structure Analysis (TSA), which was developed by Lautamatti (1987) will be introduced, and its application to the analysis of topical progression and its contribution to discourse coherence in a variety of languages will be discussed; particularly, the comparison between the topic development in the English compositions produced by NES users and L1 Chinese speakers.

It is necessary that L1 Chinese speakers become aware of the contribution that topic development makes to discourse coherence, in both of these languages, so that they can have the choice of adapting in order to satisfy their potential readers' expectations in the British HE institutes. By analysing possible differences in topic development between the texts produced by L1 Chinese students with English proficiencies, or the essays produced by the same learners before and after the teaching intervention, I may be able to identify how learners' English proficiency

impacts on their discourse coherence in terms of topic development, and whether explicit teaching could help Chinese learners produce academic essays coherently within the British HE context.

3.3 The subject and the topic in English

English is a subject-prominent language and it follows a strict subject-verb contract to fulfil the demands of grammatical correctness. To clarify the differences between the topic and subject of a sentence, three concepts; initial sentence element (ISE), topical subject and mood subject, were introduced by Lautamatti (1987). ISE refers to ‘the initially placed discourse material in sentences, whatever its form or type’ (p. 91), which is related to the physical position of an element rather than its linguistic conceptualisation. For example, ‘Finally, we have arrived.’ Here *finally* is located at the initial position of this utterance. It is an ISE. Topical subject is ‘a mood subject relating to the discourse topic’ (p. 89) and the mood subject is the element ‘in the position of [the] subject’. For example, ‘Anne ate an apple’. *Anne* is the topical subject as it is both the grammatical subject and the topic of this sentence. ‘*It* is said that Anne ate the last apple’. Here *it* is the mood subject and the grammatical subject of this sentence.

Mood subject, which was termed by Schneider and Connor (1990) as a ‘non-topical subject’, referring to the element that is in the position of subject but is NOT the topic of the sentence semantically. Dummy subject, such as the existential ‘there’, anticipatory pronoun ‘it’ and cleft sentence is a non-topical subject (Schneider & Connor, 1990). The obligatory subject-verb agreement requires the employment of expletive pronouns *it* and *there* in English; they are not of referential importance but to assist the accomplishment of the integrity of the syntax of the sentence. The real topics in these sentences are generally pushed into later positions, leading to a disassociation between subject and topic (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Svartvik, 1985). For example, these three sentences share the same topic *Anne*, their subjects however are varied, *there*, *it* and *it* respectively.

(5)

a) *There* is evidence to show that Anne ate the last apple.

b) *It* is said that Anne ate the last apple.

c) *It is Anne who ate the last apple.*

These three types of elements share a relationship in four modes (adopted from Lautamatti, 1987, p. 97),

- i. ISE = topical subject = mood subject
- ii. ISE = topical subject \neq mood subject
- iii. ISE \neq topical subject = mood subject
- iv. ISE \neq topical subject \neq mood subject

Some examples will be analysed below to demonstrate the four types of relationship between these three concepts.

(6)

The first mode a)

1. Anne ate an apple.

Anne is physically positioned in the initial part of the sentence; thus it is an ISE. *Anne* is both the subject and the topic of this sentence. Grammatically, *Anne* agrees with the past tense of *eat* in order to fulfil the subject-verb contract. Semantically, *Anne* is the thematic focus and the topic of this affirmative sentence. *Anne* in this sentence represents ISE, topical subject and grammatical subject.

The second mode b)

2. About this problem, we discussed last meeting.

About this problem is in the initial position of the sentence (ISE) and the topic of this sentence, but the subject of this sentence is *we*.

The third mode c)

3. *There* is evidence to show that Anne ate the last apple.

There is in the initial position of the sentence (ISE) and the mood subject of this sentence. Here both the evidence and *Anne* can be regarded as a candidate for the topic of this sentence. It depends on the context this sentence is embedded in, and what the discourse and / or the micro-discourse is talking about.

The fourth mode d)

Finally, there is evidence to show that Anne ate the last apple.

In this sentence, *finally* is the ISE, located at the initial position of the sentence. *There* is the mood subject. Again, either evidence or *Anne* is the topic of this sentence, depending on the topic of the discourse and/or the micro-discourse in which it is embedded.

When the topic serves as the subject of a sentence, it complies with the strict subject-verb agreement. Nouns, noun phrases or the relative clauses that representing noun phrases are regarded as the best candidates, when identifying the topic of a sentence in English (Schneider & Connor, 1990). Witte (1983a) recommended a procedure for identifying topics, starting from the grammatical subject of the main clause, and then to the diagnoses of a noun phrase, agreed by Lautamatti (1987).

3.3.1 The types of topical progression categorised by Daneš (1974)

The term *topic-comment* is not new to Western rhetoricians. Aristotle names it *topoi* (topic sentence); Vilem Mathesius from the group of Prague School linguists terms it *theme-enunciation*, referring to ‘what the sentence is about’ and ‘what is said about [it]’; Jan Firbas (1964, 1971) labels it *theme-rheme*, representing old and new information or a given-new contract (Weissberg, 1984; see also Witte, 1983a). The sentence of *we will learn academic writing* will be used as an example to demonstrate these relationships.

<i>We</i>	<i>will learn academic writing</i>
topic	comment
theme	rheme
given information	new information

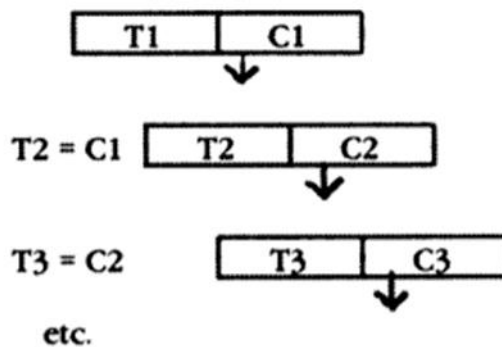
Here *we* is the *topic*, *theme* and *given information* while *academic writing* is the *comment*, *rheme*, and *new information*. New information is placed at the end of the sentence where the focus of NES readers and listeners generally lies. ‘Theme and rheme help writers organise clauses into information units that push the communication forward through a text and make it easy for readers to follow’ (Hyland, 2015, p. 12). Rheme normally takes responsibility for the progress of the

discourse argument, when it becomes to the ‘old’ information of the proceeding sentences from the ‘new’ information of the previous sentence.

The concept of theme-rheme is not equal to that of subject-predication. Identifying the theme and the rheme of a sentence is a complex process as it involves writers; readers need to understand what a writer intends to express and what information can be treated as given information (theme) and what are newly introduced (rheme).

This theme-rheme, or given-new information relationship is not restricted within the levels of clause or sentence (Halliday, 1967), but extends to paragraphs (Weissberg, 1984), and then to whole texts (Daneš, 1974), to convey a dynamic information flow which consequently constructs a coherent piece of work. Daneš (1974) categorised three types of topical progression, *linear*, *constant* and *hypertheme* under the assumption that thematic progression represents text coherence to a great extent. They are recommended by Weissberg (1984) as effective tools for teaching text coherence to college students. These relationships are symbolised in the following diagrams.

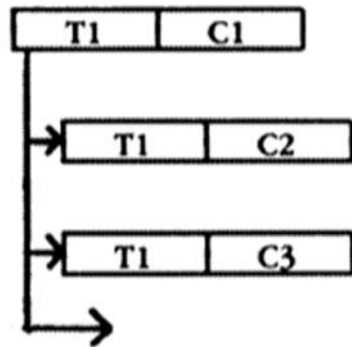
Linear Topical Progression (Weissberg, 1984, p. 489).



Note: T: topic; C: Comment (same hereafter)

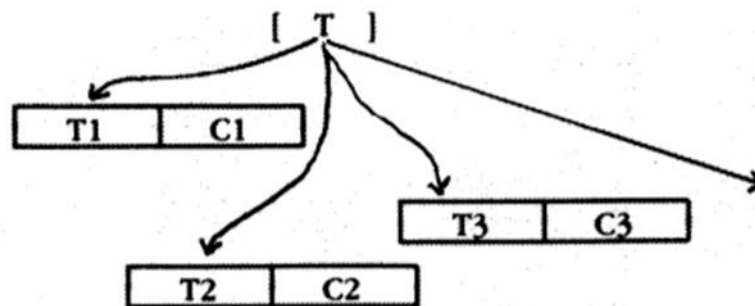
Linear topic, as its literal meaning suggests, requires a piece of new information to develop into given information in the immediately sequential sentence, and so forth. For example, ‘Hydrology is based on the water cycle, more commonly called the hydrologic cycle. This *cycle* can be visualised as ...’ (Weissberg, 1984, p. 489). The rheme of the first sentence - *cycle* - comes to be the theme of the second sentence. The new information embedded in the first sentence turns to be given information thereafter.

Constant Topic Progression (Weissberg, 1984, p. 489).



Constant topic progression represents a pattern of developing the same topic in adjacent sentences, that is to say, the topic of the first one is also that of the second one. For example, ‘Herbage of crested wheatgrass was harvested from 10 unfertilised permanent plots and 10 permanent plots annually fertilised with 8 pounds of nitrogen per acre. *Herbage* from 48 square feet, ...’. (Weissberg, 1984, p. 489). The theme *herbage* was repeated between the adjacent sentences. This repetition does not need to be lexically identical; synonyms and semantical repetition also serve the same function at the semantic domain of information conveyance.

Hypertheme Topical Progression (Weissberg, 1984, p. 490).



Hypertheme topical progress means the given information will be divided into several sub-themes, and then developed in several different directions but under the original hypertheme. ‘The reflector was protected from the weather by an outer window of 0.10mm tedlar. *The focal length of the reflector* was *The back of the reflector* was ... *The reflector rack* was ...’ (Weissberg, 1984, p. 490). The theme *reflector* of the initial sentence was divided into several sub-categories consisting of

the length, the back and the rack of the reflector. Each of them serves as a theme in the sequential sentences, introducing one particular aspect of the hypertheme *reflector*.

Although Daneš (1974) and Weissberg (1984) investigated the positive interrelationship between topic development and text coherence, and the intimate relationship between the topic development of a discourse and the construction of discourse coherence, they did not define themes in a clear schema, nor develop practical procedure that L2 teachers and ESL/EFL learners could rely on. Topical structure analysis (TSA) that was developed by Lautamatti (1987) came into use in the light of these practicability issues.

3.3.2 The types of topical progression categorised by Lautamatti and Simpson

Topical structure analysis (TSA) was introduced by Lautamatti (1978, 1987) as a measurement of textual coherence through the topical development of a discourse (Connor & Farmer, 1990; Schneider & Connor, 1990). It has since then been perceived as ‘a most suitable method for analysing coherence as it considers both global coherence (the meaning of the essay) and local coherence (how sentences build meaning in relation to each other and the overall thesis)’ of the discourse (Burneikaite & Zabaliūtė, 2003, p. 69). Discourse topic is ‘the main idea discussed’ in a discourse; subtopics are a succession of ‘subordinate ideas’ in hierarchical order that are either directly or indirectly related to the discourse topic (Lautamatti, 1987, p. 71). Topical development of discourse is described as ‘the way the written sentences in discourse relate to the discourse topic and its subtopics’ (Lautamatti, 1987, p. 72).

Three types of topical progression, as exemplified below, were identified by Lautamatti (1978) as, ‘parallel progression (the topics are semantically co-referential) [PP]; sequential progression (the topics are always different and come out of the comments of the previous sentence) [SP]; extended parallel progression (a parallel progression temporarily interrupted by a sequential progression) [EPP]’ (Burneikaite & Zabaliūtė, 2003, p. 69; Chiu, 2004, p. 156). In 2000, Simpson added ‘extended sequential progression (ESP)’ as the fourth type of topical progression. Hoenisch (2009) categorised these four types of topic development as:

1. parallel progression (PP), in which topics of successive sentences are the same, producing a repetition of topic that reinforces the idea for the reader (<a, b>, <a, c>, <a, d>);

2. sequential progression (SP), in which [the] topics of successive sentences are always different, as the comment of one sentence becomes, or is used to derive, the topic of the next (<a, b>, <b, c>, <c, d>);
3. extended parallel progression (EPP), in which the first and the last topics of a piece of text are the same but are interrupted with some sequential progression (<a, b>, <b, c>, <a, d>).
4. extended sequential progression (ESP), in which the comment of one clause becomes the topic of a non-consecutive clause; hence, <a, b>, <a, c>, <c, d>, <b, e>.

The following examples demonstrate the four types of topical progression in a discourse:

(7)

Sentences with the topical development in PP (parallel progression) <a, b> <a, c>

i. *I have a dog. I walk my dog every day.*

Sentences with the topical development in SP (sequential progression) <a, b> <b, c>

ii. *I have a dog. Its name is Brucy.*

Sentences with the topical development in EPP (extended parallel progression)

<a, b> <b, c> <a, d>

iii. *I have a dog. Its name is Brucy. I walk him every day.*

Sentences with the topical development in ESP (extended sequential progression)

<a, b> <b, c> <a, d> <b, e>

iv. *I have a dog. Its name is Brucy. I also have a cat called Timmy. They always play together.*

The initial sentence is *I have a dog*. *I* is the topic and theme while *dog* is the comment and rheme. In example *a*), *I* re-occurs as the topic of the immediate sequential sentence, displaying a parallel progression of topical development between these two adjacent sentences. Readers receive extra information about the same topic *I*. In example *b*), the rheme *dog* of the first sentence has been developed as the theme of the immediate sequential sentence *b*). Readers consequently are provided more information about *the dog*. During this information conveyance, the focus shifts from

I to the dog. In example *c*), the theme *I* of the initial sentence has been resumed in a distant sentence. This is called an extended parallel progression in the topical development. The focus of this micro discourse shifts from *I to the dog* and then back to *I*. This recursive development constructs a coherent discourse that reminds readers that the topic of this discourse is *I* rather than *the dog*, to avoid the digression from the topic. The last example *d*) reveals a phenomenon that the rheme *dog* in the first sentence comes to be a theme of a distant sentence *they (the cat and the dog)*, which is termed as an extended sequential progression of topical development. In this situation, readers gain extra information regarding the rheme of the initial sentence. If effective, this information should provide them with sufficient, but not digressed information that improves their comprehension of the discourse topic.

In general, of all four types of topical development, the topic development in PP contributes least to the diversity of text organisation. Writers introduce a topic from different angles but without further development. For example, the topic *I* of example (7a) is repeated as the topic of its successive sentence. They provide readers with limited subtopics of a discourse topic. The overuse or inappropriate engagement of this type of identical sentence structures may indicate a lack of diversity and grammatical adequacy of the writer. Nonetheless, in some circumstances, it is necessary to employ parallel progression structures; for example, when making a definition, a description from various aspects will provide readers with a sound introduction and help them reach a greater comprehension regarding the things / events being defined. Furthermore, sentences with parallel topical progression (PP) may also reinforce readers' impression of a particular topic as they encounter the same topic repeatedly in the immediate sentences, and of a short duration and distance.

Sentences with topical development in SP generally demonstrate that the writers intend to introduce or discuss a topic by adding external information to the original theme and offer readers further information with respect to the rheme, such as the rheme *dog* in example (7b) becomes the topic of the successive sentence 'its name is Brucy'. This extra information allows readers to establish in-depth information by following the vertical development of the topic. If at all related, it could establish a more intricate and sound information network for readers to understand the original topic. However, if unrelated or not closely relevant, it could divert the readers from the main topic to peripheral information, which could damage

the global coherence of the text. The stretching out of information concerning the rheme may lead readers in unintended directions, meanwhile reducing the attention paid to the desired focus and the theme.

The third type (EPP) is the recursion of the topic from a distanced sentence, such as the topic *I* in example (7c) recurred as the topic of a distanced sentence ‘I walk him every day’. An information chain will be constructed during the resumption of the topic, establishing an invisible memory line that contributes to the construction of discourse coherence in the reader’s mind. Here it is mainly located in the reader’s working memory (short-term memory). The consistent return to the primary topic(s), also demonstrates a writer’s maturity in the control of discourse development and their writing skills. The resumption of the same topic illustrates a clear stream from the discourse topic(s) and provides readers with information from both horizontal and vertical perspectives. It also demonstrates a writer’s mature ability to manipulate the conveyance of information, by invoking readers’ attention to the central topic after temporarily leaving the mainstream.

The last type, topical development in ESP, is similar to the third type EPP in that one element reoccurs at a distance. The difference is that, in EPP, the topic of the initial sentence reoccurs, but in ESP, the rheme of the initial sentence becomes the topic in a distanced sentence. For instance, the rheme *dog* in example (7d) recurred as the topic of a distanced sentence ‘they always play together’. This reoccurrence of the rheme as a theme in a distanced sentence establishes an extended sequential progression (ESP) in the development of the topic. If effective, the topic development of ESP supplies readers with diverse information that facilitates their understanding of a broader scenario; but if not, it may cause confusion as readers become overwhelmed by ill-organised information.

However, the choice regarding which type of topical progression relies on the writer’s judgement, the purpose of delivering the information, and the target readers’ expectations. There is no specific ‘privileged’ type which is ‘better’ than another, or which type can convey information ‘better’ than the others.

Comparing the categories of topic development defined by Weissberg (1984) and Lautamatti (1987), it is obvious that the fundamental concept is the same; they both relate the development of the topic of a discourse to the construction of discourse coherence. However, there exists an inconsistency in their criteria. Taking a

piece of written discourse from Witte (1983b) as an example, adopted from Witte (1983b, pp. 183-184). Topics are italicised.

There are *critics*, however, who see these courses as a waste of time and effort. *Some* criticize the standards and grading procedures used by composition teachers. *Others* contend that these courses are not related to anything outside the classroom.

The topic development of *critics* – *some (critics)* – *others (other critics)* has been identified as parallel progression (PP) by Witte (1983a); it was classified as hypertheme topical progression by Weissberg (1984), and sequential progression (SP) by Schneider and Connor (1990), due to its part-whole relationship (see the Appendix II).

This inconsistency in the categorisation reflects the complexity and subjectivity in the field of language study; it also raises challenges for NNES learners trying to identify the different types of topical progression. This study employed Schneider and Connor's (1990) coding guideline (see Appendix II). All participants were taught to use this coding guideline when identifying the types of topical progression. Hence the example above would be regarded as sequential progression in this study.

3.4 The topical development and Topical Structure Analysis (TSA)

The development of topic in a discourse has been intimately related to text coherence and the quality of writing (e.g., Almaden, 2006; Chiu, 2004; Connor, 1996; Connor & Farmer, 1990; Flores & Yin, 2015; Lautamatti, 1982; Witte, 1983a). Topical progression has been perceived as one of the best indicators of text coherence at the global and local level of a discourse (Lautamatti, 1987; Witte, 1983a). Connor and Farmer (1990) pointed out that 'topic structure analysis considers both the global and local coherence of texts', focusing 'on the semantic relationships that exist between sentence topics and the discourse topic. Through topical structure analysis, these relationships can be studied by looking at sequences of sentences and examining how the topic[s] in the sentence work through the text to progressively build meaning' (p. 127). They suggested that the analysis of topical progression in a discourse could 'help students to consider the discourse level in conjunction with the surface level of their writing' (p. 126), because inexperienced writers generally focus

on linguistic factors while processing and revising writing, and lack an awareness of the text as an organic and coherent whole.

Some researchers have equipped students with TSA as a tool for self-revision to improve textual coherence (Connor, 1996; Connor & Farmer, 1990; Witte, 1983a), or a tool to raise students' awareness of the importance of coherence at the discourse level (Chiu, 2004; Connor, 1990). Other researchers maintain that it is more suitable for teachers and/or researchers to apply as a criterion for measuring coherence rather than to be taught to ESL learners due to its complexity and sensitivity of nature (Todd, 1998; Todd, Thienpermpool, & Keyuravong, 2004). Some regard TSA as a method for teachers to diagnose and examine students' topical progression in the process of writing, and to locate problems and predict possible errors (Almaden, 2006; Connor, 1990), or as a means of judging writing quality and identifying the development of the topic within a variety of writing rhetoric (Lautamatti, 1982), or a strategy of assessment on processing coherence (Flores & Yin, 2015).

Empirical studies suggest that the explicit teaching of TSA to students is feasible. Connor and Farmer (1990) argued that students would benefit more if they were taught to use the TSA approach as a revision tool to improve textual coherence, 'specifically in regard to clearer focus ... and better development of subtopics' (p. 134). Fan and Hsu (2008) suggested the teaching of TSA to students as 'an alternative learning strategy for coherent writing' (p. 115). They found from their students' feedback that the engagement of students in the process of revision promoted learners to become responsible writers, particularly in the consideration of the coherent relation between the sentence topic and the discourse topic. Liu (2009) in her doctoral study conducted a teaching intervention on second-year English major students, by teaching TSA to learners as a revision tool to improve their discourse coherence. She also detected an improvement in their construction of discourse coherence, with the raised awareness of discourse as an organic piece rather than a combination of sentences, in the domain of topic development. She detected the effect of the teaching intervention even after a three-week interval on her participants' academic written products.

In the teaching intervention of this study I will teach the participants the positive correlation between the topic development of a discourse and discourse coherence, and I will also teach them to apply TSA in their writing and revision process, aiming to promote them as independent learners using TSA as a tool to

construct discourse coherence. In the data analysis procedure of my study, I will apply TSA as an analytical tool to examine the development of topics in the participants' academic essays. By comparing the essays produced before the teaching intervention by the Chinese students with different English proficiencies, I can investigate the possible influence of ESL/EFL learners' English levels to their topical development of a discourse. By comparing the essays composed before and after the teaching intervention, I may be able to identify the effect of the explicit teaching of TSA to their construction of discourse coherence, and investigate whether this teaching is capable of raising awareness of the impact of cross-linguistic and cross-cultural issues on ESL/EFL academic writing.

Before engaging in further discussion, the analytical unit used must be considered when applying TSA can be identified. This is of fundamental importance as it determines the number of subtopics in a discourse and the way in which the subtopic develops.

3.4.1 The analytical units of Topical Structure Analysis (TSA)

The analytical unit of topic development in a discourse has been considered as both an independent and dependent clause (Dita, 2009), an independent clause (e.g., Lautamatti, 1987; Simpson, 2000) and a T-unit (Dumanig, Esteban, Lee, & Gan, 2009; Witte, 1983a, 1983b). The definitions of sentence and clause applied in this study are adopted from Flores and Yin's (2015) study of Filipino speakers of English (p. 107).

A sentence is regarded as a group of words ending with either a full stop or question mark even if it is structurally ungrammatical; a clause is taken as a group of words that include both a subject and a verb, including independent and dependent clauses.

Dita (2009) was in favour of counting the topics in both independent and dependent clauses. She observed that the rheme of the dependent clause could be utilised as the theme of the independent clause. For example, '*The moment they are not protected by the US-supplied security forces, those officials will be hunted to death by the insurgents*' (p. 103). She pointed out that the topic of the independent clause - officials - was not the topic of the dependent clause, which was 'US-supplied security forces'. In this case, the number of topics counted in Dita's (2009) study will therefore be higher than Lautamatti's (1987). However, overly segmented analytical

units counted in Dita's (2009) study, may increase the risk of shifting the semantic analysis into linguistics and functional analysis, which would not reflect the true nature of discourse coherence. It is probably because of this concern that Dita's (2009) analytical unit has not been utilised by many researchers.

Both Lautamatti (1987) and Simpson (2000) regarded the conventional sentence as the analytical unit. The conventional concept of sentence includes simple sentences, matrix sentences and coordinate sentences. In their studies, simple sentences were analysed as being individual units; only the topic of independent clauses in matrix sentences were analysed; and coordinated sentences were treated as two analytical units. Although they did not explain the reasons behind this, it can be supposed that they regarded discourse as a semantically organic entity which conveys information from one sentence to another.

A T-unit has been identified by Hunt (1965) as a linguistic unit that contains a dominant clause and its dependent clauses in the study of NES students' compositions. The T-unit was originally called a 'minimal terminable unit' in order to identify the syntactic maturity of NES pupils' writing ability. It is defined as 'one main clause plus whatever subordinate clauses happen to be attached to or embedded with it' (Hunt, 1965, p. 305) and it is 'an intermediary structure between the clause and the sentence (Hunt, 1970, p. 5). The example below was adopted from Hunt's (1965) study (p. 305). This was written by an NES fourth-grade pupil without any punctuation apart from the full stop at the end of the paragraph. The number of T-units was calculated only after appropriate punctuation had been applied by Hunt (1965) to ease readability. A total of six T-units were identified in the following excerpt.

1. I like the movie we saw about Moby Dick, the white whale.
2. The captain said if you can kill the white whale, Moby Dick, I will give this gold to the one that can do it.
3. And it is worth sixteen dollars.
4. They tried and tried.
5. But while they were trying they killed a whale and used the oil for the lamps.
6. They almost caught the white whale.

The nature of the T-unit evidently presents one of the prominent benefits of employing it as a unit of discourse analysis, which is that its tolerance for the existence of ungrammatical or improperly punctuated discourse, has proven

convenient for researchers in the study of L2 users' discourse in terms of topical development.

T-units in ESL studies have been defined by Schneider and Connor (1990) as any independent clause and all of its required modifiers, or any non-independent clauses punctuated as a sentence (as indicated by the end punctuation mark such as a full stop or a question mark), or any imperative. A grammatical matrix plus a subordinate clause was counted as being one T-unit while coordinate clauses were counted as two T-units. Schneider and Connor (1990) proposed that there were two advantages of applying T-units to the field of ESL/EFL analysis. One is related to the characteristics of inexperienced ESL/EFL writings, where ungrammatical sentences, incomplete sentences, mis-punctuations, the misuse of vocabulary, etc. is common. The other benefit is its convenience for researchers carrying out comparative studies based on the same analytical variables. Hence, this study also applied T-units as the analytical unit.

A prudent modification to this model may be to employ *error-free* T-units rather than all T-units as analytical tools, as some researchers suggested this might be a more accurate index of ESL writing maturity (Gaies, 1980; Larsen-Freeman & Strom, 1977; Wolfe-Quintero, Inagaki, & Kim, 1998). However, the definition of *error* seems to depend on the specific researcher or on the particular research conducted, and in the divergent aspects of linguistics (Larsen-Freeman & Strom, 1977; Robb, Ross, & Shortreed, 1986), or from only morphological and syntactic dimensions (Scott & Tucker, 1974). For example, Lennon (1991) defined *error* as 'a linguistic form or combination of forms which, in the same context and under similar conditions of production, would, in all likelihood, not be produced by the speakers' native speaker counterpart' (p. 182). In addition to the challenge of the divergent definitions of 'error-free', the analysis of only 'correct' sentences actually neglects the prominent benefit of using T-unit as an analytical unit, which is the tolerance of ungrammatical products of NNES users.

In another study, Schneider and Connor (1990) sidestepped this problem in their study by abandoning the essays marked with the lowest scores, assessing them as being inadequately developed for a meaningful analysis of topical progression. However, the omission from the analytical process of T-units that contain errors runs counter to the aim of this enquiry. It is also unrealistic for this study as errors are almost inevitable in the written discourses produced by these EFL Chinese learners at

the intermediate or the beginning of advanced level. Therefore, T-units both with and without errors will be utilised when applying TSA in this study.

3.4.2 The impact of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic factors on the development of the topic of a discourse

In English, indicators of quality writing are linked to a high proportion of topics (Dita, 2009; Witte, 1983a, 1983b), or a high proportion of PP and EPP (Dita, 2009; Witte, 1983a, 1983b), or PP and SP (Simpson, 2000), or SP (Fries, 1983; Rutherford, 1983), or SP and EPP (e.g., Schneider & Connor, 1990). These controversial, if not completely contrary conclusions, can be attributed to differences in interpreting the types of topical progression, the choice of analytical unit, and the divergence between the genres of texts that they assessed. For instance, Witte (1983a) analysed a passage in an expository prose produced by 80 NES college students, and another 180 NES university essays in an argumentative prose in his later study (1983b), and concluded that the topic development of PP and EPP were the best indicators of quality writing in NES compositions. Simpson (2000) however identified a positive correlation between the SP in topic development and discourse coherence.

Although it is arguable, it seems that the collective line is that a prevalent percentage of SP combined with a balanced application of all the four types may best represent a sound coherence model constructed for English academic writing (Burneikaite & Zabaliúte, 2003; Rutherford, 1983; Schneider & Connor, 1990; Simpson, 2000).

Likewise, the impact on the topical progression of ESL/EFL discourse from a type of particular L1 speakers and/or those with particular cultures has also been of interest to researchers, as well as its relation to the overall writing quality. Researchers have considered L1 transfer, cross-cultural issues, L2 learners' language proficiency and their writing ability, as well as the genre impact as the possible causes that may create and can explain the differences between ESL/EFL users' topic development and that of NES.

The development of topic in Chinese discourse has been widely identified as being repetitive and to favour PP (Shi, 2000). This preference is also evident in Chinese ESL/EFL written products, even in doctoral thesis (Fan, Hsu, & Yang, 2006), and therefore has been identified as evidence of L1 transfer. Miyasako (2000) also

related the prevalence of topic development in PP in English compositions produced by L1 Japanese speakers to L1 transfer, because the Japanese language is regarded as being repetitive and prefers to advance topical progression in parallel modes. This was also observed in Kawaguchi, Hannouchi and Ichinose's (2010) study with 32 EFL summaries produced by Japanese college students. Comparing the results from these two studies, the impact of the participants' English proficiency on their development of the topics of a discourse can be evidently detected. The college students in Kawaguchi et al.'s (2010) study developed topics in a more balanced way between the various types of topical development than the middle school participants recruited by Miyasako (2000) did.

In addition to the L1 and L2 proficiency impacts which have been identified in these two studies, Sugiura (2000) indicated that a maturing of ESL users' writing ability may also contribute to an insightful understanding of textual coherence. He conducted a four-and-a-half-year longitudinal study with a single Japanese student who had settled and studied in the USA. In this study he witnessed a change from the prevalent application of PP to that of SP in this boy's English discourse.

Kim (1996) and Kim (2012) also regarded the overwhelmingly developed topics in SP in L1 Korean students' English compositions as evidence of L1 transfer, as it is also a feature of the Korean language. The same conclusion was made by Fakhri (1994, 1995) with L1 Arabic speakers. She also linked the predominant application of SP in the topic development of English essays produced by the Arabic speaking college students to be the result of L1 transfer, as Arabic features a prevalent use of SP in topic development. Nevertheless, they both noticed a better-balanced use of all four types of topical development by the NES participants, and the fundamental differences in the syntactic complexity of the sentences composed by NES and NNES participants.

Simpson (2000) suggested a necessity of raising awareness of cultural differences in ESL classes, after he observed expert-level L1 Spanish language professional writers' preference for topic development in PP and ESP in a study of 20 paragraphs selected from academic journals. He attributed the predominant application of thematic development in ESP by L1 Spanish writers to their culture and L1 influences, because Spanish speakers tend to add more topics rather than providing thorough information of the original theme, which was generally regarded as a loss of focus by NES readers. The other 20 paragraphs composed by NES expert-

level adult writers published in the same academic journals opted for developing topics in PP and SP.

In addition, genre has also been regarded as an influential factor that affects the development of topic. Ghazanfari, Alavi and Ghapanchi (2011) observed a preference for SP in argumentative essays and EPP in the narrative prose after examining English paragraphs produced by Iranian university students. Flores and Yin (2015) attributed the genre impact to the diversity of results obtained from three studies conducted on the EFL essays produced by L1 Filipino speakers, which show the prevalent application of PP and EPP in the topic development by university students (Almaden, 2006), that of PP and SP by in Dumanig, et al.'s study (2009), and that of SP in Flores and Yin's search (2015). Despite that there were differences in English proficiencies of these participants in these three studies – Almaden (2006) identified the participants as university students at the intermediate level, while Dumanig, et al. (2009) analysed the papers from expert-like writers, Flores and Yin (2015) argued that the genre differences might be the greatest factor affecting the type of topical progression in academic written discourse, when they found no differences in the application of any types of topical progression in the essays they collected from the university students labelled as lower proficiency and those as higher proficiency groups.

To summarise, the topic development of a discourse by ESL/EFL learners is related to their L1 impact, English proficiency, English writing ability, an awareness of the target readers, a rich English input environment, etc. An explicit teaching that raises the ESL/EFL users' awareness of these impacts on their topical development has been suggested.

3.4.3 The explicit teaching of TSA in ESL/EFL academic writing

As previously mentioned, TSA is perceived as being a tool that can be used by students for self-revision, to improve textual coherence and raise their awareness of the construction of coherence at the discourse level (Chiu, 2004; Connor, 1996; Connor & Farmer, 1990; Witte, 1983a).

Chiu (2004) conducted a three-month longitudinal study regarding TSA as a self-revision tool for EFL compositions by a highly motivated college student in Taiwan. Her study is of importance in terms of producing abundant qualitative data. This study chose one topic in the narrative prose and the other in the descriptive prose.

Chiu (2004) noted the prevalent employment of PP in the first draft of both prose, and then an increased proportion of EPP in the second draft of both prose and a decrease of PP in the second draft of the descriptive prose. Chiu (2004) argued that the increased amount of EPP in the participant's revised compositions indicated the participants' better control of topic and her raised awareness of the holistic discourse coherence in terms of topical development.

Regardless of this encouraging result, there is still doubt as to whether Chiu's (2004) study can be applicable to all EFL/ESL learner writers. Firstly, this participant was highly motivated as Chiu (2004) admitted. It is unrealistic to expect every learner to be highly motivated in learning EFL/ESL writing. Secondly, Chiu (2004) met the participant 2-3 hours a week for a three-month period as well as performing her routine teaching practice. This intense engagement, with its extra teaching time and effort, may be beyond what many teachers can commit to, particularly when teaching a group of students. In China, the average student number is over 50 at the pre-tertiary level, and between 20 and 150 in universities. The amount of work involved is fantastic if practiced at Chiu's level. Another point that raises criticism is that Chiu (2004) did not describe how she taught the participant the TSA approach nor mention whether she directed the participant to not only apply TSA as a self-revision tool in the linguistic domain but also understand its contribution to the construction of discourse coherence. This is actually an important part, if not the most important, when engaging TSA as a tool for the teaching of the writing process.

Inspired by Chiu's (2004) study, several Taiwanese postgraduate students such as Fan (2003) and Liu (2009) conducted similar empirical studies on small groups of English-major college students. Their data also showed a positive impact of teaching students TSA as a self-revision tool on the construction of textual coherence of EFL written discourse.

Liangprayoon, Chaya and Thep-ackraphong (2013) also taught TSA as a self-revision tool to a group of Thai senior college students, aiming to raise their awareness of textual coherence. They reported a prevalence of sentences with SP topical development in their 12-week post-intervention writing with compare and contrast prose. Regardless of this, they emphasised that a balanced approach between topical development in PP, SP and EPP might be an effective indicator of holistic and quality writing rather than the predominance of one or two types. Interestingly, they noted that the application of TSA was more effective in improving text coherence of

less successful students than in their more advanced counterparts. They therefore argued for the existence of a positive pedagogical outcome of TSA's in EFL writing.

In summary, in this chapter, I have introduced the characteristics of Chinese and English in the domain of subject and topic, as well as the development of topic in a discourse and its contribution to the construction of discourse coherence. I also discussed the types of topical progression identified by various researchers, and the widely applied analytical tool Topical Structure Analysis (TSA), as well as the contribution of each type of topical progression to global and local coherence, along with the potential damage to discourse coherence if used inappropriately.

In the next chapter, I will start by introducing the common text structure(s) in Chinese and English academic writing, and then compare the similarities and differences of the movement of each structure (definitions will be given in the next chapter), discussing the potential problems that could arise due to the differences in structuring discourse and the thinking patterns that are reflected in the text organisation. I will then narrow this down to focus only on paragraphs, as paragraphs are a cohort of coherent sentences which representing a microcosm of the text. In a paragraph, all of the topics of the sentences serve the topic of the paragraph, which serves the discourse topic.

Chapter 4 The text structure of Chinese and English academic writing (text coherence at the paragraph level)

Because of the political and social upheaval in China at the end of the 18th century and a subsequent transformation of the language - from the classic Chinese language (*Wenyan wen*) to modern Chinese (*Baihua wen*) - analysis of Chinese academic writing is normally divided into two parts, before and after 1901. The later period was when not only the language itself was transformed but also when the official academic writing style, Eight-Legged Essay (*baguwen*) was eradicated. In this chapter, I will firstly introduce the inductive thinking and deductive thinking that are arguably representative of Eastern and Western thinking patterns. I will then introduce the basic move structures in the context of the ancient and modern Chinese languages, as they are relevant to how information conveyance in texts, and reflective thinking patterns are embedded in Chinese culture.

4.1 Inductive thinking vs. deductive thinking

The reasoning and logic of the East and the West has for a long time been perceived as being a dichotomy, in which the East (including China) possesses inductive reasoning, whereas the West applies deductive reasoning. Recent studies generally regard these two types of reasoning as ‘two successful models’ in different cultural backgrounds (Thorsten, 2013). Abundant literature related to this topic can be found in the fields of philosophy, language, culture, and politics, and in a variety of languages (e.g., Ji, 2006; Thorsten, 2013). Ji Xianlin (1911-2009), an influential Chinese polymath, has conducted a great deal of research regarding the difference between Western and Eastern cultures. People summarised Ji’s (2006) words into ‘Xifang wenhua zhuzhong fenxi, yigenweier; er dongfang wenhua zhuzhong zonghe, heerweiyi’ (西方文化注重分析, 一分为二; 而东方文化注重综合, 合二为一) (The West is deductive, from the universal to the particular; the East is inductive, from the particular to the universal), and this has been referenced frequently (e.g., Ren & Hitchcock, 2013; Thorsten, 2013). Thorsten (2013) described Chinese inductive reasoning patterns as ‘holistic, non-analytical and spiritual’ and it was ‘integration-based’, in comparison with English deductive thinking patterns of being analytical and linear. Kaplan (1966) diagrammed the differences between the East

and the West in respect of a simplified thinking pattern, where the West is represented by a linear thinking pattern, and the East by a circular thinking pattern.

Recent research no longer perceives these two cultures as being the two ends of a dichotomy, but rather as being in a dynamic status of flux. Kirkpatrick and Xu (2012) assessed an abundance of Chinese writing samples, and concluded that ‘Chinese prefers to use inductive reasoning over deductive reasoning’ (p. 139), but it ‘by no means excludes other types of rhetorical organisation’ (p. 140). The patterns of ‘because-therefore’ or ‘frame-main’ sequence in written Chinese have been regarded as being representative of inductive reasoning by Kirkpatrick and Xu (2012), which they identified in the organisation of sentences, paragraphs and the entire discourse. They however also easily identified the use of deductive reasoning in the L1 Chinese speakers’ compositions they collected. Their argument that Chinese speakers in general prefer to use inductive reasoning and thinking patterns, but also apply deductive reasoning has been widely supported by other researchers (e.g., Scollon, Scollon, & Kirkpatrick, 2000).

Ren and Hitchcock (2013) stated that ‘differences between Chinese discourse organisation and English discourse organisation are expressions of differences between their cultural patterns of thinking’ (p. 150), which is in line with Scollon, et al. (2000). They pointed out that the difference between Chinese and English discourse organisation patterns reflected the varied inductive and deductive rhetorical strategies embedded. They also stated that the transition of one thinking pattern into another culture and language would lead to the danger of being judged as incoherent. Wang (1992) identified 40% of L1 Chinese college students resorted to inductive reasoning in organising paragraphs of their English essays and 24% organised in deductive reasoning. He attributed the use of inductive patterns to the transference of Chinese thinking patterns.

‘Indirectness’ is another word often used when describing the influence of Chinese inductive reasoning on the organisation of the written products. In contrast, ‘directness’ is applied to describe the rhetorical sequence in English academic writing; by which it means the reflection of Western deductive thinking patterns in text organisation. Of course, this is arguable. Yang and Cahill (2008) assessed the text organisation of essays written by NES American university students and L1 Chinese students, and reported that American NES college students were significantly more ‘direct’ in text organisation than their Chinese counterparts were. The latter seemed to

organise texts with a mixture of deductive and inductive reasoning. They also noticed a positive correlation between L1 Chinese students' English proficiency and the directness of their text organisation. In other words, Chinese students with higher English proficiency resorted to more direct, deductive reasoning when organising discourse than those with lower English proficiency did.

To summarise, it seems that L1 Chinese speakers prefer to use inductive reasoning, which is often regarded by ENS readers as being indirect. NES speakers are in favour of deductive reasoning. Neither languages exclude the other types of reasoning. In the next sections, I will introduce the common text structures in classic and modern Chinese. By analysing each movement of the structure, I may have a better understanding of how these texts are organised and of the impacts of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic issues.

4.2 The move structure in Chinese language texts

The rhetorical term 'move' is widely employed in Chinese English discourse analysis (Connor, 1996). It represents the discourse strategy used for the specific purpose of information conveyance (Virtanen & Maricic, 2000) and a discursial segment that performs communication functions in a discourse (Swales, 2004). Through analysing surface linguistic factors, and the analysis of move structure in texts between various cultures and languages, researchers are able to gain information regarding how discourse is constructed, what discourse strategies are chosen, what thinking pattern(s) are embedded, and any cultural correlations.

4.2.1 Eight-Legged Essay

The Eight-Legged Essay (*baguwen*) was the official academic writing style in China until 1901. *Gu* here means the section of an article, so *baguwen* literally means an eight-section essay. Its dominant status was established alongside the enhanced Imperial Examinations (*keju*) of the Song dynasty (960-1279 AD) but the name *Gaokao* was first coined in the Ming dynasty (1368-1644 AD). The Eight-Legged Essay was formalised as the standard structure to be used in the civil service examination system to select scholars and officers for the emperor and his government. The topic of an Eight-Legged Essay had to be chosen from the classical publication, *Four Books* and *Five Classics* (*Sishu Wujin*), a collection of thoughts from Confucius and his followers that were granted orthodoxy by central government.

Mathematics, sciences and music however were never at the core of the imperial examinations system, as a result of a bias against these disciplines throughout Chinese history. These areas and the people involved in them were regarded as subordinate to the orthodoxy and the mainline culture.

Baguwen (Eight-Legged Essay) contains characteristics such as: the main theme of essays must be in line with the central government's guidelines; topics must be chosen from *Four books and Five Classics*; references should be made to words and activities of historically famous disciples of Confucius. Here I adopt Kirkpatrick's (1997) elaboration on the functions of an Eight-Legged Essay (pp. 232-233). The first two sections should be used by writers to link the topic to Confucianism, to ensure that they have memorised what Confucius and his disciples said and did. Section 3 is the start of argument, but the author's points will not be revealed until section 6, almost at the end of the writing. A conclusion will be drawn in the last section.

1. *PO Ti* 破题. "breaking open the title". This should reveal the candidate's knowledge of the source of the essay title and should be written in only two sentences.
2. *Cheng Ti* 承题. "receiving the title". This comprises four or five sentences and includes the reason why the sage (Confucius) made the statement quoted in the essay title.
3. *Qi Jiang* 起讲. "preliminary discourse". This is the real beginning of the essay. Here the candidates can use their own words, rather than discuss and quote the sage.
4. *Qi Gu* 起股. This section consists of two paragraphs-the beginning legs-one parallel to the other in rhetorical structure. These paragraphs build up the philosophical content of the essay without exhausting it.
5. *Xiao Gu* 小股. This is the prelude to the main theme of the essay-where the first two lines are parallel to the second two lines, and these are the "minor legs."

6. *Zhong Gu* 中股. This is the main part of the essay-the central legs-and contains the main points the candidates want to raise. Parallel structure is used.
7. *Hou Gu* 后股. This develops the ideas expressed in the *Zhong Gu* or main part and represent the latter legs.
8. *Da Jie* 大结. “grand conclusion”. Here the candidate brings the composition to a close.

The influence of the Eight-Legged Essay on Chinese writing is however arguable, given that less than 20% of Chinese people before 1950 were literate (UNESCO. org), and that the Eight-Legged Essay was an exclusive writing style used in official written reports, rather than in people’s daily life (Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2012). Kirkpatrick and Xu (2012) have analysed a series of composition textbooks from contemporary Chinese universities and reported that no *baguwen* influences were detected, arguing that the *buguwen* impact was non-existent, and the re-emergence impossible, due to its rhetorical complexity and the political reality of modern China. Mohan and Lo (1985) agreed that *baguwen* had little place in contemporary Chinese-medium schooling and correspondingly, it has little or no impact on contemporary Chinese writing let alone on writing in English. However, some researchers argue that the logic development between eight sections of *baguwen* can be detected in modern Chinese discourse structure, but in a different pattern *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* (opening-continuing-turning-concluding).

4.2.2 Qi-cheng-zhuan-he (opening-continuing-turning-concluding)

Qi-cheng-zhuan-he (opening-continuing-turning-concluding), a four-part move structure in Chinese writing, can be traced back to *Wenxi Diaolong* (The Mind of Literature and Carving Dragons) produced by Liu Xie in 522 AD. The majority of Chinese scholars agree that it is a rhetorical style initially from poetic structures and then expanded to almost all types of written product (e.g., Huang, 2006). Two influential dictionaries published in China, Zhou and Liu’s (1996) *Dictionary of Contemporary Chinese Composition*, and Zhang, Hu, Zhang & Lin’s (1988) *The Dictionary of Chinese Rhetoric*, provide delineations such as, *qi* is the opening or beginning of an article or a paragraph, *cheng* means the second part continues to adopt the same meanings as the first, *zhuan* bears the responsibility for producing a turning point which introduces a new idea or counter argument to the previous part,

and *he* summarises and concludes the whole article or paragraph with the aim of completing written output that is coherent. The alternative to a four-part move structure is the three-part move structure, where the move of *cheng* (continuing) and *zhuan* (turning) are combined together (Huang, 2010), or with the absence of *zhuan* (turning) (Liu, 2005).

A well-known poem written by Li Bai around 750 (AD) can perfectly demonstrate this four-part move structure. Li Bai (701-762), crowned as *Shixian* (Poet Transcendent), is one of the most eminent poets in Chinese history. This poem is adopted from Kirkpatrick (1997, p. 229):

Qi

At the front of my bed moonlight shines,

Cheng

I think there is frost on the ground,

Zhuan

Raising my head, I look at the moon,

He

Lowering my head, I think of home.

Li Bai commences the poem by describing a natural phenomenon in the first two lines, which bear the move structure of *qi* (opening) and *cheng* (continuing). He then takes advantage of the move of *zhuan* (turning) on the third line to unveil the purpose of this poem in the final line which serves as *he* (concluding), that is, he tries to express his longing for his hometown and family while he is away. The weighting of this poem lies at the end and with the revelation of the author's intention. This supplies a good example of the inductive reasoning and the indirectness of Chinese thinking patterns that have been discussed in the previous section. Cai (1993, 1999) correlated the characteristics of indirectness in Chinese to the move *zhuan* (turning). Tsao (1982) explained *zhuan* as 'a change of some kind', due to 'the avoidance of self-expression' in Chinese culture.

A comparatively recent article written in the 1940s and translated by Shen (1985) also illustrates a similar move structure apparent in discourse and thinking

patterns of Chinese writers (pp. 1-2, as below). This article also starts with a description of the environment and then turns into a revelation regarding the main figure's psychological movement and thoughts in the last part, which perfectly exemplified the 'frame-main' sequence that Kirkpatrick and Xu (2012) described.

Qi

Comrade Fang Zhimin is thinking deeply and is worried.

Cheng

Bedbugs, mosquitoes, and fleas are tormenting him, and he is tossing and turning and has been unable to get any sleep for twenty-four hours; he must find a secret hiding place for his letters and manuscript.

Zhuan

Then, like a flash of light in the dark night, he suddenly thinks of Lu Xun. Although they did not know each other, he had read Lu Xu's articles and had great faith in Lu Xin's loyalty to the revolutionary cause. He decided to place the letters and manuscript he had written in the last moments of his life in Lu Xun's hands.

He

He had no doubt that Lu Xun would be up to this extremely dangerous and difficult task.

Jiang (1998) pointed out the parallel existence of move structures between the eight sections of *baguwen* and the four-part *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* (opening-continuing-turning-concluding) in historic Chinese, which was supported and advanced by Huang (2006). Jiang (1998) claimed that the first two sections of *baguwen* correspond to *qi*, the second two sections to *cheng*, the third two sections to *zhuan*, and the last two sections to *he*. Following this string, Nie (2009) drew a table (see below, Table 4-1) where a comparative structure allocates the moves of four ancient Chinese proses, to their corresponding counterpart of *qi-cheng-zhuan-he*.

Table 4 - 1 The Comparative Move Structure

体裁 \ 结构	起	承	转	合
宋元经义	冒题	原题	讲题	结题
宋试论	论头	论项	论腹	论尾
律诗	首联	颔联	颈联	尾联
八股文	起比	中比	后比	束比

	Qi (opening)	Cheng (continuing)	Zhuan (turning)	He (concluding)
Songyujingyi	Maoti	Yuanti	Jiangti	Jieti
Songshilun	Luntou	Lunxiang	Lunfu	Lunwei
Lvshi	Shoulian	Hanlian	Jinglian	Weilian
Baguwen	Qibi	Zhongbi	Houbi	Shubi

(adopted from Nie, 2009, p. 117; Pinyin are added and translated by me in the table above; explanations are in the paragraph below.)

Reading from top to bottom in the first column, *SongYuanjingyi* (the academic writing *Jingyi* of national civil service examination in Song and Yuan dynasties), *Songshilun* (the academic writing *Shilun* of national civil service examination in Song dynasty), *Lvshi* (a type of poetry with minimum of eight lines) and *baguwen* (eight-legged essay).

If one agrees with Nie's (2009) argument that almost all ancient Chinese rhetorical styles can be categorised into a four-part move structure (as previously mentioned), the move structure *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* (opening-continuing-turning-concluding), which was present in the ancient era, may continue in contemporary Chinese composition as a viable model.

4.2.3 The acknowledgement and application of *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* by Chinese

Qi-cheng-zhuan-he (opening-continuing-turning-concluding) has been regarded as the basic and most common move structure in Chinese writing (Zhang, Hu, Zhang, & Lin, 1988). It is widely accepted that there exists a positive correlation between the application of the four-part move structure *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* in the text organisation and the perception of high quality academic writing in Chinese argumentative essays (e.g., Xia, 2016; Wei, 2014). Xia (2016) surmised that the effective use of *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* is one of the key factors that impacts examination marks positively, a position he adopted after analysing results from authentic written compositions collected from *Gaokao* (National University Entrance Examination). Xia's (2016) conclusion is reinforced by the large number of composition training books and journals published in the fields of *Yuwen* (Chinese Language) and *Zuowen* (Chinese Composition). In the leading journals of Chinese language studies such as the *Journal of Language Teaching in Middle School* and *Chinese Teaching & Studies*, where the application and functions of *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* in Chinese composition topic, and the relevant articles are frequently published.

The teaching of the four-part move structure starts as early as primary school, where *Yuwen* (Chinese Language) teachers integrate the construction of the *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* into the organisational structure. This teaching system remains from then on up to secondary school. Hence, a conclusion can be made that all Chinese students registered in state-owned schools have experienced a Chinese language and composition training process that highlights the application of the four-part move structure in the text organisation.

The next section focuses on text structures, and the moves of text organisation in English academic writing, in order to form a clear pattern that is comparable to Chinese text structure and then to analyse the possibility of L1 transfer in ESL/EFL essays organised by L1 Chinese speakers.

4.3 Text structure in academic writing in English

The Problem-Solution patterns of discourse organisation are believed to be a type of the most common and popular discourse patterns in English academic writing (Charles, 2011; Hoey, 1983, 2001). The basic organisational schema of a Problem-Solution discourse pattern is *situation-problem-solution-evaluation* (Flowerdew, 2003, 2008). The diagram below is taken from Hoey (2001, p. 127) to demonstrate

the basic problem-solution pattern. Hoey (2001) prefers to use *response* as an alternative to *solution*. He points out that the order in which the questions are answered is flexible and that it depends on the specific readers that the writer has in mind when conveying and sequencing information.

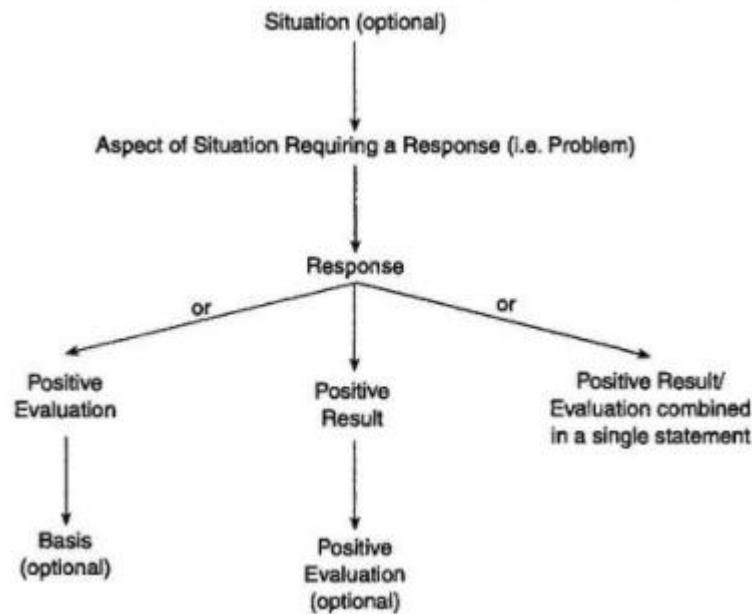


Figure 4 - 1 Problem-Solution Patterns

These four steps can be summarised as the answers to the questions that readers seek, as demonstrated below (Nikulshina & Mordovina, 2011, p. 1122). The *situation* move is optional, so is its question.

Situation answers the question: ‘What are we talking about?’

Problem answers the question: ‘Why are we talking about this?’

Solution answers the question: ‘What is to be done?’

Evaluation answers the question: ‘How good is the solution?’

It is worth pointing out that these four moves do not always occur in a simple linear sequence; rather, they are often organised in a recursive way to accomplish the purposes of writing. The ultimate goal is to successfully deliver effective information to target readers and satisfy the target readers’ expectations while reading.

4.3.1 A comparison of Problem-Solution patterns and *qi-cheng-zhuan-he*

Qi-cheng-zhuan-he (opening-continuing-turning-concluding) is not the only discourse structure in Chinese language. Likewise, the Problem-Solution pattern is not the only text pattern used in the organisation of English texts. Other types such as the Goal-Achievement pattern and the Opportunity – Taking pattern can also be found in texts (Hoey, 2001). There are two reasons I employed the Problem-Solution pattern to represent the text organisation of academic writing in the English HE context. The primary reason is that it contains four steps (*situation-problem-solution-evaluation*) that can be used to compare and contrast with the four-part movements (*qi-cheng-zhuan-he*) in Chinese text organisation. The other reason is that it is ‘one of the most frequently occurring’, ‘the most thoroughly investigated’, and ‘more basic than the other patterns’ (Hoey, 2001, p. 142). In other words, there is adequate literature relating to the Problem-Solution pattern in English academic writing, as there is in the four-part text structure *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* (opening-continuing-turning-concluding) in Chinese. It will provide me with sufficient materials for this study and it also makes sense to compare the two most applied text structures in these two languages.

Chen (2007) compared the functions of each move structure of these two languages, as follows (adopted from Chen, 2007, p. 144).

Table 4 - 2 A comparison of move structures between Chinese and English

The Common Four-Part Model in Chinese	The Argumentative Text as a Problem-Solution Structure in English
<i>Qi</i> : prepares the reader for the topic	Situation: introduces background material
<i>Cheng</i> : introduces and develops the topic	Problem: A statement of the undesirable condition of things
<i>Zhuan</i> : turns to a seemingly unrelated subject (at this point where cheng is finished, turns the idea to a subtheme where there is a connect, but not a directly connected association [to the major theme])	Solution: a statement of the desirable condition
<i>He</i> : sums up the essay	Evaluation: an assessment or an evaluation of the solution in terms of its efficacy.

In the first two moves, English writers start to introduce the context or background of a topic, and then reveal the gap or the problem(s) that the writer will focus on. In comparison, Chinese writers start with a much broader introduction, and then slowly narrow down to the topic, by following its inductive arguing, from general to specific. Chen (2007) points out a tendency by Chinese writers to delay the revelation of *problem* until the third stage *zhuan* (turning), which he surmised as a reflection of the inductive logic embedded in Chinese thinking patterns. He also proposed it to be one of the causes of ‘indirectness’ felt by English readers on the English products produced by L1 Chinese speakers.

Chen’s (2007) claims were supported by Yang and Yang (2010) and Tsao (1982). Yang and Yang (2010) attributed the merging of the moves *qi* (opening) and *cheng* (continuing) as the cause of the seemingly lengthy beginning of Chinese discourse. They stated that the combination of these two moves led to ‘the rather lengthy and irrelevant Chinese details at the beginning of texts, to the English reader’ (Yang & Yang, 2010, p. 77). The example below (Table 4-3) is a text written by a young Chinese student, taken from Yang and Yang (2010, p. 74). This Chinese student spent the first two units, unit 1 and 2, on the introduction of background, which took up almost 40% of the total number of the words in this excerpt. The topic word ‘literacy’, occurred in unit 3, and the writer’s argument was revealed at the end,

in the move *he* (concluding). The delayed revelation of topic is evident.

Table 4 - 3 An example of the comparison of move structures between Chinese and English

<i>Qi-cheng-zhuan-he</i> (lexical signal)	A text by a young Chinese student	<i>Problem-Solution</i> (lexical signal)
<i>Qi</i> (topic) (learn of ourselves)	(1) We are dependent, for understanding and for consolation and hope, upon what we learn of ourselves from songs and stories.	<i>Situation</i> (learn of ourselves from songs and stories)
	(2) From this statement, we can know that through songs and stories, people realized themselves, humanity and their societies.	(elaboration)
<i>Cheng</i> (From this statement)	(3) The literacy—mastery of language and knowledge of books—is the essential factor that enlarges people’s knowledge, and improves mutual realization of people, and then creates the smooth society.	<i>Problem-implied Response</i> (Literacy is essential)
<i>Zhuan</i> (Exemplification)	(4) From kindergartens to colleges, from homes to offices, we learn how to interact with someone and how to realize ourselves and our societies. (5) The literacy helps us to accustom and realize them.	(Exemplification)
<i>He</i> (Hence)	(6) Hence, literacy is not an ornament, but a necessity.	<i>Evaluation</i> (Necessity)

Jia and Liu (2011) used ‘delayed’ thesis to describe the lengthy introduction and the delayed revelation of the problems in the compositions composed by the Chinese participants in her study. She believed that this lengthy introduction was ‘sort of an emotionally attached build-up that aims to achieve a harmonious relationship’⁶ between readers and writers (Jia, 2005, p. 100). Jia (2005) claimed that it was Chinese writers’ conscious intention to make this delay, as a Chinese ‘writer must achieve the effect that the listener is not supposed to get the speaker’s or the writer’s intention until he or she reaches the last stage’ (p. 97). The outcome of this conscious effort in Chinese culture and writing however is perceived as being inductive or indirect by NES readers.

Jia (2005) also detected the impact of the four-part move structure *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* in the participants’ English text organisation after analysing the EFL essays produced by Chinese students in a writing class organised by a top university in China, Tsinghua University. She reported that the problem(s) was not revealed until the end of four or five paragraphs in some of the Chinese participants’ English essays,

⁶ This might be the best description of the purpose of Introduction in the Chinese text that I have ever encountered.

leaving the learners with limited space to analyse the problem(s); considering it was a short essay, the essays ended with an insufficiently analysed conclusion.

It would be naïve to believe that there were no other varieties of structural organisation in academic writing in English or Chinese. However, it is important to raise NNES students' - in this study - L1 Chinese students' awareness regarding the similarities and differences in the organisation of text structure between languages, and the ways of presenting argument in the Western academic world.

4.3.2 A focus on paragraphs in the development of the topic sentence

The previous comparative analysis revealed that one of the distinctions between Chinese and English text organisation is the lengthy introduction and the delayed revelation of topic in Chinese, in comparison with the direct introduction of topic in English. I will then move to another area that seemingly has challenges but has been neglected by researchers of L1 Chinese English learners; the immediate development of topic sentence within paragraphs. A paragraph is an identifiable discourse unit and has semantic value for discourse analysis (Van Dijk, 1985; Tannen, Hamilton, & Schiffrin, 2015). It consists of both the text organisation structure and sentential units.

The focus of this study at the paragraph level is located in the second sentence. There are several reasons. One is that it will be interesting to investigate the possible transition of the lengthy and 'indirect' opening feature of Chinese writing to their ESL/EFL essays. It is an area that has not been sufficiently researched. If the establishment of the topic sentence and its position in the initial sentence of paragraphs has been taught in Chinese English classes, why is it still criticised for its indirect opening and its development for not satisfying NES readers' expectations?

Another reason is that there exists a criterion that can be taken advantage of when analysing the development of the topic sentence. That is Reid's (1996) established categories regarding wrongly developed topic sentences in ESL college students' written products. Along with the other two analytical units at the discourse (TSA) and sentence levels (this will be introduced in the next section), this study will establish an overall analysis regarding the construction of discourse coherence from the three domains: discourse, paragraph and sentence.

This study only focuses on how the topic sentence is further developed into the second sentence, in other words, the relationship between the topic sentence and

its successive sentence, without concentrating on the establishment of the topic sentence. The reason is that I have conducted some literature reviews (e.g., Yang, Badger, & Yu, 2006; You, 2004), and concluded that Chinese students have been taught about the topic sentence in English. I am interested in this, because if they have been taught to establish a topic sentence but still demonstrate an indirect development of paragraphs, I may be able to conclude that the impact of an inductive thinking pattern is not only on the text organisation but also on the paragraph organisation. When a direct teaching intervention is introduced in this part, I may be able to identify the possible impact of Chinese students' English proficiency and the effect of this aspect on the teaching intervention.

4.3.3 An awareness of topic sentence in English compositions by Chinese students

Semantically, 'a topic sentence is the surface manifestation of an element at the "top" (or "macro") level in the semantic hierarchy of a paragraph or group of paragraphs' (Popken, 1987, p. 211). It is used to support 'the thesis statement and is directly connected to a particular point in the thesis statements, in the order of the [main] points' (Hinkel, 2004, p. 310). The necessity of having a topic sentence in academic writing however has been debated, particularly concerning the existing differences of genre, discipline and individual preference.

Popken (1987) reported a prevalence for topic sentences in the 35 published academic articles collected from a variety of disciplines. He attributed this phenomenon not only to the conventions of academic writing, where topic sentence or topic sentence-like, by which he means the Heading, is usually placed at the initial position of the paragraph, but more importantly, he claimed that it was due to the writers' belief that the establishment of a topic sentence can enhance the inherent coherence of the whole text. In addition, the explicit establishment of a topic sentence will increase the readability (Eden & Mitchell, 1986). It has been pointed out that effective NES readers are likely to analyse a paragraph by skimming the first and second sentences and simultaneously, integrating their existing knowledge, and then predicting the potential development and the purpose of the text (Carrell, 1982; Eden & Mitchell, 1986). The establishment of the topic sentence therefore not only enhances the construction of text coherence but also complies with readers' reading habit.

On the other hand, there is not always the need to establish a topic sentence in English writing. Liu and Furneaux (2014), in their comparative study of English academic essays composed by L1 Chinese students and British NES students, found that it is not necessary to place a topic sentence in a paragraph, but as long as a topic sentence was established in the paragraph, it predominantly took the initial position.

The dispute regarding topic sentence and its history was explored in D'Angelo's (1986) article of *the Topic Sentence Revisited*. He introduced the topic sentence regarding its rhetorical origin, its contribution to readability, and its value to the expression of the main idea(s) within texts. He suggested the explicit teaching of topic sentence to learners with an awareness of the existence of writing variants. This now seems to be mainstream in composition teaching, particularly to ESL/EFL learners.

The explicit teaching of the initial position of the topic sentence by Chinese English teachers in Chinese English classes has been confirmed in studies. Yang, et al. (2006) reported from their questionnaires and interviews with Chinese students that the explicit teaching of the establishment of a topic sentence in a paragraph is common in Chinese English classes. Hence, the establishment of the topic sentence and its position at the initial sentence of a paragraph should not be a novel concept that Chinese students have never heard of.

Furthermore, this study focuses on Chinese students studying at British universities. They have achieved a high enough mark in an IELTS test to have received an HE offer. IELTS is a compulsory English level test designed for international students, who do not have an English-medium education background to take part in the application process of British universities. Their applications will be accepted only if their test results satisfy the university's language requirements. A model text taken from the official website of the IELTS organisation is shown below (Two model texts are displayed in this website for the academic test). This test style is argumentative. The model follows the conventional English textual structure of introduction-body-conclusion; the main body consists of two paragraphs. The discourse structure utilises a problem-solution pattern.

A person's worth nowadays seems to be judged according to social status and material possessions. Old-fashioned values, such as honour, kindness and trust, no longer seem important.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with this opinion?

Give reasons for your answer and include any relevant examples from your own knowledge or experience.

Write at least 250 words.

WRITING TASK 2 – Model Answer

Given the power and influence of the super rich, it might seem as if social status and material possessions are the new symbols of personal worth, but in everyday life I do not think this is true.

It is apparent that most celebrities today are admired or envied solely for their material wealth or position in various social hierarchies. Many of these people are known to turn their backs on friends, cheat on their spouses or spend their evenings over-indulging in alcohol and/or drugs. Things like owning a mansion, driving an expensive car and getting into A-list parties are exalted above old-fashioned values. Ultimately, though, it is the many readers of gossip magazines and celebrity blogs who reinforce these ideas.

Nevertheless, I do believe that in their day-to-day lives most people still believe in values such as honour, kindness and trust. In some way most of us want to form loving families, raise our children to be good citizens, stand up for the downtrodden and protect our communities from harm. We still form friendships, romances and business partnerships based on old-fashioned criteria. When our trust is abused or we are unfairly treated, we see that as a major violation of our relationship and we judge the wrongdoer accordingly.

In conclusion, I believe there is some truth to the notion that status and possessions have superseded old-fashioned values as a measure of a person's worth. Looking beyond the tabloids, however, it is apparent that most ordinary people have still preserved an old-fashioned conscience.

Retrieved from <http://takeielts.britishcouncil.org/prepare-test/free-sample-tests/writing-sample-test-1-academic/writing-task-2> on 10/11/2018

It is obvious that a topic sentence exists in the initial sentence of both paragraphs of the main body (the second and third paragraphs). The topic sentence of the second paragraph introduces the central idea of this paragraph, that is, *most celebrities today are admired or envied solely for their material wealth and social status in various social hierarchies*. The second sentence exemplifies the types of

behaviour these celebrities are believed to display due to their material wealth and social privilege. The initial sentence of the third paragraph is also the topic sentence introducing the main idea that '*I do believe that in their day-to-day lives most people still believe in values such as honour, kindness and trust*'. It is then supported by the argument that 'most of us' will comply with the commonly believed good values, which are exemplified with more concrete examples.

Given that, admittedly from anecdotal evidence, a significant proportion of Chinese students experience on average, an eight-month learning process for this specific type(s) of English writing before enrolling in British universities, a conjecture can be made that the majority of Chinese students studying in British universities are aware of the use of the topic sentence in English, and its initial position in a paragraph.

Now it is almost certain that Chinese students have been taught how to produce a topic sentence; however, I have not yet encountered a study conducted in this area regarding the teaching in Chinese English classes regarding the semantic value of the topic sentence and its contribution to global and local coherence. This does not surprise me, as the Chinese English teaching system and Chinese English teachers have been criticised for their neglect of the teaching of English at the discourse level, and its sentence orientation (Mohan & Lo, 1985).

The next section will focus on the development of the topic sentence in paragraphs. As previously mentioned, it will be interesting to investigate the immediate development of the topic sentence by L1 Chinese students in English essays, and its relation between their English proficiency and their English writing ability and the effect of an explicit teaching programme of this area.

4.4 The analytical tool: Reid's category of the misdevelopment of the topic sentence

Profiting from more than thirty years of experience teaching ESL, Reid (1996) may have been the first one to notice the significant differences in the development of the topic sentence in paragraphs by NES and ESL learner. Reid (1996) tried to categorise the possible types of inappropriately developed topic sentences and the successive sentences produced by ESL learners, and then based on these, teach students the appropriate ways of developing the topic sentence in a paragraph. In her

study, Reid (1996) pre-set eight topic sentences in the styles of exposition, narrative, persuasion and comparison, and then encouraged NES and ESL college students from various cultural backgrounds and native languages to add a sequential sentence. An analysis of the students' products established six categories in which to classify inappropriate construction of the second sentence developed from the topic sentence. She also admitted that there were some common mistakes made by both ESL and inexperienced NES writers, such as restating without adding in any new information, change of focus, and inappropriate examples when establishing the second sentence.

However, she ascribed the inconsistency between the topic sentence and the second sentence in NES students' writing to their inexperience and immature control of language; but those of ESL students to their unfamiliarity with English rhetoric and schemata, exacerbated by culture differences and logical diversity. Reid's research on the topic sentence development germinated the possibility of advancing my own study. Could the criteria she established be adapted to examine and categorise Chinese students' English academic writing? Could it become a practical tool that Chinese students resort to when developing paragraphs? If the inappropriate development of the topic sentence results from the differences of rhetorical styles and cultural factors when students utilise L2, as Reid (1996) suggested, will an explicit teaching of this area help Chinese students to produce paragraphs that can satisfy their British HE target readers? In order to address these questions, I incorporated a further stage to the teaching intervention.

In order to continue the further investigation, the concept of 'second sentence' Reid (1996) applied needs to be explained here. Reid (1996) pointed out that if the topic sentence was positioned as the initial sentence of a paragraph, the 'second sentence' would be the physical second sentence; however, if the topic sentence was not placed at the initial position, the 'second sentence' meant the immediately developed sentence after the topic sentence, regardless of its physical position, therefore, 'second sentence' is a conceptualised notion.

In Reid's study, all of the second sentences in paragraphs were regarded as being *appropriate* or *anomalous* by six experienced NES writing teachers, according to the relationship to their corresponding topic sentences. Errors of lexicon and grammar were not taken into consideration.

“Appropriate” second sentences were defined in this context as those that focused on key words in the topic sentence, that directed the reader without changing the focus of the topic sentence, and that led to the paragraph that would follow in way(s) predicted and expected by expert NES academic readers.

“Anomalous” sentences [were defined as that] changed the anticipated focus of the paragraph abruptly and/or prevented them [readers] from predicting the third or fourth sentences of the paragraph that would follow.

Reid (1996) classified the ‘anomalous’ second sentence into six types, as below. I added the seventh category which was illustrated by Reid (1996) but not listed: ‘a second sentence is unrelated to the topic sentence’.

1. Repetition/restatement of the topic sentence.
2. Sentence is only tangentially related to the topic sentence.
3. Selection of an inappropriate word in the topic sentence as the main idea for the second sentence.
4. A sentence that is even more general than the topic sentence.
5. A sentence that contradicts the topic sentence.
6. The use of a concluding sentence as a second sentence.
7. A sentence that is not related to the topic sentence.

Adapted from Reid (1996)

The following examples are also taken from Reid’s (1996) article. The italicised second sentences were produced by the ESL participants in her study.

The first type: the repetitive

In Saudi Arabia, parents have separate responsibilities for raising their children. *Father and mother have different roles in raising their children.*

The second type: the tangentially related

Milk is one of the most important sources for nutrition in humans. *Natural products are best.*

The third type: the choice of inappropriate keywords

Spelling is one of the most frustrating skills to learn in English. *But it is one of the most important things too.*

Or *It's very difficult because my native language doesn't use alphabetic at all.*

The fourth type: the over-general

Milk is one of the most important sources for nutrition in humans. *Humans like milk.*

The fifth type: the contradictive

Milk is one of the most important sources for nutrition in humans. *Even if wine is a better beverage than milk.*

The sixth type: the conclusive

Milk is one of the most important sources for nutrition in humans. *Therefore, one should drink a glass every day.*

The seventh type: the irrelevant

Spelling is one of the most frustrating skills to learn in English. *Because I depend on a computer.*

Reid's (1996) study was challenged by Allison, Varghese and Wu (1999). After they conducted a 'partial duplication' with 108 Singaporean college students, they received different results from Reid's. They challenged Reid in three areas, the placement of the topic sentence, the relationship between predictability and interpretability by readers, and the criteria and categorisations she established. They disputed that, in English academic writing, topic sentence is not always placed at the initial position of a paragraph, and readers' expectations may not always be in parallel with the development of sequential sentences. They further criticised the subjectivity of the criteria and categories established by Reid (1996), for example, the degree of inappropriateness was not measurable. In addition, the lack of quantitative analysis also raised their concern.

Not surprisingly, Reid (2000) defended her initial study. She admitted that the first sentence in paragraphs does not always function as a topic sentence, and added that 'if the first sentence was simply introductory, and did not fulfil the "functions" of a topic sentence, then a contrasting second sentence would function as the topic

sentence for the paragraph' (p. 83). For example, if the first sentence is used to introduce the background or continue information from the preceding paragraph, normally a signal word or a logical connector, such as *however* or *nevertheless*, will be inserted to indicate that the succeeding sentence actually functions as the topic sentence. In this case, 'second sentence' will be the successive sentence developed from the one functioning as the topic sentence.

Reid (2000) highlighted the innovativeness of her study and pointed out that her goal was to produce a practical teaching procedure for pedagogical usage, rather than a theoretical study arguing for the placement of the topic sentence. She argued that this study could inspire a more focused and explicit teaching process that may raise ESL learners' awareness of the logical relationship between the topic and second sentences, eventually helping them to construct a coherent piece of writing at the paragraph level. The argument between Reid (1996) and Allison et al. (1999), and then Reid (2000) reflects the complexity of teaching ESL writing, the controversy over teaching methods, and the dilemmatic situation for teaching practitioners.

Reid (1996) advocated the direct teaching of coherent development from the topic sentence to the second sentence in a paragraph for ESL/EFL learners. She recommended that this teaching should also include the introduction of appropriate reading skills, relevant background knowledge, and Western academic rhetoric. She believed that this pedagogical regime would result in the enhancement of ESL learners' logic development, the engagement of critical thinking and the awareness-raising of readers' expectations when processing writing. The steps she recommended teachers take are as follows (p. 153):

- i. Raise the consciousness of ESL students about second language functions;
- ii. Develop students' predictive skills;
- iii. Discuss the concepts of prediction as it is associated with NES academic readers;
- iv. Describe the problems of inappropriate second sentences [based on the six categories she listed as above];
- v. Ask students to write second sentences (individually, in pairs, or in small groups) and explain why they chose the sentences they did; and
- vi. Ask students to consider second sentences in their own (and peers') writing.

Obviously, these ‘steps’ are not particularly practical, they are more like guidelines as Allison et al. (1999) argued. This has been admitted by Reid (2000), but she responded that the teaching of the development of topic sentence aimed to raise ESL learners’ awareness of discourse coherence, and therefore the teaching procedure should be flexible based on students’ needs and their English competence.

The characteristics of my participants are notably similar to Reid’s (1996), as they were all intermediate EFL learners with limited experience of academic writing. The seven types of erroneous development from topic sentence to second sentence Reid (1996) are categorised - repetition, partial relationship, wrong-choice of keywords, overgeneralisation, contradiction, conclusion and unrelatedness - were readily detected in my pilot study. It will be interesting to see how Chinese university students react to this teaching regime and whether the teaching of this domain may raise their awareness of text coherence.

In the pilot study, the Chinese participants were required to produce a second sentence to the seven topic sentences Reid (1996) used in her study. Almost all of the improperly developed second sentences fell in to the seven categories that Reid (1996) classified.

For example, the third type of ‘choosing inappropriate key words’:

Spelling is one of the most frustrating skills to learn in English. *It’s very difficult because my native language doesn’t use alphabetic at all.*

One Chinese participant wrote: Spelling is one of the most frustrating skills to learn in English. *Chinese people use characters, not the alphabetic letters, so it is difficult to spell the right English word.* This student then continued to discuss the characteristics of Chinese characters, and how they are different from the English alphabet system, and then progressed to *Pinyin* and how the regulations governing the organisation of letters into words which are in variance to the English system. The whole paragraph ends with a concluding sentence, ‘so English spelling is difficult for Chinese’. It is a typical Chinese four-part move structure, which starts from *qi* (opening) – a topic about English spelling, *cheng* (continuous) – an explanation, *zhuan* (turning) – comparing and contrasting the spelling of Chinese Pinyin, and at the end, *he* (concluding) – resuming the topic.

In summary, I have introduced the most commonly applied text structures in both Chinese and English academic writing, *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* (opening-continuing-

turning-concluding) and Problem-Solution patterns correspondingly, and compared their similarities and differences. I have also discussed the indirectness that English speaking academic readers identified in the English essays produced by L1 Chinese students. I then introduced the teaching of topic sentence in the Chinese English system, and the analytical tools regarding the inappropriate development of topic sentence categorised by Reid (1996). This aspect and Reid's (1996) category will be taught in the second stage of the teaching intervention of this study, and used in the analysis of Chinese students' pre- and post-intervention essays, with the aim of raising their awareness of the construction of local coherence in paragraphs, and identifying the possible positive teaching effect in this domain.

The next chapter will focus on the application of logical connectors, which contribute to the text coherence at the sentence level, if used properly. I will start with a definition of logical connector and their categories in Chinese and English. Then, I will compare the differences between their identification and categorisation. After this, the analytical tool for quantifying the employment of logical connectors will be introduced. The overuse and underuse of logical connectors are defined by comparing their use by NNES learners to that of NES users. In addition, the misuse of logical connectors by L1 Chinese English learners highlighted by previous studies was introduced. At the end of this chapter, a summary of Chapter 2, 3, 4 and 5 is conducted and the research questions raised by the literature review will be introduced.

Chapter 5 The application of logical connectors in Chinese and English (local coherence)

Logical connectors (e.g., however, therefore) are cohesive devices that are used within and between clauses and sentences in order to establish an explicit logical connection. They were termed thus by Quirk and Greenbaum (1973) and Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999). They are also called ‘logical connectives’ (Crewe, 1990), ‘cohesion markers’ (Enkvist, 1978, 1990), ‘conjunctive ties’ (Gardezi & Nesi, 2009), ‘conjunctive adjuncts’ or ‘discourse adjuncts’ (Halliday & Hasan, 1976/2014), ‘linking adverbials’ (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, Finegan, & Quirk, 1999), ‘internal conjunction’ (Field & Oi, 1992) and ‘linking signals’ (Leech & Svartik, 2013). Each term reflects the original researcher’s interest in this language phenomenon, from the perspectives of information conveyance, lexical property, grammatical feature, or the development of logic. The concept of logical connectors in this thesis is based on three books: *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* by Quirk, et al. (1985), *Longman grammar of Spoken and Written English* by Biber, et al. (1999), and *The Grammar Book: ESL/EFL Teacher’s Course* by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999).

5.1 A comparison of logical connector categorisation in English and Chinese

There are categorising inconsistencies in logical connectors between English and Chinese languages. In Chinese, conjunctions, adverbs, auxiliaries, phrases and some clauses are all regarded as logical connectors (*guanlianci*)⁷ (Lv, 1999; Xing, 2001). Chinese *guanlianci* (logical connectors) have been allotted into 9 categories based on their semantic value, *binglie* (additive), *dijin* (progressive), *xuanze* (selective), *chengjie* (sequential), *zhuanzhe* (adversative), *rangbu* (concessive), *jiashhe* (negative concessive), *yinguo* (causal) and *zhucong* (subordinate). For details, check *Yufa Xiuci jianghua* (Lv & Zhu, 2013), *Hanyu fujū yanjiu* (Xing, 2001), and *Xiandai hanyu yufa lilun yanjiu* (Wang, 1997).

⁷ Logical connectors are called *lianci* in classic Chinese lexicology and *guanlianci* or *guanlin ciyu* in contemporary Chinese.

The categorisation of English logical connectors differs from this. Semantically, English logical connectors are divided into four types, additive (*and, or* and *furthermore*), adversative (*but, yet* and *nevertheless*), causal (*so, therefore* and *as a result*), and temporal (*first, previously* and *to sum up*) by Halliday and Hasan (1976/2014) in their noteworthy book *Cohesion in English*; *temporal* was later replaced by *sequential* (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Logical connectors classified as additive are those ‘used to signal addition, introduction, to show similarity, etc.’; those functioning as adversatives are ‘used to signal conflict, contradiction, concession, etc.’; those categorised as causal are ‘used to signal cause / effect and reason / result, etc.’; and those listed as sequential are ‘used to signal a chronological or logical sequence’ in a discourse (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Alternatively, Biber, et al. (1999) allotted them into six classifications, *enumeration and addition, apposition, result/inference, contrast/concession* and *transition*. This study employed Halliday and Hasan’s (1976) categorisation when logical connectors are mentioned in the later sections.

There exist some inadequacies in the equivalence of the translation and subsequent categorisation of logical connectors between English and Chinese. For example, *nevertheless* belongs to adversative logical connectors in the English language system; but in its Chinese counterpart, it belongs to *rangbu* (concession category). *Or* is an additive logical connector in English, but its Chinese counterpart falls into the selective (*xuanze*) category in Chinese. Both the types of *rangbu* (concessive) and *jiashu* (negative concessive) Chinese logical connectors belong to the adversative category in English. Some words such as *firstly, secondly* are allocated as temporal logical connectors in English, but belong to content words in Chinese.

In addition to the inconsistency of the categorisation, a closer look at some of the logical connectors that have been classified as belonging to the same categories in both languages also expose differences in what at first glance seems to be directly equivalent. For example, *therefore* belongs to causal logical connectors in both English and Chinese; however, the reasons placed before *therefore*, that lead to the conclusion, are different. *Therefore*, in English means *for that reason* or *on the grounds of*, which serves as a logical consequence and is used to draw a conclusion that is based on the facts rather than on opinions, whereas in Chinese logic, conclusions can be drawn from assumptions and opinions, or partial causes, or one of

many causes. If Chinese students transfer the use of *therefore* directly from Chinese into their English essays, it may be regarded as misuse by non-Chinese academic readers. Milton and Tsang (1993) noticed several ways *therefore* was misused by Chinese students in their English essays such as transforming a single or partial cause into being the entire cause, or wrongly regarding opinions or assumptions as facts, or placing reasons after *therefore*. They claim this was ‘flaws in logic in the students’ thought processes’ (p. 230), although the ‘flaws’ could also be interpreted as being caused by cross-cultural and cross-language impacts.

5.2 A comparison of the placement of logical connectors in Chinese and English

X. Q. Li (1991, 2005) categorised 116 of the most commonly used Chinese logical connectors into four types, which are those that occur in the dependent clause, independent clause, between sentences and can occur repeatedly. Examples are illustrated as follows.

The first type are the logical connectors that only occur in dependent clause such as *ruguo* (if).

Ruguo ta bu qu, wo *jiu* mei banfa le.

If he does not go, I *then* have no way (to do it).

The second type, such as *foze* (otherwise), *jiu* (then), can only be used in the main clause (independent clause).

Ni xianzai zuihao dache, *foze* ni *jiu* ganbushang feiji le.

You’d better take a taxi now, *otherwise* you wouldn’t catch the plane.

Ruguo ta bu qu, wo *jiu* mei banfa le.

If he does not go, I *then* have no way (to do it).

The third type is those that generally occur repeatedly in all clauses of one sentence such as *yaome* (or). There were only five occurrences out of the 116.

Yaome wo qu, *yaome* chi ni qu, *yaome* women dou qu.

Either I go there, *or* you go, *or* we both go.

The fourth type are exclusively located between clauses, with a comma before and after, such as *lingwai* (in addition). This type also consists of a small amount of Chinese logical connectors, six out of the 116.

Wo buxiang qu, *lingwai*, wo ye meiyou qian qu.

I don't want to go, *in addition*, I don't have money to go.

Likewise, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) classified English logical connectors, based on their syntactic values, into *adverbial subordinators* and *conjunctive adverbials*. Adverbial subordinators are conjunctions grammatically linking two ideas in one sentence and occur in the dependent clause (e.g. *while*, *although* and *so*), while conjunctive adverbials are those generally across two sentences (e.g., *furthermore*, *in addition* and *however*)⁸. For example,

Adverbial subordinator

He was late for the meeting **although** he left home earlier than normal.

Conjunctive adverbial

This is the only solution to the current situation. **However**, it might not be the best one.

Comparison of the positioning of logical connectors in these two languages shows that both Chinese and English logical connectors can be placed in the dependent clause, as the first type in X. Q. Li's (2005) category and those being labelled as adverbial subordinators by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) such as *because* and *when*. Both Chinese and English logical connectors can occur between the sentences, as type 4 and some of type 2 in X. Q. Li's (2005) classification, and conjunctive adverbials in English (e.g., *in addition* and *however*). Although Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) did not list a type of repetition of English logical connectors, they exist in English, such as the use of ... or ... or

⁸ For details, see *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber et al., 1999), *The Grammar Book: ESL/EFL Teacher's Course* (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999), and *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language* (Quirk, et al., 1985).

Hence, the third type, the repetition of logical connectors, in X. Q. Li's (2005) categories also make sense in English.

Despite the fact that logical connectors can be placed in the dependent clause and between the sentences in both languages, there are still differences existing when being used by L1 Chinese and L1 English speakers. This will be introduced in the next two sections.

5.2.1 A comparison of the logical connectors placed in the dependent clause in English and Chinese

Some logical connectors can occur in the dependent clause of a sentence. However, L1 Chinese speakers tend to place them at the initial sentence position (ISP), whereas L1 English speakers seem to use them in more flexible positions. For example,

Yinwei feijin quxiao le, tamen meiyou lai.

Because the flight was cancelled, they did not come.

In this causal-resultative complex sentence, Chinese prefer to introduce the cause before the result (Gao, 2013; Xing, 2001). Consequently, the dependent clause, with the logical connector *because* is placed before the independent clause. Xing (2001) attributed this preference to the ISP of logical connectors to their inductive reasoning and logic. Hence, the use of *Yinwen ... suoyi* (*because ... therefore ...) is more natural for L1 Chinese speakers than that of *zhisuoyi ... shiyinwei* (*therefore ..., because ...).

This differs from English. For example, albeit that a *because*-clause can be placed either before or after the resultative clause, NES users generally place *because* in the initial position of a subordinate clause if the *because*-clause contains new information (Kolln & Gray, 2016), which is attributed to their deductive reasoning. Hence, the use of 'they did not come *because* the flight was cancelled' is more natural. This also reflects the pattern of given-new information in the conveyance of information in English (Green, Christopher, & Mei, 2000). The result that 'they did not come' is 'old' information but the reason why they did not come is new information for the interlocutors. Therefore, it is logical to place the dependent clause with *because* after the consequence. This seems opposite to Chinese writing protocol, in which reasons are positioned at the front of the sentence.

Apart from the explanation of the given-new information conveyance and the different deductive-inductive thinking patterns between Chinese and English, interestingly, Kress (2003) links the positioning of dependent clause (including the embedded logical connectors) in a sentence to users' cognitive development in the study of NES pupils' use of logical connectors. He noticed that NES children tend to produce the dependent clause before the independent clause as in example (9a) whereas NES adults were in favour of the opposite structure in example (9b).

(9)

Children product (written by a seven-year old child)

i. When it started to rain we picked up our picnic things. (p. 89)

Adult product

ii. We picked up our picnic things when it started to rain. (p. 89)

Kress (2003) explained that this was due to the adult version - example (9b) represented more complex logic than the child's version - example (9a). Structure a) only demonstrates the chronological sequence, 'After it started to rain we picked up our picnic things', while structure b) contains not only the linear logic 'After it started to rain we picked up our picnic things', it also represents the causal-result relationship where 'we picked up our picnic things because it started to rain'. Kress (2003) explained that, cognitively, the movement of *when* from the initial sentence position to the middle, mirrors a rising process of awareness where writers are able to construct a discourse by taking into consideration context and logic rather than mechanically following a chronological sequence. Kress (2003) deciphered this maturity as a process 'from the concrete temporal function to an abstract, logical, causal and hypothetical function' (p. 70). However, those L1 Chinese speakers who normally come to the British higher education systems have missed this stage that Kress (2003) describes. Hence, an explicit teaching programme may raise their awareness of this difference between L1 Chinese and English speakers.

5.2.2 A comparison of the logical connectors placed between sentences in English and Chinese

In English written discourse, conjunctive adverbials (e.g. *furthermore*, *in addition* and *however*), can be placed in the initial sentence position (ISP) of a

sentence, embedded within a sentence, or at the end of a sentence, although its connective value varies. Taking *however* as an example,

(10)

In the initial sentence position (ISP)

i. **However**, it might not be the best solution.

Danshi, zhege keneng bushi zuihao de jiejie fangfa.

In the middle of a sentence

b) It **however** might not be the best solution.

*Zhege *danshi* keneng bushi zuihao de jiejie fangfa.

At the end of sentence

c) It might not be the best solution, **however**.

Zhege keneng bushi zuihao de jiejie fangfa, *danshi*.

Kolln and Gray (2016) pointed out that the connective value of *however* decreases as a consequence of its move from the initial position to the end of the sentence. When, *however* is placed at the beginning of a sentence, it provides readers with a strong and immediate contrastive sense; when it occurs at the end, it provides a fact to the readers, slightly contrasting previous information.

However, in Chinese written discourse, *danshi* (however) can only be placed at the initial sentence position. The placement of *danshi* (however) after the subject is ungrammatical (see example 10b); and the positioning of *danshi* (however) at the end of a sentence only occurs in spoken discourse (see example 10c).

If Chinese students are influenced by the use of *however* in their L1, a preference of placing *however* at the ISP in their ESL/EFL compositions can be expected. This assumption has been confirmed in previous studies. Leedham and Cai (2013) identified 88% of the use of *however* at the ISP by L1 Chinese students compared to 65% by British NES university students, and 60% of the use of *therefore* at the ISP to 31%, in the corpora they collected. *Suoyi* (therefore) can only be placed in the ISP of a clause in Chinese written discourse. The positioning of *suoyi* (therefore) after the subject and at the end of the sentence generally only occurs in Chinese oral language.

Chinese students' preference for placing logical connectors at the ISP has also been detected in other studies. Field and Oi (1992) identified up to 80% of logical connectors were placed at the ISP by their Chinese participants comparing to only 38% by the Australian NES participants in their study. Milton (1999) detected a similar tendency in his study with Hong Kong Chinese students' written essays and as did Shi (2017) in her corpus-based study with spoken English produced by English major Chinese university students in TEM-4 tests.

Shi (2017) believed that the tendency to place logical connectors at the ISP by Chinese students in their English compositions was 'not accidental'. It was the consequence of a mixture of factors such as L1 transfer, direct L1-L2 translation, the design of Chinese English textbooks and Chinese English teaching approaches. Shi (2017) pointed out that almost all Chinese English textbooks place logical connectors at the initial sentence position, which can be mediated by the use of authentic texts as suggested by Granger and Tyson (1996). In addition, Shi (2017) also criticised Chinese English teachers' teaching on the ISP, and the focus on the lexical function and large neglect of the semantic values of logical connectors.

Interestingly, studies regarding the placement of logical connectors in the written and spoken English products of L1 French, Dutch and Chinese learners almost all revealed their preference for placing logical connectors in the ISP (Field & Oi, 1992; Granger & Tyson, 1996; Green, et al., 2000; Leedham & Cai, 2013; Milton, 1999; Shi, 2017). Despite that L1 English speakers also position some logical connectors in the ISP of a sentence, it is evident that they use them with more flexibility when compared with the predominant ISP used by NNES users. It would be interesting to conduct a thorough study to disclose the possible reasons behind this. I speculate that there are several, L1 influence, NNES users' English proficiency and/or the default rule of 'playing it safe' when using an L2, or a mixture of these factors.

5.2.3 The correlative use of Chinese logical connectors and its potential impact

The co-occurrence of two or more than two logical connectors is a typical Chinese language characteristic such as *yinwei ... suoyi* (because ... therefore), *ruguo ... jiu* (if ... then). This correlative way of applying logical connectors is rare in English, although it does exist. For example, either ... or, not only ... but also. Most scholars attribute this phenomenon to Chinese philosophy, the co-existence of *yin-*

and-yang (dark-bright or female-male), to keep the seemingly opposite or contrary forces in harmony and balance (e.g., Ji, 2006; Wang, 2014). The nature of balance leads Chinese native speakers towards the structure of co-occurrence in life, language, and almost all domains. For the relationship between Chinese language and its philosophy, see the noteworthy book *Researches on Philosophy of Language Meditation on China's Post-Philosophy of Language in 21st Century* published in 2014 by Wang Yan.

Although the two parts of the correlative logical connectors can also occur independently in Chinese, it is normal to use the correlative parts together in formal written discourse. Example (8) below is taken from Lv (1999) and its literal English translation is listed as follow. Example (8i) is the most used pattern in formal written discourse. Example (8ii) and (8iii) normally occur in informal written discourse and spoken.

(8)

i. **Yinwei** Yanzi gezi aixiao, **suo yi** Churen jiu zai damen de pangbian kai le yige xiaomen rang Yanzi jinqu.

ii. **Yinwei** Yanzi gezi aixiao, (**suo yi**) Churen jiu zai damen de pangbian kai le yige xiaomen rang Yanzi jinqu.

iii. (**Yinwei**) Yanzi gezi aixiao, **suo yi** Churen jiu zai damen de pangbian kai le yige xiaomen rang Yanzi jinqu.

***Because** Yanzi is short, **therefore** King of Chu opened a sub-door to let him in, rather than inviting him to go through the main door.

If Chinese students are unaware that the correlative use of logical connectors *because* and *therefore* violates English grammar, and transfer its use from Chinese to English, it might be certainly witted the existence of *because ... therefore ...* in their ESL/EFL compositions. This was actually detected in the pre-intervention essays produced by the Chinese students from my study, and will be discussed in later chapters.

In addition, the repetitive use of *suoyi* (therefore) to construct a chain structure of *yinwei ... suoyi ... suoyi ... (*because ... therefore ... therefore ...)* is

grammatically and pragmatically correct in Chinese, but it sometime violates English syntactic rules and/or the logic of information flow. For example,

Yinwei yupian bushuyu Yingyu jiaoxue de fanchou nei, *suoyi* laoshi meiyou jiao, *suoyi* Zhongguo xuesheng jiu buhui kaolv yupian zai Yingyu xuexi de zhongyaoxing.

**Because* discourse is beyond the English pedagogy, *therefore* teachers do not teach, *therefore* Chinese students do not learn the importance of discourse in English.

In this sentence, the consequence in the previous clause turns into the reason in the successive sentence, which again causes another consequence. This chain structure has also been detected in the English essays produced by the lower level Chinese students recruited for this study.

In summary, I have compared the categorisation of logical connectors in English and Chinese, and the positioning of logical connectors between Chinese and English, and the correlative use of Chinese logical connectors. I have also discussed the challenges for L1 Chinese speakers if they transfer their L1 to L2 features in the use of logical connectors. In the next sections, the over-, under- and misuse of logical connectors by NNEs users compared with their NES counterparts will be discussed, and analytical tools will be introduced.

5.3 Studies regarding the application of logical connectors in ESL / EFL discourse

The application of L2 logical connectors is a common challenge for L2 users. There are abundant studies related to the use of logical connectors by both NES and NNEs users. Researchers attribute the differences in the application of English logical connectors between NES and NNEs speakers to L1 transfer (Granger & Tyson, 1996), developmental process (Altenberg & Tapper, 1998), avoidance strategy (Lei, 2012; Ostler, 1987), overteaching and/or uncontextualised teaching (Crewe, 1990; Milton, 1999, 2009; Milton & Tsang, 1993), the problematic design of English textbooks (Milton & Tsang, 1993), individual preferences (Tankó, 2004), and genre and discipline impact (Charles, Hunston, & Pecorari, 2011; Gao, 2016), or a combination of some or all of these factors.

The influence of the first language has been regarded as one of the prominent factors that affects the application of logical connectors by NNEs users. For example,

some researchers conducted studies in the Indo-European language family, such as Granger and Tyson (1996) with French speakers, Tankó (2004) with Hungarian speakers, Altenberg and Tapper (1998) with advanced Swedish learners, and Mauranen (1993) in writing by Finish speakers with English proficiency at expert-like levels. Other scholars go beyond the Indo-European language family, such as Gardezi and Nesi (2009) in their study with L1 Urdu speaking Pakistani undergraduates, Field and Oi (1992) with Hong Kong students, Scollon and Scollon (1995) with Japanese and Korean students, and Ostler (1987) in Arabic ESL/EFL written discourse.

ESL/EFL users' English expertise is another factor that has been focused on due to its possible impact on the use of logical connectors. Investigations have been conducted ranging from high-school students (Field & Oi, 1992; Milton & Tsang, 1993), undergraduates (Altenberg & Tapper, 1998; Bolton, Nelson, & Hung, 2003; Crewe, 1990; Granger & Tyson, 1996), MA and doctoral postgraduates (Chen, C. W. Y., 2006; Lei, 2012), to professional writers (Yli-Jokipii & Jorgensen, 2004).

Some researchers are interested in the use of particular logical connectors by ESL/EFL users. For instance, Scollon and Scollon (1995) noticed the incorrect positioning of the coordinators *and* and *but* by L1 Japanese and Korean students. Granger and Tyson (1996) observed the overuse of corroborative connectors such as *actually* by French and German-speakers. Ucar and Yukselir (2017) noticed the underuse of *thus* by L1 Turkish university students in essays. Green, et al. (2000) were interested in the use of logical connectors in spoken discourse.

These studies have revealed the differences of applying logical connectors between NES and NNES users in the domain of the over-, under- and misuse by NNES speakers and the differentiation of positioning. This will be discussed in the next sections in detail, as the use of logical connectors is one imperative factor that contributes to the construction of discourse coherence.

5.3.1 The definition of over- under- and misuse of logical connectors

The over-, under-, and misuse of logical connectors by NNES learners are identified by comparing their use in discourses with those of NES. It is worth noting that these concepts are comparative rather than absolute.

Milton and Tsang (1993) provided descriptive definitions of overuse and misuse as shown below (p. 228).

Overuse (redundant use)

The logical connector is not necessary; its present [presence] does not contribute to the coherence of the text;

Misuse

The use of the logical connector is misleading; another cohesive device should have been used; the logical connector is placed inappropriately; misuse of the logical connector is related to loose organisation and faulty logic within the text.

Based on information compiled from the relevant research, I have introduced my own definition of underuse.

Underuse

The absence of a logical connector does not damage reader comprehension, but if it is present, it will enhance readability.

The following excerpt from NNES compositions is used to clarify the concepts of overuse and misuse of logical connectors by C. W. Y. Chen (2006, p. 126).

In order to achieve the ultimate control of English, language learners are encouraged to learn English as early as one can. Thus, there is a tendency that Taiwan will turn to an ESL context in the near future. However, there must be a severe impact on learner identity, and learners can never have ultimate control of English (Belz, 2002). The above researchers in different language contexts all prove that learner's identity is changing with language contexts; moreover, learner would suffer from a far more dramatic struggle in a more mainstream context. Therefore, if ESL context are hastily enacted in Taiwan, where the mainstream language is still not English, then, it is for certain that learners will never have ultimate achievement of English; rather, they will suffer from not only a dramatic struggle, but also a severe self-identify problem. Consequently, further researches are needed on this issue to suggest a better language context for learners.

However, moreover, then and rather in this paragraph have been identified as overuse (Chen, C. W. Y., 2006), in that the logic embedded in this discourse would have provided readers with sufficient information to facilitate a reasonable prediction

from the information flow. The presence of these connectors is redundant, intrusive and unnecessary. *Thus, therefore* and *consequently* have been regarded as misuse, because the immediate sequential sentences after these three connectors did not comply with a cause-effect relationship with their corresponding preceding sentences.

Underuse or under-signaling coined by Hoey (1983) means that the place where NES users would employ logical connectors is neglected by NNES writers. Generally, it is regarded as a peripheral issue compared to the overuse and misuse of connectors. It does not severely damage the understanding of the text, given that the implicit logic of the text is coherent and consistent (Crewe, 1990). It may only reduce the reading speed of readers, as the explicit existence of logical connectors, if used properly, should increase reading speed and facilitate comprehension. Hence, the underuse of logical connectors is not the focus of studies regarding the use of logical connectors by L2 users, nor is it this study's.

Wrongly used connectors have been perceived to resulting in a 'fragmented' paragraph damaging NES readers' comprehension (Chen, C. W. Y., 2006), and *missignal* the development of the discourse (Hoey, 1983). Hence, when the misuse of logical connectors has been identified, teaching should always follow. The next section will concentrate on the use of English logical connectors by L1 Chinese speakers with various English proficiencies in their ESL and/or EFL discourse, followed by a summary of the possible influential factors.

5.3.2 The inappropriately used logical connectors by L1 Chinese students in ESL / EFL discourse

The use of logical connectors by Chinese high middle school students in the EFL context

Field and Oi (1992) identified the overuse of logical connectors by L1 Chinese speakers at the high school level. They compared a corpus of Hong Kong high school students' argumentative written compositions to their Australian counterparts', and reported a significantly excessive use of logical connectors by Chinese students, along with the issue of predominantly sentence-initial positioning of connectors, and a preference for using only a small cohort of connectors. They postulated that the causes might be L1 negative transfer and Chinese students' lack of register-sensitivity, such as the presence of *anyway* in formal essays, and the

influence of Chinese English textbooks, such as the overuse of *also*, *on the other hand* and *moreover*.

The most frequently used logical connectors by non-English majors Chinese students in the EFL context

As introduced in Chapter 2, Chinese students with non-English majors studying in mainland China are not required to write essays in English, hence Liu and Braine's (2005) study is intrinsically valuable. They collected a small corpus from an academic writing course offered by a top university, Tsinghua University, which consisted of 50 academic compositions produced by 50 first-year Chinese undergraduate students after a 13-week EFL academic writing training course. They reported that *and*, *also*, *or*, *but*, *so* were the most frequently used logical connectors. Logical connectors such as *furthermore*, *on the contrary*, *in addition* and *nevertheless* were hardly ever detected in students' writing. Liu and Braine (2005) attributed this phenomenon to the participants' weak language proficiency as well as lack of register-sensitivity.

The use of logical connectors by Chinese university students with English majors in the EFL context

Chinese students with English majors in mainland China are required to write essays in English. Lee and Chen (2009) compared a Chinese learner corpus of 78 Chinese undergraduate dissertations from those majoring in linguistics and applied linguistics from Mainland China with two NES corpora. One is the NES learner corpus consisted of 76 NES assignments from BAWE (British Academic Written English) Corpus, which is 'a record of proficient university-level student writing' with a good coverage of 30 disciplines at undergraduate and taught master levels, and regarded as an expert student corpus. The other NES corpus was a professional writer corpus, containing 56 published articles in journals such as *Applied Linguistics*. They identified a high frequency of '*besides*' and the misuse of '*according to*' by Chinese students compared to their British NES learners and expert counterparts. They however did not detect a significantly different use of logical connectors between NES university students and NES expert writers, which is different from Bolton et al.'s (2003) findings.

Lee and Chen (2009) argued that first language users, no matter university students or expert writers, benefit from both their intuitions and their greater

comprehension of the implicit meanings semantically and pragmatically, which places second language users consistently at a disadvantage. For instance, NES users have a sense that the information immediately after *besides* does not share the same importance as the aforementioned information semantically, and it mostly adds less important information that complements the meaning of the discourse. ESL/EFL learners however are unable to obtain this type of knowledge from dictionaries and/or textbooks.

C. W. Y. Chen (2006) also identified the overuse of logical connectors such as *besides* in the essays produced by L1 Chinese Taiwan high-proficient university students, in comparison with published articles. The learner corpus consisted of 23 essays produced by Taiwan first and second year postgraduate students in MA TESOL, who are regarded as advanced EFL learners; the expert corpus contained 10 published articles from English linguistics and language journals.

The use of logical connectors by the most advanced L1 Chinese English learners in the EFL context

In 2012, Lei generated a learner corpus containing 20 doctoral dissertations from Applied Linguistics majors from key universities in mainland China. She compared it with an expert writer corpus consisting of 120 published articles from six international journals in the field of applied linguistics. These PhD candidates represent Chinese students who are literally at the highest English level, as they have experienced at least a 10-year full-time English study programme (four-year undergraduate, 3-year postgraduate and at least 3-year doctoral study) at a tertiary level, plus approximately 8-year compulsory English study at a secondary school.

Lei (2012) identified an evident overuse of logical connectors in the causal, resultative and sequential relation and the underuse of adversative logical connectors. The redundantly used connectors are 13 additive adverbials such as *besides*, *in addition*, and *what's more*, 10 sequential adverbials such as *firstly*, *secondly* and *in summary*, 5 causal / resultatives *therefore*, *so*, *accordingly*, *otherwise*, *hence*, and 5 adversative adverbials *actually*, *on the other hand*, *on the contrary*, *though*, and *in spite of this*. The underused logical connectors were *however*, *again*, *despite this*, *in contrast*, *nevertheless*, and *conversely*. Among them, *however* and *again* were the least used in these doctoral theses. Lei (2012) ascribed this phenomenon to over-

teaching, lack of register-sensitivity, and the complexity of semantic and syntactic meaning that might be beyond L1 Chinese students' competence.

Although Lei (2012) did not conduct a thorough statistical analysis on her data but only provided descriptive analysis, her study offers a rare and commendable opportunity for us to take a glance at the most advanced Chinese English learners. As, if these students who experienced 10-year full-time English study in universities still share the similar issues with the other Chinese students, it may be reasonable to take a look into the Chinese English teaching system and approaches. It may also yield a need for the adaptation of the current Chinese English pedagogy to satisfy students' needs in the perspective of the use of logical connectors. This is one of the reasons to conduct this study.

The overuse of logical connectors by Chinese Hong Kong university students in the ESL context

Hong Kong Chinese students study English as a second language, rather than a foreign language as their mainland Chinese counterparts do. Ma and Wang (2016) detected the overuse of logical connectors by L1 Chinese Hong Kong university students. They conducted a small scope study on 45 essays produced by first-year Cantonese speaking university students from a variety of majors, a little less than 50,000 words in total. In comparison with the 46 essays supplied by first year and final year American NES students, elicited from LOCNESS (The Louvain Corpus of English Essays), they diagnosed the redundant use of logical connectors by Chinese students in ESL academic writing; for example, the overuse of *moreover* by Hong Kong tertiary students; 26 times more frequent than their American counterparts.

Milton and Tsang (1993) generated a rather large L1 Chinese student written corpus, which encompassed 4 million words from 2,000 assignments and 206 scripts produced by the freshmen of Hong Kong universities, to compare with two forms of NES learner corpora; one was from the American Brown Corpus and the other was the LOB (Lancaster-Oslo-Bergen) Corpus. Both the American and the British corpora consist of over a million-word collections. They identified the redundant use and misuse of logical connectors by L1 Chinese speakers but did not detect any substantial differences when logical connectors were applied by the two variations of English native speaker. This study highlighted their concern regarding the possible impact of English variants on the use of logical connectors in general.

Milton and Tsang (1993) blamed the overuse of cohesion devices on teachers, who enhanced students' misplaced belief that the number of cohesion devices in a text was a significant indicator of high quality writing. They also criticised the teaching approach of the Hong Kong education system where logical connectors were taught, but 'their syntactic and semantic differences' were neglected (p. 231). This leads students into using what they thought to be logical connector alternatives that were in fact functionally different. In addition, they regarded the misuse of *moreover* and *therefore* by Hong Kong Chinese students as the indicator of 'flaws in logic in the students' thought processes' (p. 230). Here they meant that Chinese students showed little awareness of logical differences and rhetorical styles between the two cultures.

Bolton et al. (2003) compared both Hong Kong Chinese and NES university students' essays to NES expert writers' articles, and identified the overuse of logical connectors in both Chinese and NES students' assignments, in contrast to professional writers' work. The two learner corpora consist of English compositions by Chinese undergraduate Cantonese speakers from ICE-HK (International Corpus of English – Hong Kong) and compositions produced by NES tertiary students from ICE-GB. The expert corpus consists of published articles collected from ICE-GB (International Corpus of English – Great Britain). However, they pointed out that there existed significant differences between these two learner corpora in terms of overuse. Hong Kong learner writers used *so*, *and*, *also*, *thus* and *but* redundantly while their counterparts did so with *however*, *so*, *therefore*, *thus* and *furthermore*. They agreed with Field and Oi's (1992) conclusion about a lack of register-sensitivity in Chinese speakers.

The use of logical connectors by oversea Chinese students at the tertiary level

Leedham and Cai (2013) formed two learner corpora; one consisted of assignments from L1 Chinese undergraduate students studying in the UK, and the other was from English native speakers' essays in the BAWE corpus. They identified the misused and overused logical connectors favoured by L1 Chinese speakers such as, *what's more* and *besides*, as well as the prominent sentence-initial position of *moreover* and *therefore*. They ascribed it to the impact of the textbooks employed in Chinese high schools and Chinese students' lack of register awareness of English.

In summary, conclusions drawn from previous studies suggest that L1 Chinese speakers demonstrate the use of logical connectors in EFL/ESL academic compositions in a systematic and Chinese characterised way, compared to NES writers. For example, the overuse of *and, also, or, so, but, what's more, besides*, etc., the misuse of *moreover, therefore, according to*, etc., and the underuse of *furthermore, in addition, nevertheless, despite this, however*, etc.

The factors that may be responsible for these situations can be summarised as: mechanical teaching (Hinkel, 2001), the design of textbooks, the exam-oriented system in China (Leedham & Cai, 2013), the insensitivity to genre and discipline differences in rhetorical style (Reynolds, 2002), lack of register awareness (Field & Oi, 1992; Liu, 2008; Shaw & Liu, 1998; Yang & Sun, 2012), L1 transfer and improper translation equivalents of logical connector between English and Chinese (Field & Oi, 1992), the difference in the perceptions of logic between the East and the West (Milton & Tsang, 1993), the absence of NES's language developmental process and English environment (Leedham, 2014; Sugiura, 2000), and a consequence of the developmental process of language learning (Crewe, 1990). In most situations, the inappropriate use of logical connectors by L1 Chinese students is actually the consequence of a mixture of several previously mentioned factors.

Encouragingly, Leedham's (2014) study with L1 Chinese overseas students has pointed out that a rich English environment and high frequency input may become a welcome counterbalance to this situation. She initiated a corpus with 146 assignments written by L1 Chinese overseas students from different years in one university, and compared it to an NES corpus encompassing 611 British undergraduate assignments. She observed that there were fewer 'Chinese characteristics' in the assignments of the third-year Chinese students compared to those of the first and the second year students, such as the reduced use of the informal logical connector *besides*, and the decreased presence of the subjective sense of *we* in senior assignments. She hence suspected that, without explicit teaching of this aspect, a rich English input and an increased English proficiency might be the best explanation for this phenomenon.

In the next section, the analytical tool that is used to identify the frequency of logical connectors will be introduced. This will be used in my analytic process to identify the most frequently used logical connectors in the pre- and post-intervention essays for the purpose of data analysis. This analytical tool will not be taught to

students as it does not directly enhance their understanding and application of logical connectors.

5.4 The analytical tool of logical connectors: ratio of occurrence

The ratio of the occurrence of logical connectors in a discourse can be measured in two ways; one is a word-based calculation and the other is a sentence-based calculation. The former is the raw frequency-count number of logical connectors divided by the total number of *lexicon tokens*, and the latter is that raw number divided by the total number of *sentences*.

Milton and Tsang (1993) employed the former type. The frequency count is ‘the number of times the word occurs’ in a corpus (p. 224). The two-step formula is as follows:

$$\text{Ratio of occurrence} = \text{frequency count} / \text{lexicon token of corpus}$$

$$\text{Difference of frequency} = \text{Ratio of occurrence in L2 corpus} / \text{Ratio of occurrence in L1 corpus}$$

If the result is over 1, it reveals overuse; and if less than 1, then it is underused. For example, ‘the word, *also*, occurs 16,291 times in the [NNES] Learners’ Corpus of c.4,084,000 tokens; the ratio of occurrence is thus $16291/2,084,000 = 0.0040$ ’ (Milton & Tsang, 1993, p. 224). In comparison with the ratio of occurrence of *also* in Brown NES Corpus (0.0011), the difference of ratios is $0.0040/0.0011 = 3.64$ roughly. It is over 1. Therefore, NNES learners overused the word *also* in their writing samples more than their NES counterparts did (as chosen from Brown Corpus) in Milton and Tsang’s (1993) study.

Bolton, et al. (2003) employed a *sentence-based calculation* to identify the over- and underuse of logical connectors in their study comparing academic essays composed by Hong Kong and British university students at the tertiary level. Here, the ratio of frequency was calculated by dividing the number of occurrences of logical connectors with the number of sentences and then multiplying by 1,000 as demonstrated below.

$$\text{Ratio of occurrence} = \text{frequency count} / \text{number of sentence} * 1000$$

$$\text{Difference of frequency} = \text{Ratio of occurrence in L2 corpus} / \text{Ratio of occurrence in L1 corpus}$$

They argued that the ‘word-based calculation’ (Milton & Tsang, 1993) was not the best measurement tool for the ratio of occurrence of logical connectors, as

connectors generally function at the sentential level rather than the lexicon level. They stated that the calculation of the ratio of frequency at the lexicon level would raise the risk of neglecting logical connectors' contribution to the construction of text coherence and consequently, becoming asymmetrically inclining toward their lexicon elements.

To identify the most suitable ratio of frequency measurement, C. W. Y. Chen (2006) utilised both a word-based calculation (Milton & Tsang, 1993) and a sentence-based calculation (Bolton et al., 2003) to investigate a written corpus generated from first and second-year Hong Kong university students. She reported that these two calculation systems yielded contradictory results. In the word-based calculation, she identified a higher ratio of occurrence of logical connectors in the NNES written samples than that in the expert-like corpus, in contrast to the result generated from the sentence-based calculation, in which the ratio of occurrence of logical connectors in the expert-like corpus was higher than that in the learner writer's. The results generated from the sentence-based calculation however is contradictory to the conclusions made by other studies.

This study adopts the word-based calculation matrix to determine ratio of frequency. The reasons lie in these two facts. One fact is that the word-based calculation is widely adopted in studies on the use of logical connectors. For example, the study of Granger and Tyson (1996) on French third and fourth year undergraduate students; Altenberg and Tapper's study (1998) on Swedish undergraduates; and Lee and Chen's study (2009) on Hong Kong Chinese college students. The results generated from this study would be comparable to most of the relevant studies. The other fact is that common errors and mistakes in syntax and punctuation by ESL/EFL learners often leads to a difficulty in identifying sentence boundaries, particularly when analysing texts written by learners with low English proficiencies.

A challenge has been raised in determining over- and underuse. That is, no clear-cut quantitative or statistic index, say, 5% or a 20-fold difference, that has been established by previous researchers to identify the measurement of under- and overuse. For instance, Field and Oi (1992) made descriptive comments to announce a difference in the use of logical connectors between NES students and Hong Kong middle school students such as 'a much greater variety in L2', or '*on the other hand* was used 22 times but only once by L2 writers' (p. 23).

Similarly, Lee and Chen (2009) labelled *besides* as being overused because its occurrence in Chinese students' academic EFL written essays was 3.3 times compared to 0.2 times by L1 English speakers; and likewise, 14.1 times to 3.5-3.7 times of applying *according to*, per 10,000 words. The former had a 3.1 times difference but the latter had a 10.4-10.6 times difference. In another case, Bolton et al. (2003) classified *on the contrary* as being overused by NNEs learners, on the basis of a difference of 0.1 between the ratio of frequency compared to that of the Academic corpus employed. This might be easily challenged on whether this 0.1 difference can be regarded as redundant use, or whether it was just caused by individual differences or genre differences between the chosen samples.

Lei (2012) noticed this issue and construed an explicit number, 'the difference of 10 between the frequency of occurrence per million words' (p. 272) between two corpora, as the criterion for overuse and underuse in her study. Measured by this criterion, she identified 33 logical connectors overused by L1 Chinese PhD students in their dissertations compared to those used in NES expert corpus. However, she did not explain why a difference of times 10 in the ratio of occurrence is the best index to determine the over- or underuse of logical connectors. It is more like a choice based on her own experience or an educated guess, rather than from scientific research.

Compared to the study of over- and underuse of logical connectors, the inaccurate use of logical connectors is studied in a more descriptive mode. Generally, logical connectors are analysed individually. The focus is on teaching to ensure the proper use. The teaching of the frequently wrongly used logical connectors by L1 Chinese English learners is the core of the third stage of this teaching intervention, with the topical development as the first stage and the progression of topic sentence as the second stage, so a coherent pedagogical design can be conducted targeting the construction of discourse coherence from text to sentence and then to the use of particular logical connectors, reflecting the impact of cross-language and cross-cultural factors.

5.5 The suggested approaches to teaching logical connectors

Studies regarding the application of English logical connectors by L1 Chinese speakers are abundant. However, the majority of studies focus on the identification of the over-, under- and misused logical connectors, and the possible reasons behind this. There are rare studies concerning the importance and essentiality of raising L1

Chinese students' awareness in the teaching of logical connectors and the contribution of logical connectors to discourse coherence.

This study will take advantage of the results generated by previous studies, and then choose a small number of logical connectors that are rather challenging but frequently used by Chinese students, and teach them in the intervention. There are two reasons for this. There is no point in conducting a study to 'confirm' the conclusions that have been drawn by a number of previous studies, nor is it practical for a doctoral study or comply with the purposes of this study.

Teaching logical connectors according to frequency

Along with the corpora analysis development in the language field, the teaching of logical connector based on their frequency is one of the hot topics. Liu (2008) suggests that the teaching regime should be based on the frequency of logical connectors, and that both the most and least frequently used connectors in NES users' discourse should be highlighted to NNES. For instance, Chinese students should be taught logical connector in the sequence of *however, thus, therefore* and *for example* because these are listed in Biber et al.'s (1999) study as the most frequently used connectors in their statistical assessment regarding British English native speakers, including oral and written discourses. However, Liu (2008) did not take other influential factors into consideration such as genre and discipline, ESL learner's English proficiency, individual writer's preferences, and their writing skills and abilities. Do teachers have to prepare to teach students studying in different academic disciplines with a variety of logical connectors based on their specific disciplines? Even though this works, which list shall teachers teach to pre-tertiary students? The practical pedagogical design needs to be carefully planned, if taking this corpus-based approach.

Teaching logical connectors to raise learners' awareness

Crewe (1990) advanced three pedagogical approaches to the teaching of logical connectors to ESL learners, a *reductionist*, an *expansionist* and a *deductionist* approach. He suggests that these three approaches could be used as three stages of teaching practice to help students 'remedy the misuse/overuse of' logical connectors (p. 321). The ultimate goal of these pedagogical approaches he suggests is to raise NNES learners' awareness of logical connectors in respect to their contribution to discourse in deep logicity rather than being treated as 'surface-level fillers'. This is

in line with Granger and Tyson's (1996) suggestion to teach NNES learners with the 'semantic, stylistic and syntactic behaviour of individual connectors' (p. 17). They also believed that this teaching was able to raise NNES speakers' awareness when using and positioning logical connectors.

The reductionist approach Crewe (1990) suggested is that instead of teaching all of the logical connectors, a small range of logical connectors should be selected for the purpose of teaching, based on learners' English proficiency and the aims of their study.

The expansionist approach he suggested, is teaching 'any expression which explicitly states the connection with the preceding (or following) textual matter' first, which he named an 'explicit marker' (most of them contains the referential pronoun *this/these* or *that/those*, such as *because of these events* or *opposite to this*) (p. 322), and then expanding the teaching from the 'explicit markers' to the conventional logical connectors such as *therefore, however*.

The deductionist approach that he suggested will start in the prewriting stage. Students are required to consider the embedded logic between paragraphs and/or ideas before starting to write, at the brainstorming stage. For example, if they plan to produce an argument or idea that contains a causal-resultative relation, 'therefore, as a consequence' might be the best candidates to place there. If they intend to produce a paragraph that adds more information to the preceding one, 'in addition, furthermore' should be in their consideration. Through this process, teachers may convey the information to students that logical connectors should be used to serve the deep logicity embedded in discourse, rather than *decoration* tools to form the 'surface logicity' of a discourse.

Crewe's (1990) suggested pedagogical approaches are more like guidelines to the teaching of logical connectors to ESL/EFL learners. It might need to complement other approaches to become feasible. Probably this is why no follow-up studies have been published to my knowledge. For instance, how the logical connectors should be chosen was not clearly stated in Crewe's (1990) study; and how many logical connectors should be selected to teach; etc. However, it has inspired me to engage in the teaching of a small group of logical connectors that L1 Chinese speakers feel challenging in this study, to help the construction of discourse coherence from a 'micro' way. I adapted the *reductionist* and *deductionist* approaches that Crewe (1990) suggested, and also introduced the frequency of logic connectors at the beginning of

this teachings stage, aiming to raise students' awareness of the genre impact. The detailed teaching procedure and content will be revealed in the next chapter, the section of 'Design of the teaching intervention'.

To sum up, this chapter has introduced the concept of logical connectors (*guanlianci*) in both English and Chinese, the particular Chinese features such as the existence of co-occurrence, and the flexibility of positioning. I then discussed the application of logical connectors in English by NES and NNES users, particularly by L1 Chinese speakers, the issues of over-, under- and misuse of logical connectors, and the preference for sentence-initial position (ISP) by L1 Chinese learners.

In the next section, I will summarise the literature reviewed in the last three chapters, briefly discussing the three domains that have been chosen as the teaching content and their contribution to the construction of discourse coherence. At the end, the research questions will be revealed.

5.6 Summary and research questions

The previous three chapters have reviewed academic writing in the three domains that contribute to the construction of global and local discourse coherence: the topical development of global discourse coherence, the development of the topic sentence in a paragraph, and the application of logical connectors at the sentence level, in both Chinese and English languages, as well as the ESL/EFL products of L1 Chinese students. The corresponding analytical tools, TSA (topical structure analysis), Reid's (1996) categories of inappropriate development of topic sentences, and the ratio of occurrence of logical connectors have been introduced.

The reviews demonstrate the possible cross-cultural and cross-linguistic influences on the ESL/EFL compositions produced by L1 Chinese speakers, and the areas that Chinese students need to acquire, but are lacking in the Chinese English teaching systems and cannot be adequately supplied by the overseas universities in which they enrol. These are the lack of an awareness of register and discourse notion in academic writing, lack of an awareness of discourse coherence and the practical strategies and skills needed to construct discourse coherence, and a lack of awareness of the target readers' expectations.

In the view of the above, I introduced a three-month teaching intervention for Chinese students, raising their awareness of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic impacts on global and local discourse coherence and its manifestation in academic

writing, and providing them with practical tools that they can use in the construction of British English discourse coherence.

In light of the above, the following research questions were formulated:

1. What is the impact of English proficiency on the nature of L2 discourse structure in academic writing?
2. How do teaching interventions that target discourse devices impact L2 academic writing?
3. How does raising awareness of the construction of discourse coherence, related to cross-cultural and cross-language issues, affect L1 Chinese ESL learners' academic performance?

All three questions are further divided into three sub-questions; each sub-question focuses on one of three domains that this study targets. The first research question will be explored in the three domains of: data generated from only the pre-intervention academic essays produced by the two groups of Chinese participants, to identify the impact of the Chinese students' English proficiency on topical development, the development of the topic sentence in a paragraph, and the application of logical connectors. The second research question will be answered by the data collected from both the pre- and post-intervention essays. By comparing the essays produced by the same group of students before and after the teaching intervention, any possible teaching effect on the construction of discourse coherence in the three domains can be identified. The third research question will be investigated from the questionnaires and interviews conducted after the teaching programme, in order to have a close look at students' awareness raising process and any possible delay-effect of the awareness-raising on their use of language in academic writing.

In this study, academic writing is defined as essays and dissertations written within an HE context. Features of academic writing such as referencing and plagiarism are not the concern of this study. An utterly British English native-like piece of academic writing is not the criterion to judge discourse coherence and writing quality, nor the goal of the teaching intervention of this study. Interlanguage or language features reflecting L1 are acceptable in ESL/EFL learners' written

discourse as long as they do not cause severe damage to the construction of discourse coherence.

The following chapters will be arranged as such: Chapter 6 introduces the participants, the design of the teaching intervention, and the research methods. Chapter 7 analyses data collected from pre- and post-intervention essays, questionnaires and interviews. Chapter 8 discusses the results generated from data with respect to the impact of ESL/EFL proficiency and the effectiveness of the teaching intervention, as well as the potential influential factors that affect students' awareness-raising. A duplicated study of this pedagogical design conducted in a Chinese university will be introduced in Chapter 9, with discussion on its possible application in a wider context. Chapter 10 will end with a general discussion regarding the implications of the findings for both teaching and learning parties, and the limitations of the findings.

Chapter 6 Research Methodology and Design

In this chapter, I will introduce the pilot study, the methodology used to explore the questions above, the target groups who are also the potential beneficiaries, the pedagogical approaches, the syllabus design, the overall experimental process of the three-month teaching intervention, and issues related to research validity and reliability.

6.1 Pilot study

A pilot study was conducted in the Spring term of 2014 with a small scope of L1 Chinese students studying at a British university. The participants were recruited by convenience sampling. Nine postgraduate students signed the consent forms and agreed to participate in this pilot study during the spring term (the second term of their postgraduate study). Five were from the business management field, two from engineering, one from chemistry and the last one was from Women's Issues in Social Sciences. Their IELTS writing skills were scored at between 5 and 5.5 when they enrolled in this British university in Autumn, 2013, and their average essay mark in the first term was 52. The disappointment of their own low essay marks was one of main reasons that drove them to seek help in their academic writing.

The pilot study contained three stages. Stage one included all the preparation processes such as the introduction of the essay topic, the collection of the essays at this pre-intervention stage, a vocabulary size test, and the arrangement of teaching schedules. The focus of stage two was on the teaching practice, which was designed by me, concentrating on the three particular domains which I believed were useful and helpful in ESL academic writing for those L1 Chinese speakers with intermediate and/or advanced English proficiencies. Post-intervention essays were collected at the end of this stage, with the same topic, enabling me to conduct a study that compares the possible changes made by the same learners before and after the intervention, and to assess and evaluate the possible impact of this teaching intervention. Questionnaires and interviews were introduced at stage three, to collect in-depth information from the individuals.

The later experiment duplicated this procedure with the following changes. The teaching content was adapted; a re-assessment of participants' vocabulary size was added after the teaching as well as the introduction of an online discussion panel. The

details of the experimental procedure are demonstrated in Table 6-2.

The re-assessment of the participants' vocabulary size was added in the experiment due to the earnest requests of the participants of the pilot study. They wanted a re-testing of their vocabulary size in the hope of identifying any possible improvement after the three-month study. The enthusiasm or the 'obsession' with the number of words they know, or 'recognise' in Nation's (2006, 2013) definition, seems to be characteristic of a certain type of L1 Chinese English learner. Many researchers and Chinese English teaching practitioners believe that this obsession has been encouraged by the Chinese English teaching systems (e.g., Chai, 2016). Hence, Paul Nation's Vocabulary Size Test was conducted twice; before and after the teaching intervention. The results, while not surprising me, did however, disappoint those participating in this pilot study. There were no significant differences between their vocabulary size measured before and after. This result is consistent with the result received from the later experiment. The result is introduced in detail in Table 6-2 in the section 6.3.5. I did not expect a significant increase in the breadth of the participants' vocabulary size but suspected that there would be some improvement in the depth of their vocabulary owing to this three-month teaching programme. However, this was not the focus of the study, plus the complexity and subjectivity of measuring the depth of the learners' vocabulary knowledge, I hence did not conduct further investigation into this aspect.

Another change that was introduced after the pilot study was the introduction of an online discussion panel. During the pilot, I established a 'chat group' on *WeChat*, to make communication between me and the participants more immediate and for the convenience of the group. It was welcomed by the participants and later shifted its purpose to become a question-and-answer forum or a discussion panel with their peers. This change was noticed by me and then encouraged, and later officially introduced into the later teaching intervention. Its organisation will be introduced in the later section 6.3.6.

6.2 Participants

Seventy-six Chinese Mandarin speakers were recruited just after arriving at two British universities to participate in the three-month teaching intervention. All of these students are from the mainland of China with a mean age of 22, and have been

awarded Bachelor degrees from state-owned universities. They had all been studying English for at least eight years as English is a compulsory course in Chinese middle schools, and for the first two years at higher education institutes. None of them had lived in an English-speaking environment nor had daily contact with the English language before they took postgraduate courses at British universities. At the beginning, 81 students agreed to take part in this study but three of them dropped out before the teaching intervention began, and two provided invalid data and therefore were excluded from the data analysis process. The other 76 participants completed the experiment.

Fifty-five out of 76 students (72%) studied in the social science areas and business related subjects; 16 (21%) were in the science and technology fields. Five (6%) studied English-related majors back in China but at a relatively low level. Though the participants were recruited by convenience sampling, the reality is that the number of Chinese students choosing to study in the business and/or social sciences fields are more than those in the science and technology fields, which is in line with the data collected by HESA and other relevant research groups such as Universities UK. For example, the report *International Facts and Figures* published in May, 2017 by Universities UK.

The majority (91%) of my participants were from ordinary universities. Only seven participants (9%) were from five universities that were listed as being in the key universities selected by the Higher Education Institutions, China. In 2015 there were 155 out of 2,529 state-owned universities and colleges receiving greater support from the government in the aspects of finance, policies and teaching staff, according to the Ministry of Education of the People's Republic of China. These key universities normally recruit the students with the best scores in the nationwide College Entrance Examination (CEE) each year. The background diversity of my participants ensured that the result of this experiment can be taken as representing a norm rather than the outcome of an investigation into elite students studying at top universities, or a very specific type of students.

The two British universities that these participants studied at were named universities A and B in this study. University A was ranked at between 50th – 80th in the university guides published by the BBC and the Guardian for those years, and was a non-Russell group institution, while university B was between 10th – 30th in the same period, from the Russell group. 38 students were recruited from university A in

2014 and placed into Group A; the other 38 from university B were approached in 2015 and formed Group B. The only reason that these two groups were recruited in two consecutive years rather than the same year is due to the constraints of the teaching load. A 12-week teaching intervention was involved with each group, demanding a high level of involvement from me in the preparation of teaching materials, the design of lessons and homework, and the actual teaching itself. Moreover, the geographical distance needs to be considered as these two universities were located in two different English cities.

The participants' initial English levels were determined by the language entrance requirement of these two universities and their university gateway test results; in this study, it refers to their IELTS scores. Group A consisted of 6 males and 32 females who received IELTS scores of 4.5 to 5.5; Group B encompasses 14 males and 24 females who were awarded IELTS scores of 5 to 6.5, which are equivalent to the levels of B1 and B2 in the Council of Europe's Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR). The participants' mean IELTS performances have been listed in the table below in respect of both overall and individual category skills (see Table 6-1). Learners in Group B had the higher mean scores than their Group B counterparts in all four test units: Listening, Reading, Speaking and Writing. This shows that the participants in Group B may have higher English proficiency and skills in these four test units than those in Group A at the time this IELTS test had been taken.

Table 6 - 1 The mean of IELTS scores

	Overall	Listening	Reading	Writing	Speaking
Group A	4.8	5	5	4.5	4.7
Group B	5.7	6.4	6.5	5	5.2

It is evident that *writing* skill received the lowest score among the four English skills tested. This type of imbalance is in accord with historical IELTS scores of L1 Chinese speakers recorded by the IELTS organisation. For instance, in 2015,

the average individual band scores in IELTS Academic were overall 5.7; among them, Listening 5.9 and Reading 6.1 were higher than Writing 5.3 and Speaking 5.4 (IELTS.org).

All of the participants were motivated, as they voluntarily participated in my experimental study with the full awareness that they were going to engage in a three-month teaching programme which involved writing practice, in addition to the required study of their own disciplines. Most of the participants perceived this teaching process as a free academic writing training course to improve their ESL academic writing ability. The attendance rate was 94.6% in class. On the one hand, their high engagement with this teaching programme allowed me to conduct a consistent and complete empirical study; but on the other hand, this opens the study to a charge of not being replicable, as it is unrealistic to expect all students to possess such a high level of motivation. Nevertheless, this concern should not be overstressed as the later duplicated study also received a similar positive result, which will be introduced in Chapter 9.

6.3 Design of the teaching intervention

Both Group A and Group B followed the same procedure in this empirical study. The teaching intervention was subdivided into pre-teaching, during-teaching and post-teaching stages. The writing task was conducted twice, in the pre- and post-teaching stages, with the same topic for each group, in order to generate comparable results, as was the vocabulary size test. A questionnaire was completed in the week immediately after the 12-week teaching programme, and then a post-study interview was conducted to collect enriched qualitative data, with the aim of generating further information and factoring in the potential delay effect that may occur in language learning. An outline of this teaching programme is shown below (Table 6-2). The details will be explained following this table in this section.

Table 6 - 2 Research stages

Research stage	Time occurring	Activity	Mode of delivery	Mode of data collection
Pre-intervention	two weeks before	pre-writing essay	face-to-face	email
During the intervention	three months	teaching the three domains that relate to discourse coherence	face-to-face; in-class activity; homework; online discussion panel	
Post-intervention	in the last class	questionnaire	face-to-face	paper
	in the last class	post-writing essay	face-to-face	email within three weeks
	the week after	post-writing measurement of vocabulary size	email	email
	six months later	post-study interview	face-to-face	paper

6.3.1 Participants' English proficiency as the indicator of their writing competence

As aforementioned in section 6.2, the participants were divided into two groups, Group A and Group B, based on their IELTS overall and written test results which they obtained before entering a British university. Their IELTS writing scores were employed as the prominent indicator of their English proficiency.

L2 writers' writing competence has been perceived to be associated with a variety of variables. Five relevant studies have been published under the special issue of *New developments in the study of L2 writing complexity* in the Journal of Second Language Writing (2015) identified teaching instructions, L1 and L2 proficiency, and task complexity as the influential factors on the ESL writer's' syntactics complexity and the quality of writing (e.g., Lu & Ai, 2015; Mazgutova & Kormos, 2015; Ortega, 2015). In addition, Ortega (2015) also discussed other factors such as genre, discipline and their potential impacts on L2 writers' writing quality. This has been supported by the research conducted on BAWE corpus. For example, Nesi and Gardner (2018) have pointed out that 'university students write in a wider variety of genres than is commonly recognised, and the student writing differs across genres, disciplines and levels' (p. 51) after they analysed carefully selected essays from the BAWE corpus. This is in accordance with the results of the other research they have conducted around the BAWE (e.g., Gardner, Nesi, & Biber, 2018).

Forbes (2018) conducted a study regarding the impact of individual differences on the ESL learners' writing strategy development and also concurred with the conclusion drawn by the previous researchers, which is L2 users' writing development is 'influenced by a complex and dynamic range of factors such as the learner's [ESL] proficiency levels, their level of metacognitive engagement with the task, their attitude towards writing and their strategic use of other languages' (p. 1). L2 writers' writing competence is also linked with their cognitive ability and other psycho and linguistic abilities such as learners' self-regulation ability (Alsamadani, 2010). In conclusion, ESL writers' writing quality normally has been influenced by a cohort of factors however, isolating just one or two might be better indicators for research purposes.

Despite being fully aware of the existence of these variables and the possible impacts on the individuals' writing outcomes, restricted by time and driven by the purposes of this teaching intervention, I did not conduct further investigation

regarding the variables such as the participants' L1 language proficiency, their L1 and L2 writing skills, metacognitive abilities and individual differences before this teaching intervention. Rather, I postulated the participants' English proficiency as the primary indicator of their ESL writing ability.

This can be explained by two factors. One is that ESL learners' English proficiency has been regarded as one of the prominent indicators of their writing competence by many researchers. For instance, Weigle and Friginal (2015) assessed the high proficiency NNES learners' written essays drawn from the corpus (TOEFL Internet-Based Test) and concluded that 'as non-native speakers become more proficient, they are able to use their expanded linguistic resources in ways that are preferred in [ESL] academic writing' (p. 36). This has resonated with the results that were obtained by Biber and Gray (2013) investigating the NNES essays collected from the same corpus. The other reason is related to the aims of this study. This study focuses on the outcomes of the teaching intervention and its potential contribution to pedagogical practice, rather than constructing a theoretical framework to identify factors that may pose an impact on ESL writing ability.

6.3.2 The genre-based approach to this writing teaching intervention

A genre-based approach was employed in this writing teaching intervention. Chronologically, the approaches to teaching writing have been introduced as product-based, process-based and genre-based. Later a process-genre approach was developed to enhance the strengths of all three types of approaches and mediate their weaknesses (For more details, see Badger and White's (2000) article *A Process Genre approach to teaching writing*). A simplified explanation of the three approaches to teaching writing is that the product approaches focus on the outcomes of written texts and the linguistics and language features; the process approaches concentrate on the process of writing such as drafting, editing and revising; the genre approaches emphasise the social contexts of writing and purposes of writing. For example, the rhetorical style of a report or a letter is different from that of an academic essay.

The process-genre approach Badger and White (2000) developed is from 'a view of writing and a view of the development of writing' (p. 157). To be specific, 'writing involves knowledge about language (as in product and genre approaches), knowledge of the context in which writing happens and especially the purpose for the writing (as

in genre approaches), and skills in using language (as in process approaches). Writing development happens by drawing out the learners' potential (as in process approaches) and by providing input to which the learners respond (as in product and genre approaches)' (pp. 157-158). By integrating writing and the development of writing, they suggested a process-genre approach through which teachers may be in a better position to teach and students may be able to develop a better understanding of writing.

In addition, there are other approaches introduced into teaching writing and discussed by scholars and teaching practitioners in recent years (e.g., Barrot, 2015; Forbes, 2018), as teaching writing is always an interesting but complex field. For example, a 'sociocognitive-transformative approach' was introduced by Barrot (2015) with the purpose of improving the traditional four teaching approaches from the perspective of 'functional-interactional', which is based on the process-genre approach with a combination of reading-into-writing approach, with the aim to provide more opportunities for learners to practice their 'sociocultural', 'transformative aspects' and '21st century skills'. Forbes (2018, in press) suggested developing a framework for a strategy-based, cross-curricular approach to teaching writing based on an empirical study she conducted, in which she found positive outcomes from her participants' written discourse. The approach she recommended focuses on the transfer of writing ability from learners' L1 (German) to their L2 (English), with the collaboration of the writing teachers from the two languages involved. Her research has prompted an interesting perspective in teaching writing practice, which is how to integrate learners' existing L1 writing knowledge and skills into their L2 writing classes and at the same time, how teachers can help students develop their L2 writing skills.

However, it is arguable that these *approaches* should be recognised as frameworks or a set of flexible instructions rather than a stable approach that practitioners can adopt and follow, as Forbes (2018, in press) herself admits. These approaches still need to be examined in a wider variety of contexts.

As mentioned at the start of this section, I have employed the genre-based approach and generated the genre-based writing instructions in this teaching intervention. This is under the full consideration of my participants' L1 background, their English abilities, the purposes of their studying in a British university, my research targets, their needs, and the potential outcomes that I intended to reach.

Hyland (2004) in his well-cited book *Genre and Second Language Writing* has pointed out that the genre-based approaches can help writers ‘better understand the ways that language patterns are used to accomplish coherent, purposeful prose’ (p. 5), and it also offers ‘teachers a means of presenting students with explicit and systematic explanations of the ways writing works to communicate’ (p. 6). This is in line with what Callaghan, Knapp and Noble (2014) pointed out that ‘for students with limited control over written language, explicit guidance in understanding purpose, schematic structure and the language features of a genre is needed’ (p. 182). The strengths of employing the genre-based writing instructions in teaching writing have been listed by Hyland (2004) as explicit, systematic, needs-based, supportive, empowering, critical and consciousness raising (pp. 10-11), and has been evidentially demonstrated in the process of this teaching intervention.

In addition, the participants’ needs is the prominent factor when adopting a teaching approach in teaching writing. As introduced in section 6.1, the expository prose has been chosen as the writing task in this intervention, because it is one of the most commonly employed academic writing styles in British universities, but it is neglected in the Chinese English teaching systems. The participants needed to know this kind of genre and at the same time have their awareness raised of the impacts of cross-cultural and cross-language factors on this type of writing.

In this teaching intervention, the product approaches can satisfy neither the participants’ needs nor mine, as a focus on teaching on language features is not the prominent target. Although some language features have been taught in this programme such as the use of logical connectors, they were taught in a frame of constructing discourse coherence rather than being treated as linguistics features. Likewise, the process approaches that emphasise the writing process such as drafting, editing and revising also do not meet the participants’ needs nor satisfy the targets of this study. Despite that brainstorming, editing and revising were involved in this teaching intervention, these served the purpose of raising the participants’ awareness of the specific structure that the expository essay has, rather than focusing on the process of writing. Therefore, a genre based approach seemed to be the best choice of this teaching intervention.

With the genre-based writing instructions, I am able to explicitly teach the participants how expository essays are structured and why they are written in the ways they are, and point out how and why they are different from the Chinese writing

style. This can help the participants foster a better understanding of the genre they need to use. During the teaching intervention, I was responsible for providing sufficient and appropriate input to learners by taking into account the social context, English language abilities and their individual English learning experiences. The participants were required to adapt the input to their own ways of understanding, and then establishing their own developmental process to achieve the writing targets. This explicit teaching highlighted the domains that the participants needed to pay attention to. I also had the expectation that some competent participants would become writers capable of producing critical and creative writing in the future, based on what they have learned from the teaching intervention.

In class, guided by the genre-based writing instructions (see an example in the teaching plan in Appendix VII), and followed the genre approach teaching schedule (see Appendix VI), I employed various language teaching techniques and skills in the teaching intervention. For example, I used communicative approaches to guide a teaching activity on a comparison of the development of topics in the texts between the Chinese and English languages. In another instance, I used the task-based instructions to facilitate the participants to accomplish a controlled writing practice. The employment of teaching techniques and skills in this teaching intervention all served toward the achievement of teaching aims.

6.3.3 Noticing and awareness-raising as a pedagogical procedure

Awareness-raising has been perceived as one of the essential steps in the process of language learning and teaching. Since Schmidt (1990) transferred the concept of *noticing* from the psychology field into the language learning industry, it has been expanding beyond linguistics features and into the cross-cultural and cross-language areas in language teaching and learning (e.g., Chen & Yang, 2014). McIntosh, Connor and Gokpinar-Shelton (2017) discussed the benefit from the engagement of Intercultural Rhetoric (IR) in the language teaching and classrooms and the argumentation surrounding it, and again highlighted the necessity of explicit teaching of genre comparability and the existence of cultural impacts on second language writing. Intercultural Rhetoric, which was developed from Contrastive Rhetoric, has been broadly defined as ‘the study of written discourse between and among individuals with different cultural backgrounds’ (Connor, 2011, p. 2). Similarly, Hyland (2004) emphasised the importance of raising learners’ awareness

regarding the genre differences and the impacts of various cultures and languages in the genre-based approach to class teaching. He stressed that the engagement of explicit teaching in this area is one of the primary advantages when employing the genre approaches in the teaching of writing in class. Based on this, I paid particular attention to the participants' awareness-raising of the impact of both cross-language and cross-cultural factors on their ESL writing in this teaching practice (see Appendix VI for the explicit teaching of awareness-raising in class).

For example, when teaching the topical development of a discourse, I introduced the differences of the English and Chinese languages in terms of subject and topic at an early stage, aiming to raising their awareness regarding this linguistics feature (This area was discussed in detail in Chapter 3). English is a subject-prominent language, which demands a subject-verb agreement, this leads to a complex relationship between subjects and topics in sentences. In brief, the subject and the topic of a sentence may or may not overlap. Whereas Chinese is a topic-prominent language; the looser relationship between topics and their comments leads to a tendency for Chinese students to insert the topic at the beginning of a sentence. This disparity may raise some challenges for L1 Chinese students when constructing sentences and/or identifying the subject and the topic of sentences. The explicit teaching of this difference, led to positive responses from the participants, which was evidently demonstrated in the later teaching stages and reflected in the interviews conducted after the teaching intervention.

After this awareness-raising step, both the participants and I felt easier in the process of teaching and learning, as the participants had access to the relevant knowledge. For instance, models of the article in the expository prose were used right after the awareness-raising step in stage 1 classes. When the participants encountered the problem of identifying the proper subject and/or topic of a sentence, a review of the content taught in the awareness-raising step provided the participants with accessible resources and at the same time, enhanced their understanding of why and how to do this practice. This awareness was also kept in the writing practice steps and consistently into their final product stage. In the interviews conducted after the teaching intervention, some participants gave very positive comments regarding this awareness-raising step. One commented (in Chinese, I translated it into English),

I think the most important part of this teaching programme is that the teacher told us the differences between English and Chinese languages, and

the differences of the thinking patterns between my culture and the Western culture. This REALLY helps me as in the past, I didn't know why I made mistakes and why my writing in English couldn't be understood by English native speakers. With this knowledge, I started to know why, which is very important, because bearing this knowledge in mind, I can choose how to write an English essay, how to adapt my writing to the British universities' demands.

At this awareness-raising stage, I also conducted explicit teaching to direct the participants' attention to the impact of cross-cultural factors on their ESL writing. For example, I introduced the preference for deductive logic by Western writers and that of the inductive logic by Eastern writers in the expository prose, at a very early stage of this teaching intervention (This was compared in detail in Chapter 4). I also pointed out the preference of L1 Chinese writers to establishing a long introduction as well as introducing opinions in the conclusion, which was reflected by the writing pattern *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* (opening-continuing-turning-concluding). This is inconsistent with the Problem-Solution pattern popularly used in the expository essays in English. An introduction to the differences of these two types of thinking patterns and the moves in the discourse structure in this teaching intervention has largely raised the participants' awareness of the impact of different cultures on writing. This awareness has evidently shown itself to be the prerequisite of successful teaching in the later stages and was mentioned in the interviews. One participant said (in Chinese, I translated it into English),

I didn't notice and have never thought about the impact of my thinking patterns and my culture on my writing neither in Chinese nor in English language. I thought my bad writing was due to my weak English ability, nothing else. But after being taught there existed some impacts of cultures on the writing, I started to do some self-reflection during and after my writing. I think it is one the most valuable things I have learned from this course.

6.3.4 Vocabulary size tests before and after the teaching intervention

Participants' vocabulary size was measured by Paul Nation's Vocabulary Size Test the week before and the week after the 3-month teaching intervention. Nation's test contains '140 multiple-choice questions, with 10 items for each 1000-word family level' (Nation, 2013, p. 1). Participants took the tests on the computer at a time convenient to themselves, and then emailed me the results. The procedure was as such: log on to the test website, take the test, and then email me the results. On

average, it only took the participants 30-50 minutes to complete this test although there was no set time limit.

Nation’s Vocabulary Size Test had been chosen for the following reasons. Firstly, the vocabulary in Nation’s test are from the British National Corpus. All of my participants were studying at British universities. Secondly, both English and Chinese versions were available in this test, and participants had either option at their disposal. Thirdly, this test utilises multiple-choice as the format of the test, which is a common examination tool that Chinese students are familiar with. Familiarity with the test format and procedure reduces test anxiety and saves test time and more importantly, ensures the validity of the test (Gardiner & Howlett, 2016). Fourthly, the result and feedback were generated instantly, providing participants with direct and efficient information. This instant access to results provides the people taking this test with an opportunity to have a glance at the breadth and depth of their vocabulary by comparing their results with the suggested vocabulary sizes, which was put forward by Nation in his study in 2006. Finally, it is easy to compare these results with those of relevant studies. Nation’s Vocabulary Size Test has been widely applied in studies of English L1 and L2 for its reliability, validity and convenience. The report of pre- and post-intervention participants’ vocabulary size is detailed in the table below (Table 6-3).

Table 6 - 3 The mean of vocabulary size of both groups students before and after the teaching intervention

	Before teaching intervention	After teaching intervention
Group A	4200	4100
Group B	5150	5300

The results show no significant progress was made by the participants ($p < .05$). Hence, the influence of the 3-month teaching intervention on the participants’ receptive vocabulary size is negligible. Nonetheless, this result provides teachers with a general insight into students’ knowledge of word-families, both individually and collectively.

The focus on vocabulary size by ESL / EFL learners is not surprising. In the Chinese English teaching system, there are explicit English vocabulary size requirements for different stages of students, from middle school (around 3,500 words) to university level (4,500 words) (2003 Senior English Curriculum Standard; 2007 College English Curriculum Requirements, China). Basically, the emphasis is on the amount rather than the depth of vocabulary knowledge from both students and teachers' perspectives (Qian, 1999).

6.3.5 Online discussion panel

During this teaching intervention, an online group discussion room was set up using the media of *weixin* (*WeChat*, literally it means micro message) for each group. *WeChat* is one of the most popular social media applications and is used by 889 million users in China (TechNode, 2017). Actually, all of the participants had at least two years' experience of using *WeChat* before the start of this teaching intervention. Compared to face-to-face discussion, online peer group discussion might invoke 'more equal participation among students' (Warschauer, 1995, p. 7). East Asian students such as Chinese and Korean in particular, are often perceived as a group who normally avoid engagement in face-to-face ESL/EFL group discussions. This is attributed to their cultures and values, such as face-saving concerns and collectivism (Wen & Clément, 2003).

Within this online discussion panel, anonymity has been made available to provide the participants with an alternative way to get involved in discussions, encouraging the engagement of learning. The participants could choose to use their real names or be anonymous. This anonymity is a face-saving strategy (face: *Mianzi* in Chinese) for the participants, so that they can protect their own and/or others' self-image and feelings in public. The importance of face-saving in cross-cultural studies related to Chinese or East Asian people has been more than adequately addressed and discussed (e.g. Chang & Holt, 1994; Ho & Crookall, 1995). If the participants thought the question they were going to ask in this *WeChat* group was 'silly and simple' and may cause them to lose face in public, they could tender this question without revealing their real identity.

In addition, the introduction of this online *WeChat* group has also reduced the teacher's workload, by eliminating the need for them to repeat the same answers to different individuals. During the teaching intervention, I regularly logged onto the

chat room, answering questions and clarifying misunderstandings. A schedule of my 'Question and Answer' time was handed to every participant and set on the top of the online chat group by a function called 'sticky on top' of *WeChat*. My 'online office time' was two evenings a week, chosen according to the participants' suggestion. The generic questions and their answers were placed at the top of this discussion room and were accessible to every participants and at any time. This accessibility is one of the benefits of establishing an online discussion room.

Peer to peer discussion within this online chat room was strongly encouraged, with or without exposing the student's real identity. Peer support is generally recognised as having a positive effect on academic discourse, promoting learner autonomy (Kobayashi, 2003; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). For the lower level participants, this peer support was particularly important in that their peers could help them in their own language with situations in which they were struggling, due to the language barriers. For the higher level participants, they had a chance to enhance their comprehension while explaining to others, and may have gained some self-confidence during these discussions. They were also able to enhance their self-reflection and self-regulation ability from their active engagement with the peer feedback, as Yu and Hu (2017) revealed in their study of L1 Chinese students' peer feedback activities in a group with mixed ESL proficiencies. Yu and Hu (2017) have pointed out that this benefits the bilateral participants.

6.3.6 Writing tasks and instructions

The two writing topics of this study were adapted from the pre-sessional courses arranged for international students by two British universities.

Group A was allocated Writing paper 1 and Group B was given Writing paper 2. 1000-1500 words were required excluding the reference list.

Paper 1

Analyse the concept of organisational culture and climate. Evaluate how leadership and motivation can influence culture and impact on organisational performance.

Paper 2

Analyse and evaluate the impact of online businesses and high street businesses in the current financial climate.

These topics were chosen with consideration of participants' language proficiencies as well as offering comparability of results. Specific knowledge was not necessary to accomplish either of these two topics but writers needed to a certain extent, to conduct some research in order to understand the concepts and background. To accomplish these writing tasks, writers need to engage academic writing skills, such as identifying concepts, comparing and contrasting the similarities and differences of the two related concepts, and discussing and evaluating the potential impacts.

The writing tasks were distributed to the class two weeks before the teaching intervention, from a room within the university library. I travelled to the cities and ensured that ethical forms were issued and signed by each member of the class. Questions raised from the participants were answered on the spot. All of the pre-intervention written compositions were collected via emails before the teaching programme started. Four emails were sent to all the participants during these two weeks to ensure the writing was progressing. The post-intervention essays were collected within 3 weeks of the teaching programme. The effects of task repetition in written work has been perceived as having a very limited impact on ESL/EFL learners' writing development (Durst, Laine, Schultz, & Vilter, 1990; Nitta & Baba, 2014) and therefore, little impact on the results generated from the pre- and post-intervention written production.

6.4 The procedures of the teaching intervention

The teaching intervention is divided into three stages, as demonstrated in Table 6-4. Each stage lasts 4 weeks. A 3-hour class was held every week in the universities in which the participants studied, with a 10-minute break every hour. Each stage covers one theme, complemented with homework and assisted by the online discussion forum. The three teaching themes in chronological order: topic development in a discourse, the development of the topic sentence in paragraphs, and the application of logical connectors, which were discussed in Chapter 3, 4 and 5. The total teaching time of each group was 36 hours.

Table 6 - 4 The three stages of teaching procedure

Teaching procedure	Content	Aim
The first month	Topic development	Global coherence at the discourse level
The second month	The development of the topic sentence	Local coherence at the paragraph level
The third month	The application of logical connectors	Local coherence at the sentence level

The teaching procedure and the applied strategies were almost identical at each stage (see Appendix VI). The teaching of new concepts was always presented in the first week with the aim of raising the participants' awareness of the cross-linguistic and cross-cultural impacts on a particular aspect. Modelling followed to introduce the common structures and the languages used in the expository prose. Controlled practice activities were conducted through almost all stages to enhance and consolidate the language points taught. Controlled practice is widely perceived as an effective strategy in language teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Free practice was then conducted with the expository prose to enhance the students' comprehension and clarify any possible misunderstanding.

Discussion were always encouraged in pairs, small groups and online to clarify any confusion in and out of class. A summary and self-reflection of the key points were made at the end of each class and it was suggested that a self-reflective report be conducted after each stage. Customised homework was developed for out-of-class practice. It generally took students 40-50 minutes to complete. Questions were placed on the online discussion board, with the hope of inspiring discussion, and encouraging solution within the student body itself, if possible. I only got involved when problems were unsolvable by the learners or key information was confused. The details will be introduced in the next three sections.

6.4.1 The first stage – the teaching process: applying TSA

6.4.1.1 The teaching process and content

The first week started with an introduction to the concepts of *topic* and *subject* in both English and Chinese, and their differences. This teaching is essential, and crucial for the success of later teaching, as with the raised awareness of this cross-linguistic difference, the participants may have a better understanding of why an English discourse is developed in such ways, why writing with ‘Chinese characteristics’ is normally challenged by their tutors who teach at British universities, and hence they are able to know how to construct an essay that is more acceptable to British universities.

The foci of the second, third and fourth week’s teaching were on the topical progression at the sentence and discourse levels, as well as the application of TSA to improve textual coherence in ESL academic writing. To demonstrate this, a lesson plan which was used in this teaching intervention has been placed in Appendix VII, accompanied with the teaching materials (see Appendix III) used in that particular class. The analysis tool known as TSA was taught to students for their use in the process of writing and revision. Schneider and Connor (1990) recommended a three-step process when applying TSA in discourse (p. 415), and this has been widely adopted:

1. Identify T-unit topics
2. Determine the progression of T-unit topics, and
3. Chart the progression of the topics

First step: Identifying T-unit topics

As mentioned in Chapter 3, a grammatical matrix plus a subordinate clause is counted as being one T-unit; coordinate clauses are counted as two T-units. The topic is ‘what the sentence is about’ and it may occur in any position in a sentence. Nouns or noun phrases are regarded as being the most likely topic candidates (Schneider & Connor, 1990). Lautamatti (1987) suggested identifying the topic of the T-units from three properties, the initial sentence element (ISE), the mood subject or grammatical subject, and the topical subject, which is widely accepted.

An initial sentence element (ISE) refers to ‘the initially placed discourse material in a sentence, whatever its form or type’ (Lautamatti, 1987, p. 77). Put simply, it is the first few words placed literally at the beginning of a sentence,

regardless of its syntactic and/or semantic value. The mood subject, also called the grammatical subject, is located in the main clause ‘appearing in a syntactically prominent position’ (p. 80). It serves as the syntactic subject, agreeing with the verb of a sentence to make the sentence grammatically correct. The topical subject is ‘a lexical subject [that] relates directly to the discourse topic’ (p. 73). It is what the sentence is about, in the dimension of semantic value. For example, ‘finally, it stopped raining’. *Finally*, a temporal adverb literally placed at the initial position of this sentence, is an ISE. *It* is the grammatical subject, which only fulfils the grammatical correctness of this sentence without specific meaning. *Raining* is the topic of this sentence; it is what this sentence is about.

A paragraph taken from Simpson’s (2000) article is exemplified below. The T-units are numbered. The initial sentence element (ISE) is in italics, the grammatical subject is underlined, and the topical subject is in boldface. This sample paragraph (11) will be used in this section to demonstrate all of the analytical steps concerning topical progression.

(11)

(1) *For example, **one project** I set involved the class devising a board game based on a nursery rhyme or folk tale for younger children.* (2) *The class were reasonably enthusiastic about this until they realised that they younger children were fictional;* (3) *i.e., they would not be playing these games with real children apart from each other.* (4) *I felt a certain amount of shame here, for I realised that the reason there would be no audience was because I had already decided that **those games** would not be ‘good enough’ for public consumption.* (5) *I have frequently arranged **real audiences** for other classes, but only when I have been confident that the finished product would show the class, the school, and, most shamefully of all, myself, in a good light.* (6) *My other error was not to impose a structure to the work or a deadline by which to finish.* (7) *Because these were **low-ability students**, my reasoning ran, they would need more time to complete the activity,* (8) *and in the way of these things, **the children** simply filled the available time with low-level busy work—colouring in the board, and making the dice and counters, rather than the more challenging activities such as negotiating group responsibilities, discussing the game or devising the rules. (Holden, 1995)*

Adopted from Simpson (2000, p. 301)

The ISE (*for example*), the mood subject (I), and the topical subject (**one project**) are not consistent in T-unit (1). All three sentential elements overlap in T-unit (2) so ‘*the class*’ is the ISE, the grammatical subject and the topic of this T-unit.

In T-units (3) and (6), '*they*' and '*my other error*' are also the ISE, the grammatical subject and the topic of their corresponding T-unit. In T-units (4) and (5), '*I*' is ISE and the mood subject of the corresponding T-unit; the topic of these two T-units are '**those games**' and '**real audiences**' respectively. T-unit (7) illustrates that the ISE and the topical subject are coincidental but the grammatical subject varies. The topic of T-unit (8) is also its grammatical subject, but it is not located at the initial position of the sentence.

Dissociation between the ISE, the grammatical subject and the topical subject is common, and can generate challenges for ESL/EFL learners. Topics can be identified only if the learners understand what the discourse is about; they are unlike the ISE, or the grammatical subject, which can be identified from its position or syntactical features. This challenge was evident during the teaching intervention, particularly for those with lower language proficiencies. This will be discussed in later sections.

Second step: Determining the types of T-unit topical development

Example (11) will be used to continue the analysis. In the first step, five topics have been generated from the 8 T-units: **one project, the class, those games, real audience** and **my other error** (shown in bold type in example (11)). The topic of T-unit (2), 'the class', has been semantically repeated four times, in T-unit (3) with the manifestation of 'they', in T-unit (7) appearing as 'low ability students', and in T-unit (8) as 'the children'. All five topics serve the paragraph topic *the project I set*.

As aforementioned, four types of topic development in a discourse are identified, parallel progression (PP), sequential progression (SP), extended parallel progression (EPP), and extended sequential progression (ESP) (Lautamatti, 1978; Simpson, 2000). This study employs the 'coding guidelines for topical structure analysis' exerted by Schneider and Connor (1990, p. 427) (see Appendix II).

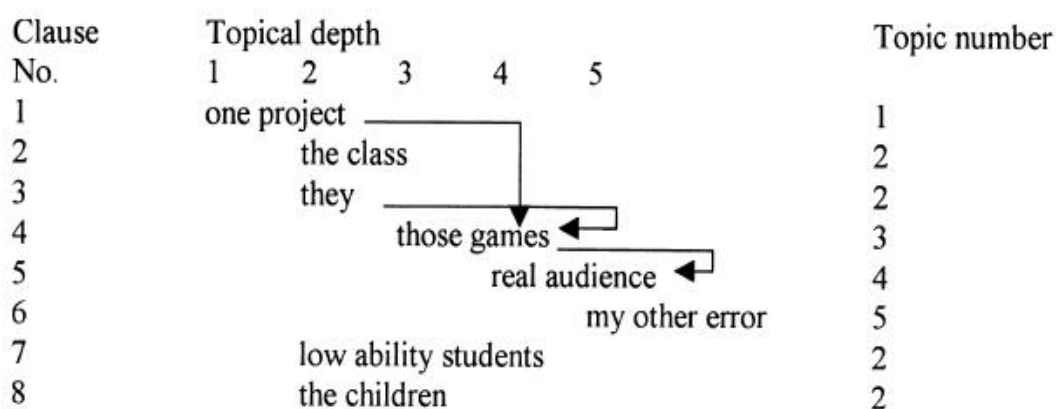
Among them, T-units 2 and 3 are regarded as PP in topical development, as the semantically repeated topic occurs in adjunctive sentences, as are T-units 7 and 8. The topics of T-units 3 and 7 are categorised as EPP in the development, as these two sentences contain semantically the same topic but at a distance. The topical development in T-units 3, 4 and 5 has conducted SP; the rheme of T-unit 3 develops into the theme of T-unit 4 as 'those games', and then the rheme of T-unit 4 progresses to the theme of T-unit 5 as 'real audience'. The topics of T-unit 1 and 4 have been

classified as ESP in the topic development, when the rheme of T-unit 1 re-occurs as the theme of T-unit 4 ‘those games’, in a non-consecutive sentence.

The relationship between the topics in example (11) has been illustrated in Table 6-5 shown in the next step. It is essential to construct an analytical diagram to illustrate the topical progression of a discourse. It represents in-text topical development and clearly displays the information flow within. It is pivotal to providing analysts and learners with a direct impression of discourse topical progression. In addition, learners are given a chance to develop a further understanding of the discourse topical development during the process of establishing, editing and revising the diagram.

Third step: Charting the progression of topics

Table 6 - 5 A diagram of topical progression



Adopted from Simpson, 2000, p. 302

In this diagram, the numbers listed vertically on the left are the number of clauses; those of topic are on the right. The depth of sequential progress is displayed horizontally on the top. *Topical depth* is the number of topics developed in the longest sequential progression (Lautamatti, 1987).

During the teaching intervention, all participating students were required to practice these three steps with the provided academic model texts, in the hope that they can use this practical tool to raise their awareness of the contribution of the topic development to the construction of discourse coherence, and then enhance their ability to develop topics coherently.

Predictably, it was a challenge for ESL/EFL students to identify topics and define their types of progression, particularly those with low English proficiencies.

Identifying topics requires users to understand the semantic meaning of the discourse, and have an insightful understanding of what the discourse is about. Determining the types of topical progression demands users to resort to their linguistic knowledge, such as the determination of synonym or antonym, and part-to-whole relationship of vocabulary. Students were encouraged to reflect on their own writing process. Pair and group discussions were particularly encouraged, in order to reach common ground while detecting appropriate topics.

The participants were required to use these three steps in the writing and revising process both in and out of class, as well as in the process of writing after the teaching intervention.

The next section focuses on introducing how researchers apply TSA to analyse the topical development of a discourse. This was not taught to the participants but only used by me as an analytical tool to process the data collected.

6.4.1.2 The use of TSA in topical progression analysis

Lautamatti (1978) suggested three analytical units for the analysis of topic development in discourse; these were *the ratio of each type of topical progression*, *the ratio of subtopics*, and *the depth of topical progression*. The employment of ratio rather than raw data is to diminish the impact that physical factors of discourse such as text length and sentence length had on the conclusions. This study employs the first two ratios, the ratio of types of topical progression and that of subtopics, as analytical units for the purpose of this study. Subtopics are a succession of ‘subordinate ideas’ that either directly or indirectly relate to the discourse topic (Lautamatti, 1987, p. 71).

The rationale behind abandoning the depth of topical progression is that it is not a reliable index when analysing written discourse produced by NNES learners at the intermediate level and below. The depth of topical progression reflects the topical development in SP. The larger the depth number is, the more SP topics are developed. If these topics were intimately related to the discourse topic, the depth would reflect true topical progression in a discourse and consequently contribute to textual coherence. However, if unrelated, the depth would actually reflect degrees of digression rather than textual coherence.

The two excerpts below that have been taken from the essays produced by a Group A student (see example 12) and a Group B student (see example 13) before the

teaching intervention will be illustrated to demonstrate the whole process of applying TSA in the analysis of topical development of discourse. The first three steps are the same as were taught to the participants. Only the last step involves the data analysis. The first step is to identify T-units and their corresponding topics. Numbers in the excerpts represent the number of T-units calculated by myself for the sake of the analysis. Topics of each T-unit are in bold.

(12)

1) **Organisational culture** is very important for business. 2) **A good organisational culture** can influence efficiency of its employees. 3) According to Huczynski and Buchanan (2007), **organisational culture** consists of many different parts, including values, beliefs and norms which impact the way staff think, feel and behave towards others inside and outside the organization. 4) Then, **organisational culture** does not only affect work. 5) **Culture** can influence personality of an organisation and corporate culture. 6) **It** will influence staff performance, customer and managers.

The second step is to analyse the topical development of this excerpt. It contains six T-units. Among them, the topics of T-unit 1 and 2 developed in sequential progression (SP), representing the relationship between the whole and a single part, from *organisational culture* to *a good organisational culture*. The same topic *organisation culture* reoccurred at a distance in T-unit 3, which formed an extended parallel progression (EPP) in the topical development. The recursion of the topic *organisation culture* enhanced readers' attention to the main topic, constructing a recursive coherence within this micro text. T-units 4, 5 and 6 all shared the same topic *organisational culture* with T-unit 1 and 3 (PP).

The third step is to illustrate the relevant information in a table, preparing for the data analysis. Table 6-6 was established below. The vertical arrows pointing downwards symbolise the topic development in PP; those pointing upwards represent the topic development in EPP, which symbolises the recursion of the same topic; the curved downward arrows symbolise the topic development in SP; and the curved upward arrows represent the topic development in ESP, which has not been displayed in the two chosen excerpts. This is in accordance with the observations made from previous studies that the extended topical progression of discourse occurs least in both NES and NNE academic writing (Connor & Farmer, 1990; Lautamatti, 1987; Schneider & Connor, 1990). The direction of arrows indicates the development of topic, whether the topic is developed forwards or resumed.

Table 6 - 6 The topical development structure of example (12)

T-unit No.	Topical depth		Topic number
	1	2	
1	org. culture		1
2	↑	a good org. culture	2
3	↓	org. culture	1
4	↓	org. culture	1
5	↓	(org.) culture	1
6	↓	it (org. culture)	1

The last step of this data analysis is to calculate the ratio of each type of topical progression and the ratio of subtopic. The results of the example (12) are demonstrated below (Table 6-7).

Table 6 - 7 The ratio of subtopics and topical development of example (12)

Ratio	Subtopic	PP	SP	EPP	ESP
Raw data	2	3	1	1	0
Percentage	33%	50%	17%	17%	0

In this excerpt, only two sub-topics were developed in the six T-units. The ratio of subtopic is 33%. It is evident that this student in Group A heavily relied on the repetition of topics (PP: 50%) without providing sufficient explanations or elaborations to support these statements. Readers are only fed with information regarding what or which aspect *organisation culture* can impact, but with no further information about how or in what circumstances these can be impacted.

The example (13) taken from a Group B student's pre-intervention essay is analysed with the same process, in four steps. The first step was to number the T-units and identify Topics, as shown below. Topics are in bold. Then the types of topical progression were assessed and illustrated in a table, and then the ratio of each type of topical progression and that of subtopics were calculated, shown as follows.

(13)

1) Comparing with no renting and hiring salesperson costs in the high street business companies, **the online companies** who just focus on e-business can save a great deal of money. 2) **Companies** can save lots of money using emails and social media to do advertisements. 3) **The email** has become a popular role of advertising. 4) **The low cost of email** makes it used

frequently by companies. 5) **It** allows to edit, copy and forward message with attaching files (Chevalier and Gutsatz, 2012). 6) Therefore, **online companies** save cost on advertising via email and social media instead of printing numerous copies of magazines and paper.

This pre-intervention excerpt consists of six T-units. Three subtopics were introduced in this paragraph, *online companies*, *email* and *the cost of email*. The subtopic *online companies* of T-unit 1 was repeated in its successive sentence T-unit 2 (PP) and recurred in a distance sentence T-unit 6 (EPP). The comment of T-unit 2 *the email* was developed as the topic of T-unit 3 (SP), then its partial value – *the cost of email* – was generated as the topic of T-unit 4 (SP), and then was revisited in T-unit 5 (EPP). The structure of its topical development is illustrated below (Table 6-8).

Table 6 - 8 The topical development structure of example (13)

T-unit No.	Topical depth			Topic number
	1	2	3	
1	online companies			1
2	(on line) companies			1
3		the email		2
4			the low cost of email	3
5		it		2
6	online companies			1

The ratio of each type of topical progression and the ratio of subtopic are calculated, and the results are demonstrated below (Table 6-9).

Table 6 - 9 The ratio of subtopics and topical development of example (13)

Ratio	Subtopic	PP	SP	EPP	ESP
Raw data	3	1	2	2	0
Percentage	50%	17%	33%	33%	0

The results show that the ratio of subtopic is 50%; the ratio of PP in topical development is 17%, and that of SP and EPP is the same at 33%. There were no topics developed in ESP. This Group B student introduced more subtopics into the main topic (50%) than the Group A student did (33%). If the subtopics are logically

related, readers of the excerpt (13) will be supplied with more extended information about the subtopic involved than those who read the excerpt (12).

I analysed all of the pre-intervention essays produced by both groups by following this four-step process. The data were then put into a one-way ANOVA to generate the statistical results. By comparing the results received from the Group A and Group B essays, I intend to find the possible impact of the Chinese students' English proficiency on their development of topics at the discourse level. By comparing the results of each group before and after the teaching intervention, I can determine the effect of this teaching intervention in terms of the topical development. Results will be displayed and analysed in the data analysis chapter.

6.4.2 The second stage – the teaching of the development of the topic sentence in a paragraph

6.4.2.1 The teaching process

The focus of the second stage of this teaching intervention is on the development of the topic sentence in paragraphs. A teaching process was designed by me under the guidelines recommended by Reid (1996, p. 153), as shown below and discussed in Chapter 4.4:

- i. Raise the consciousness of ESL students about second language functions
- i. Develop students' predictive skills
- ii. Discuss the concepts of prediction as it is associated with NES academic readers
- iii. Describe the problems of inappropriate second sentences [based on the six categories listed as above]
- iv. Ask students to write second sentences (individually, in pairs, or in small groups) and explain why they chose the sentences they did
- v. Ask students to consider second sentences in their own (and their peers') writing

Firstly, a comparison between the Chinese four-part move structure *qi-cheng-zhuan-he* (opening-continuing-turning-concluding) and the problem-solution pattern of English academic writing has been introduced, and then the concept of target readers and their different expectations between cultures are explained, in order to

raise their awareness of the different rhetorical styles and thinking patterns between these two languages and cultures. The instruction then moved to the development of the topic sentence in paragraphs. The students were taught to follow the procedure as such: (1) identify topic sentence of each body paragraph, (2) determine the appropriateness of an immediate sequential sentence, if improper, (3) categorise the type of inappropriately developed second sentence; and (4) construct a possible logically developed second sentence.

At the first stage, model articles were supplied, which were chosen from academic journals in the genre of expository prose. Introduction and conclusion paragraphs were excluded in the analysis process. Introduction functions as an opening that establishes the discourse topic, while conclusion serves as an ending that summarises the whole discourse. A conventional topic sentence normally does not exist in these paragraphs. The participants are required to work on the body paragraphs.

They need to identify whether the topic sentence can be found in the first paragraph. The procedure is as such: they highlight the initial sentence of a paragraph and then judge whether it functions as a topic sentence. If yes, they could move to the next paragraph; if no, the second sentence would be assessed in the criteria for the topic sentence. A discourse marker such as *however* might be an indicator that the second sentence actually serves as the topic sentence (Reid, 1996). If neither the first nor the second sentence functions as a topic sentence, this paragraph will be abandoned. They then discuss in pairs and small groups in order to understand the development of the topic sentence to its successive sentence. Again, a peer discussion is crucial to this pedagogical process, to help students identify the topic sentence and have a better understand of the development of the topic sentence to its successive sentence.

At the next stage, I provided students with modified academic articles in expository genre with the sequential sentences omitted. They worked in small groups of three or four participants. The key word(s) of the topic sentence was identified first and then the students brainstormed for a possible logical development from the topic sentence. Peer discussion was encouraged in order to clarify any misunderstandings and to arrive at a consensus. A variety of extended sentences were encouraged.

Then Reid's (1996) categories of the improper development of topic sentence by ESL/EFL learners were taught. The characteristics of my participants are notably

similar to Reid's (1996), as they were all intermediate EFL learners with limited experience of academic writing. Moreover, the pilot study confirmed the reliability of this classification, where almost all of the improperly developed second sentences fell in to these seven categories. Therefore, it was adapted for this study and taught in the teaching intervention.

1. Repetition/restatement of the topic sentence.
2. Sentence is only tangentially related to the topic sentence.
3. Selection of an inappropriate word in the topic sentence as the main idea for the second sentence.
4. A sentence that is even more general than the topic sentence.
5. A sentence that contradicts the topic sentence.
6. The use of a concluding sentence as a second sentence.
7. A sentence that is not related to the topic sentence.

If the second sentences generated at the last stage were perceived as being improperly developed, they were required to categorise them based on the Reid's (1996) adapted categorisation. Discussion with me and peers was encouraged, aiming to facilitate their understanding of the reasons behind the inappropriate development. Some second sentences might be categorised into more than one category depending on the way of assessing.

At the last stage, students are encouraged to generate a second sentence that might be better developed from the topic sentence. More than one option is encouraged, to avoid forming the impression that there is only one correct answer for the development of the topic sentence. Then the original second sentences of the model paragraphs were revealed for the purpose of generating discussion as such: whether the student generated second sentence differed from the original one; or whether both versions could be regarded as being properly developed. Discussion is emphasised for the study of the development of the topic sentence, as there are various effective ways of developing the topic.

The aim of this teaching stage is to raise the participants' awareness of the impact of cross-cultural and cross-language factors on their development of the topic

sentence in a paragraph, and the impact of the target readers' expectations on their development of paragraphs.

In the following section, I will exemplify the process of coding with written pieces taken from the participants' essays. This was not taught in the teaching intervention, but only used by me to analyse the data for further investigation.

6.4.2.2 The process of analysis

The coding of the development of the topic sentence in a paragraph

The pre-intervention and post-intervention texts written by both groups were analysed. The properly developed second sentences were coded as 0; and the inappropriately developed second sentences were coded from 1 to 7, as shown below.

Table 6 - 10 The guideline of the coding of the development of the topic sentence in a paragraph

<i>Coding</i>	<i>The type of development of the topic sentence</i>
0	A sentence that is properly developed.
1	Repetition/restatement of the topic sentence.
2	Sentence is only tangentially related to the topic sentence.
3	Selection of an inappropriate word in the topic sentence as the main idea for the second sentence.
4	A sentence that is even more general than the topic sentence.
5	A sentence that contradicts the topic sentence.
6	The use of a concluding sentence as a second sentence.
7	A sentence that is not related to the topic sentence.

Example (14) below is taken from a Group A student's pre-sessional essay to demonstrate how to code and analyse the development of the topic sentence of a discourse. This study produced five paragraph bodies. All contain a topic sentence at the initial position of the paragraph. The topic sentences of paragraph 1 and 5 were identified as being properly developed, and thus coded 0. The topic sentence of the other three paragraphs, paragraph 2, 3 and 4, were regarded as being inappropriately developed as they were repetitive, tangentially related or irrelevant to their respective topic sentence, coded 1, 2 and 7. The topic sentence and its corresponding second sentence of paragraphs 2, 3 and 4 are displayed in example (14) below.

(14)

Paragraph 2

Leadership is a type of power that leaders possess and can use it lead company's achievement. According to Mullins (2007), leadership is that use power to make some decisions and lead employees to achieve goal of the organisation.

It is obvious that the second sentence merely repeats the existing information that the topic sentence had already conveyed. The topic sentence is more like a paraphrase of the second sentence. This is an interesting phenomenon that quite often occurs in essays composed by both groups of Chinese participants and it may be the result of Chinese students' unfamiliarity with referencing and the concept of plagiarism in the Western academic world. It is a common rhetorical tool in Chinese to use famous people's words and statements as hard evidence to support one idea or legitimise a proclamation, and published articles are perceived as irrefutable in Chinese culture (Thorsten, 2013). This may be an interesting topic to study in another research programme.

Paragraph 3

Organizational culture is a special core of culture which helps company enhance its management level, strengthen the cohesion of enterprises and improve company's image and spirit. As Hatch and Cunliffe (2013) observed that the manager not only needs to focus on the organizational structure, but also needs to care about the personal and emotional elements of organizational life.

After reading the topic sentence, readers would expect this paragraph to continue discussing how organisational culture enhances companies' management level, in which ways it strengthens enterprises' cohesion and how it helps companies improve their image and spirit. Rather surprisingly, the second sentence digresses into the duties of a manager. It seems that this student wrongly regarded the potential benefits of organisational culture on companies as the equivalence of a manager's responsibilities. Readers may wonder when and how this writer will return from this unexpected development. This is a typical example of a second sentence that is only tangentially related to the focus of the topic sentence.

Paragraph 4

Leadership and motivation are two important factors in organisation. According to Yukl (1989), organisation culture is impacted by leaders in some ways.

This excerpt clearly displays an irrelevant relationship between the topic sentence and the second sentence. The topic sentence introduces two concepts, *leadership* and *motivation*; the second sentence however focuses on the concept of *organisational culture*. Either of these two sentences can be treated as a topic sentence to develop a paragraph, so one of the them should be removed.

The defective organisation of paragraphs is rather common among ESL/EFL learner writers, particularly among those with a lower English proficiency. An analysis of the ratio was conducted to avoid the impact that the length and the number of paragraphs would have on the results. There are five main body paragraphs analysed. As already stated, paragraph 1 and paragraph 5 are coded 0; paragraph 2, 3 and 4 are coded as 1, 2 and 7, based on the coding guideline. Hence, the ratio of type 0 is 0.40; the ratio of type 1 is 0.20; the ratio of type 3 is 0.20; and the ratio of type 7 is 0.20.

One-way ANOVA is employed to generate statistical results of the data collected from the pre-intervention essays composed by both groups, to detect the possible impact of the participants' English proficiency on their development of the topic sentence. An analysis of the data collected from pre- and post- intervention within a group, is used to assess the effectiveness of the teaching intervention in the domain of the development of the topic sentence. Data and results will be displayed in the next chapter.

In the next section, the teaching of the application of logical connectors in the final four weeks will be introduced, aiming to raise the Chinese participants' awareness of the application of logical connectors in the notion of discourse, and their contribution to local and global coherence. The analytical tool used to identify the underuse and overuse of logical connectors by NNES users will be introduced, along with the four logical connectors that are labelled as being frequently misused by L1 Chinese speakers.

6.4.3 The third stage – logical connectors

6.4.3.1 *The process of teaching*

The teaching of logical connectors in this study does not advocate the study of a whole package of logical connectors, rather, focuses on raising students' awareness of the impact of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic factors on the application of a pre-selected group of logical connectors. The function of logical connectors to reflect the deep logicity of a discourse will also be examined.

This pedagogical design is based on the reductionist and deductionist approaches recommended by Crewe (1990) (for details, see Chapter 5.5). At the first stage, the teaching starts with an introduction to Chinese *guanlianci* (logical connectors) and English logical connectors, and their semantic, syntactic and pragmatic values. The inconsistency between seemingly similar closely matched Chinese-English translation of logical connectors was highlighted. Three articles taken from academic journals with different genres were used to conduct the controlled practice.

In the second stage, a cohort of selected logical connectors, suggested by the reductionist approach, were taught. Four logical connectors, *besides*, *moreover*, *however*, and *therefore*, were chosen to be taught to the Chinese participants. The choice of logical connectors is the key and principal step when applying the *reductionist* approach suggested by Crewe (1990), as it is unfeasible and unnecessary to teach every logical connector in English classes. These four logical connectors have been chosen for three reasons. First of all, they have been identified as being frequently misused by L1 Chinese speakers in previous studies (Chen, C. W. Y., 2006; Lee & Chen 2009; Lei, 2012; Ma & Wang, 2016; Milton & Tsang, 1993). Secondly, the rationale behind their misuse have been coined as being characteristically Chinese. Through the analysis and study of these logical connectors, some of the implications related to cross-linguistics and cross-cultural factors will be better understood. Finally, due to time limits, the examinations of more than four logical connectors would result in insufficient explanation and activities in class, hindering the teaching effort. The four selected logical connectors are listed below.

Besides

In general, *besides* is perceived as informal language that rarely occur in English academic writing. However, it demonstrates a higher frequency of

application by Chinese students in their essays than their NES counterparts (Lee & Chen, 2009; Milton & Tsang, 1993), suggesting Chinese students' lack of register awareness of this particular connector. It is used in English to indicate that the information after it is either a subsidiary detail or a peripheral source compared to the information preceding it (Lee & Chen, 2009). However, its Chinese translation, *chucizhiwai*, does not possess this hierarchical meaning. If transferring its Chinese application to English, it is easy to see that the information added after *besides* might be more important than the preceding information. In addition, the Chinese translation of *except* and *in addition* is also *chucizhiwai*, which misleads Chinese students into believing that *besides* is the alternative of *in addition* and *except* in their academic writing (Lee & Chen, 2009). Chinese students should therefore be aware of the inadequacy of the direct L1-L2 translation.

Moreover

There are various reasons that Chinese students inappropriately use *moreover*. Its high frequency in Chinese students' academic writing is again attributed to their lack of register awareness. *Moreover*, is perceived as being less formal in academic writing, compared to the other logical connectors used to signal the addition of information, such as *in addition* and *furthermore*. The ways of misusing *moreover* are numerous. It is used as an alternative to *however*, to introduce information from a different aspect; or an alternative to *not only ... but also*; to add a different statement, rather than add a related statement (Ma & Wang, 2016). It is also used to represent a progressive relationship, to add important or key information, which is different from its use in English, by adding less weighty information (Milton & Tsang, 1993). This might be due to L1 transfer, as its Chinese translation *erqie* serves as a progressive logical connector in sentences.

However* and *therefore

The teaching of *however* focuses on a knowledge of register and awareness-raising of the similarities and differences of positioning in Chinese and English. The high frequency of *but* in Chinese students' academic writing has been related to their lack of register-sensitivity (Field & Oi, 1992), where *but* and *however* are used interchangeably in their academic writing. In addition, the teaching programme involved an introduction to its flexible positioning in English, and its relationship

with the conveyance of information (for details, see Chapter 5.2). In this section, the flexibility of positioning of *therefore* has also been introduced and exemplified.

Controlled practices were conducted with activities to reinforce the salient points. Several academic discourses were distributed to students where logical connector had been intentionally deleted. They were required to fill in the logical connector(s) that best reflected the logical development of the texts. At some places, more than one option is possible. The originally employed logical connectors were revealed later and compared with students' results. Any divergence was discussed in class to determine the most appropriate use of logical connectors in the specific contexts.

At the third stage, students were required to write short essays in classes, and as homework (150-200 words). They were required to firstly, think of the logic connectors that they would use to reflect the logic of their short essays, and then write a composition. This is as suggested by the deductionist approach, in order to help them understand the deep logicity that logical connectors reflect, and avoid using them as decoration tools (Crewe, 1990).

In the next section, I will introduce the use of analytical tools that was used to examine the frequency of the logical connectors in the Chinese participants' essays collected for this study.

6.4.3.2 *The process of analysis*

The ratio of occurrence of logical connectors

As aforementioned, the ratio of occurrence of logical connectors was set on the word-based calculation format generated by Milton and Tsang (1993).

$$\text{Ratio of occurrence} = \text{frequency count} / \text{lexicon token of corpus}$$

All logical connectors in the pre- and post-intervention essays were highlighted and then listed according to the frequency of their occurrence. For instance, *however* occurred 5 times in one Chinese student's pre-intervention essay, the lexicon token of this text was 1,498, hence, the ratio of occurrence of *however* in this text was 0.33%.

The top 7 most frequently used logical connectors in the essays produced by both groups before and after the teaching intervention were listed. The results generated from the pre-intervention essays of both groups are compared for any

possible English proficiency impacts. The results from the same group composed before and after the teaching programme would be compared to identify the teaching effect on the Chinese students' application of logical connectors.

6.4.4 Summary

To sum up, this teaching intervention has been particularly designed and customised to meet the need for L1 Chinese speakers to construct global and local discourse coherence in their academic writing. A mere three-month learning and teaching programme may not be able to help students gain an insightful understanding of the issues regarding discourse coherence. However, I expect these three months may raise students' awareness of the importance of discourse coherence, and provide them with practical tools that they can be used independently, based on the needs of their future academic writing or indeed other formal writing. The design of the content and procedure is therefore applicable, whether taken as a whole or a part, for fulfilling the needs of future study, based on Chinese students' language proficiency and the purpose of their study. For example, a user who already has a thorough understanding of the development and functions of the topic sentence, needs only to pay attention to topical development in discourse and/or the use of logical connectors. Or at a particular stage, a construction of a coherent discourse is the goal of their study, then the content that relates to the topic development will of the importance.

Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected in this study. Quantitative data was collected from both the pre- and post-intervention essays, as well as the close-ended questions from questionnaires, analysed by a one-way ANOVA. Qualitative data was collected from the open-ended question of the questionnaires and interviews, to gain detailed information and expose the potential long-term effect of this teaching, analysed by NVivo system. Thematic analysis is used to interpret the qualitative data.

6.5 Post-teaching Questionnaire

Questionnaires consisting of eight questions were distributed at the end of the final class (see Appendix IV). They contained seven close-ended questions and one open-ended question. The close-ended questions were multiple-choice and Likert-scale items. The first four questions are related to the participants' perspectives of this

teaching intervention. The next three questions are designed to investigate the participants' raised awareness of discourse coherence. The last open-ended question is used to provide the participants with an opportunity to express their individual opinions regarding this teaching programme, which will provide further information for the improvement of this teaching programme. The majority of students completed it within 10 minutes. All were collected within 20 minutes. Tea, coffee and biscuits were prepared in the last class, to form a relaxed atmosphere at the end of the study.

Face-to-face questionnaires are beneficial for both researchers and respondents, as clarification can be made on the spot to enhance data reliability (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013), and it reduces any possible bias caused by the administration process. In addition, face-to-face interaction might be the best mode to guarantee a high response rate and generate a feeling of completeness after the questionnaire. Failure to attain a high response rate can have fatal consequence on small-scale research. Due to the teaching load I faced, and the predictably high study load of the participants, it was impossible for me to organise a large number of students to participate in this experiment. Hence, it was vital for this study to be able to obtain a high respondent rate. A *t*-test was used to analyse the quantitative data collected from this questionnaire.

6.6 After-study interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted six months after the teaching programme, in June of the subsequent year (see Appendix V). During this six-month interval, all of the participants had produced and submitted essays in their disciplines, and immersed themselves in an English-speaking environment. The majority of them were writing up dissertation at the time of the interviews; two had submitted because they planned to go back to China early to look for jobs. Nine students were chosen randomly from each group to interview, so in total there were 18 interviewees. The interview occurred in either their kitchen on campus or a single study room in the library. As before, I travelled to their cities. Each interview lasted 30 minutes. I prepared refreshment and soft drinks. With their consent, audiotaping was utilised, accompanied by note taking for the key words and facial expressions.

This semi-structured interview was designed for three purposes. The first purpose was to explore the participants' experiences during the teaching intervention; and build upon their responses, to explore the effectiveness and consequences of the

teaching programme and to help me avoid ineffectiveness or impracticality in future teaching designs. The second purpose was to see whether they had conducted retrospective thinking about their learning experience and/or they have utilised the skills they have learned in the six months after the post-teaching ended. If so, I would like to share their perceptions and needs regarding this teaching intervention. The third purpose, which is also the one I was most excited about, was to identify the potential delayed effect or long-term effect of this teaching programme. As previously mentioned, the ultimate goal of this study is to provide the participants with practical tools that they might be capable of using independently.

The interview procedure is as such: I spent the first five minutes to reconstruct the rapport I had with them, recalling the content and process of the teaching intervention, and then I asked them the five pre-determined questions (see Appendix V), supplemented by probes if necessary. For example, question 2 was, 'Do you still use the tools taught in classes in your academic study? If so, which tool or tools, and how do you use it? If not, why not?' This question tried to determine how much students digested and consolidated the content, skills and strategies they were taught, and it also tried to identify the possible long-term effects of this teaching intervention.

Interviews were conducted mainly in English. However, code-switching was allowed, to encourage interviewees to express their feelings and opinions, and describe their experiences in the language most comfortable for them and in a more accurate and natural way, which indeed occurred in almost every interview. Code-switching is the alternative use of two or more languages within conversation (Auer, 2013), which often occurs in bilingual or multi-lingual interlocution. This study allows the use of code-switching for the practical reason that all the participants speak English at the intermediate or the beginning of the advanced level, which means they need their home language for the more sophisticated expressions (Toribio, 2001), albeit that they may have different reasons to resort to their home tongue. Toribio (2001) noticed that bilinguals at the beginner and intermediate levels seemed to seek the help of their home language due to the weakness of their L2 whereas the advanced L2 users switched between languages sometimes unconsciously. The audiotaped content was transcribed by me. A Chinese-English bilingual lecturer working in a British university was invited to do the double checking. Thematic coding was used to analyse the data.

Seidman (2013) believes that ‘at the root of in-depth interviewing is an interest in understanding the lived experience of other people and the meaning they make of that experience’ (p. 9). The predetermined questions were to control the direction and process of the interview, in order to collect comparative data between the participants. Follow-up questions acted as probes to reveal more information and clarify any possible confusions or inconsistent answer. Data generated from interviews serve as an important complementary factor to the generic information retrieved from tests and questionnaires, as they convey individualistic and specific information.

6.7 Rater reliability and the impact of errors in analysis

There was a certain percentage of wrongly constructed sentence, ungrammatical sentences, spelling mistakes and misused punctuations in both groups’ essays, particularly in the essays produced by those with lower English proficiencies. This caused a great challenge for the reliability of the data generated and results received. Schneider and Connor (1990) in their study addressed this situation by abandoning the essays marked with the lowest scores, due to their high proportion of error sentences. This served their goal of identifying the relationship between high-rated ESL/EFL essays and the types of topic development applied. This study’s solution to this same problem is to have essays analysed by two raters independently, and then have any inconsistency between raters’ analytical results discussed between them to reach common ground.

I invited a senior lecturer teaching in a British university, whose expertise is in discourse analysis, to discuss my study. I demonstrated to her how I used the analytical tools to analysis the materials collected. For example, the use of TSA to identify topics and the types of topical progression, the categorisation of inappropriately developed topic sentence, and the identification of logical connectors. Then we analysed one of the participant’s texts individually. We then discussed the differences in our results to reach common ground. I myself analysed all of the participants’ pre- and post-intervention essays in the three domains. The senior lecturer analysed 10 essays from each group produced before and after the intervention and her results were compared with mine. Inter-rater reliability was 92.3%, which provides a positive reflection on my analysis results for this study.

Errors were almost inevitable in the participants' products due to their relatively low English proficiencies. In most cases, it affected the identification of T-unit and topics in the analytical process. In this situation, I would normally discuss with the senior lecturer to reach common ground.

Here is an example of how a mis-constructed sentence was identified and analysed.

*“*Additionally, government puts forward tax policy for online businesses. For example, according to IRS (internal revenue service) stipulation, which is the institution to collect taxes in America.”*

At an initial glance, these are two sentences separated by a full stop. However, reading through the whole paragraph it is embedded in, it reveals that this learner tried to express the meaning that *'government puts forward tax policy for online businesses, such as IRS stipulation issued by America'*. Therefore, this excerpt was treated as one analytical unit, with one topic.

In summary, in this chapter I introduced the nature of the participants, and described the teaching process of the three-month intervention, including teaching content and procedure. I also introduced the methods used to collect data, including written essays, questionnaires and after-study interviews. The next chapter will demonstrate the results of data analysis from pre- and post-intervention essays as well as from the questionnaires and interviews, in a sequence corresponding to the research questions.

Chapter 7 Data Analysis and Findings

The research questions generated from the literature review of this study are

1. What is the impact of English proficiency on the nature of ESL discourse structure in academic writing?
2. How do teaching interventions that target discourse devices impact ESL academic writing?
3. How does raising awareness of the construction of discourse coherence, related to cross-cultural and cross-language issues, affect L1 Chinese ESL learners' academic performance?

Data collected from the pre-intervention essays produced by both groups of Chinese participants is used to answer research question 1. Research question 2 will be answered by using the results of data collected from the essays produced by the same groups and comparing their pre- and post-intervention products, complemented with further information elicited from the questionnaires and interviews. Research question 3 will be answered from the results generated from the questionnaires and interviews.

My proposal is that a teaching programme customised to reflect the nature and needs of L1 Chinese English learners will be able to raise their awareness of the impact of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic factors on the construction of discourse coherence. With appropriate teaching approaches and pedagogical design, Chinese students will be able to have a better understanding of the culturally oriented notion of discourse coherence; and being equipped with practical tools, they will be able to independently address this issue in their academic writing. This teaching programme can be integrated into the current education system.

7.1 The impact of English proficiency on the construction of discourse coherence

RQ1. What is the impact of English proficiency on the nature of ESL discourse structure in academic writing?

The question is divided into three sub-questions and addressed below; each sub-question focuses on one of the three domains that has been discussed in the literature review and relates to the construction of discourse coherence:

- i. What is the impact of English proficiency on the topic development of a discourse written by L1 Chinese ESL university students?
- ii. What is the impact of English proficiency on the development of the topic sentence in a paragraph by L1 Chinese ESL university students?
- iii. What is the impact of English proficiency on their application of logical connectors within a discourse produced by L1 Chinese speaking ESL university students?

The results generated from the pre-intervention essays produced by both groups reflect the original and natural state of Chinese students' academic writing. A one-way ANOVA is employed to compare the data between Group A and Group B. The results demonstrate that English proficiency has an impact on the construction of the global and local discourse coherence in all three aspects: the topical development, the development of the topic sentence and the application of logical connectors, in L1 Chinese speakers' English academic written discourses. Group A students demonstrated more 'characteristically Chinese features' in the construction of ESL text coherence, and Group B students displayed a greater awareness of the expectations of their anticipated readers, therefore demonstrated fewer Chinese characteristics in ESL academic essays. This conclusion is in accordance with previous studies (e.g., Yeong, Fletcher, & Bayliss, 2017).

7.1.1 The impact of English proficiency on topic development in Chinese students' academic writing before the teaching intervention

The results show that Group B students introduced significantly more subtopics in the essays composed before the teaching intervention than Group A students did ($p < .05$) (see Figure 7-1). Lautamatti (1978) relates a low proportion of subtopics in a discourse to a high proportion of PP in topic development. That is to say, certain topics are frequently repeated, which, of course, leads to the introduction of fewer new topics per discourse.

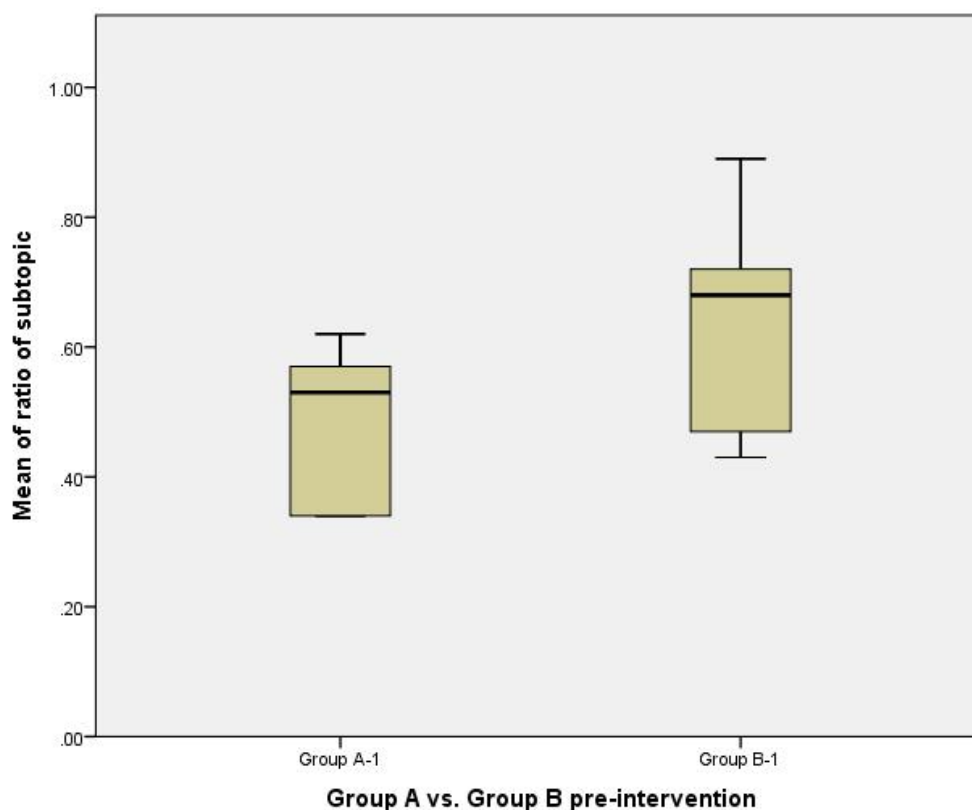


Figure 7 - 1 A comparison of means of subtopic in the pre-intervention essays of both groups

Figure 7-2 demonstrates the proportion of each type of topical progression in the essays produced by both Group A and Group B. Chinese students with lower IELTS overall and writing test results in Group A repeated almost half of the topics in their essays (PP: 45%); comparatively, those with higher IELTS overall and writing test results in Group B repeated fewer topics per discourse (PP: 32%), which is significantly different ($p < .05$). In addition, Group B students significantly more frequently resumed the same topics in the later sections of essays (EPP: 20% and ESP: 8%) than Group A students did (EPP: 14% and ESP: 4%) ($p < .05$). There was no significant difference in the development of sequential topics of a discourse between these two groups; the topic development of SP by Group A students was 38%, in comparison with that of Group B students' 39% ($p > .05$).

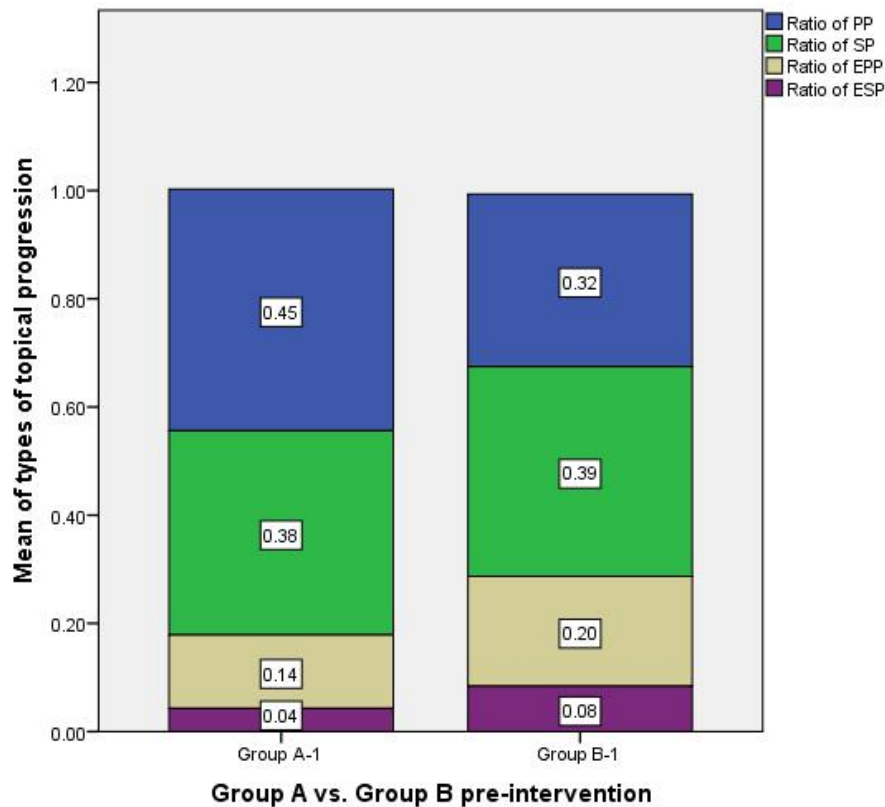


Figure 7 - 2 A comparison of means of topical development in the pre-intervention essays of both groups

To summarise, comparing the essays produced before the teaching intervention, Group A students introduced significantly fewer subtopics into their essays than Group B students did. They repeated the topics significantly more and resorted less to recursive topics than Group B students did. The repetition of the topic has been perceived as one of the Chinese characteristics in the topical development of a discourse (Fan, et al., 2006). The recursion of topics in a discourse, if used properly, demonstrates a writer’s awareness of the existence of the reader and their ability to construct micro-text coherence.

7.1.2 The impact of English proficiency on the development of topic sentences in paragraphs before the teaching intervention

The results show that, in the pre-intervention essays, Group B students produced significantly more properly developed second sentence from the topic sentence than Group A students did ($p < .05$) (see Figure 7-3 below). In other words, Group B students were capable of developing topic sentences in a more logical and coherent way – from the perspective of an NES reader - than their Group A counterparts were. Figure 7-3 also unveils Group B students’ variability in their

capability for developing topic sentences. Although Group B students performed better as a whole, some of them performed worse than their Group A counterparts did in this area.

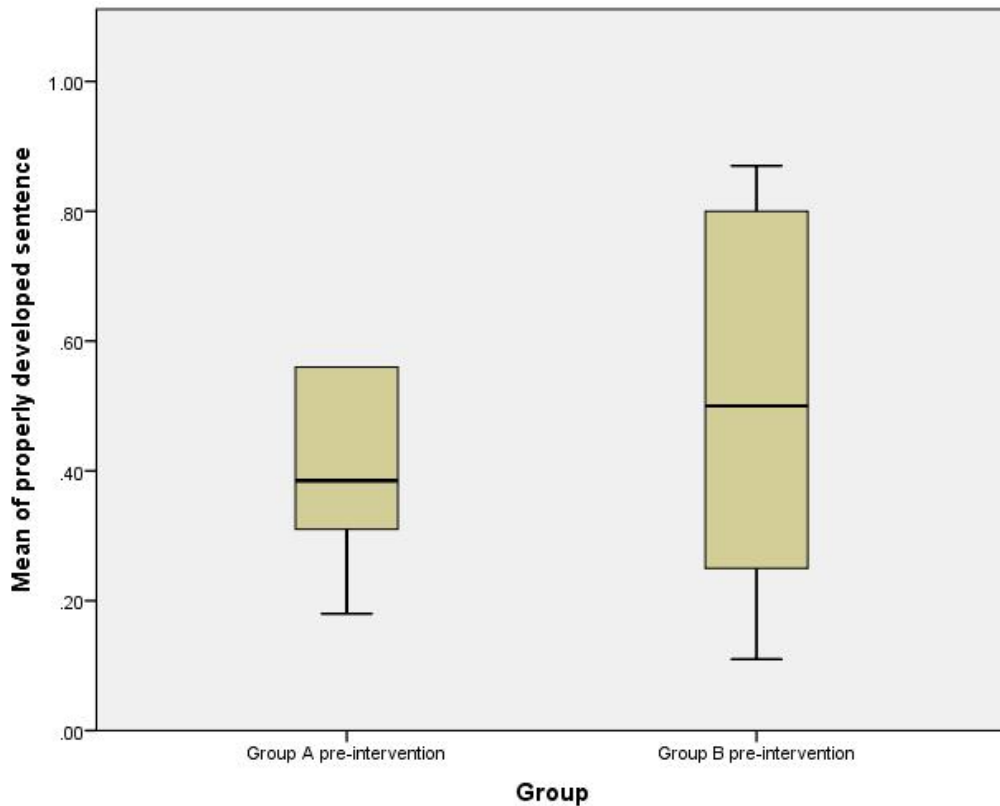


Figure 7 - 3 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the proper development of the second sentence in pre-intervention essays of both groups

Figure 7-4 below demonstrates the outcome of the essays analysis in the development of the topic sentence in paragraphs between groups, and before and after the teaching intervention.

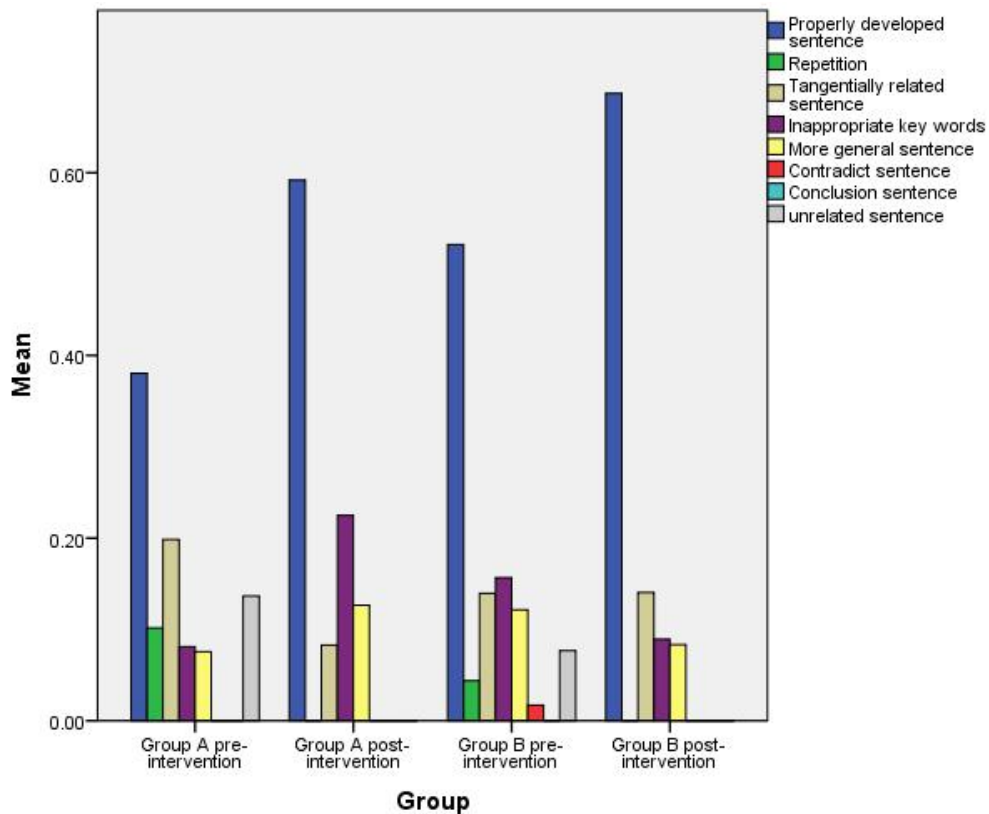


Figure 7 - 4 Ratio of types of interpretation of topic sentence in the pre- and post-intervention essays of both groups

A careful investigation demonstrates that Group A students developed significantly more inappropriate second sentences in the categories of *repetition*, *tangential relationship* and *irrelevant sentences* than Group B students did ($p < .05$) (see Figure 7-5, 7-6, and 7-7 below). This means that, Chinese students at lower English levels tend to repeat the gist of the topic sentence in its successive sentence, or divert from the topic sentence to the partially related content, or even often digress from the topic sentence when developing a paragraph.

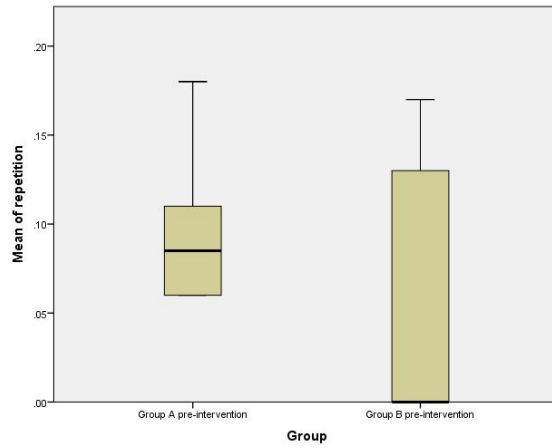


Figure 7 - 5 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the second sentences that are repetitive in the pre-intervention essays of both groups

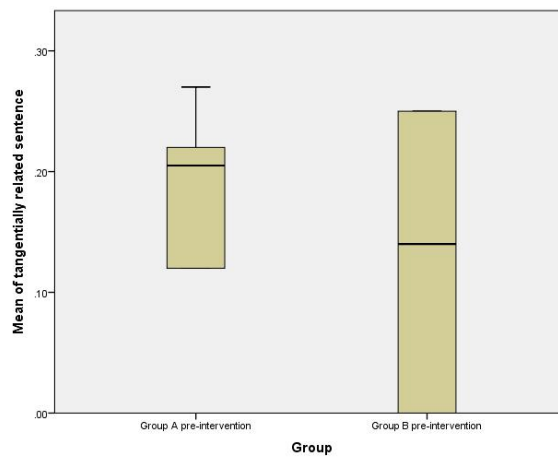


Figure 7 - 6 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the second sentences that are tangentially related to the topic sentence in the pre-intervention essays of both groups

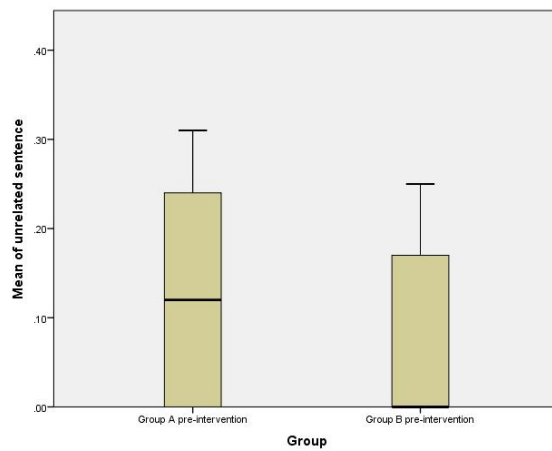


Figure 7 - 7 A comparison of mean of second sentences that are unrelated to topic sentences in the pre-intervention essays of both groups

Statistically, Group B students developed the topic sentence slightly more significantly from the inappropriate key words than their Group A counterparts did (see Figure 7-8).

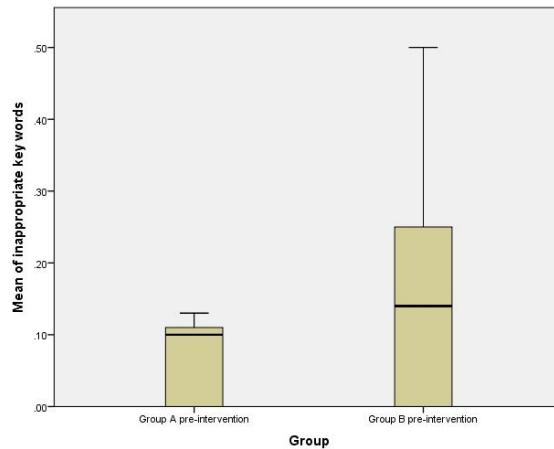


Figure 7 - 8 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the second sentences that chose inappropriate key words of topic sentences in the pre-intervention of both groups

A close investigation of Group B students' writing showed that this phenomenon mostly occurred in particular students' essays. When these students' results were removed from Group B, the statistical analysis shows the opposite result: it is actually Group A students in general that made significantly more mistakes when choosing proper key words for the topic sentence. This again demonstrated the diversity of Group B students' capability to develop topic sentence, as previously mentioned.

The following example is taken from a pre-intervention essay produced by a student in Group B (see example 15). The key word is in italics.

(15)

The online business *promotion* to customers is easier than to High Street business customers. Choi (2013) claims that the most efficient method for consumers to revisit the website is to retargeting advertisements. The retargeting advertisement is a unique feature of click-companies. It means that when a potential customer search[es] some products through the sellers' website but do not purchase any product, the company will present the relevant advertisement to its possible customer (Koti, 2014).

The key word of the topic sentence is *promotion*. Readers would expect to obtain further information regarding the contents and the benefits of online business promotion, and the reasons why e-business promotions are relatively easier than they are in the conventional business arenas. However, this student shifted the focus from

promotion to customers and then to *advertisement* in his successive and following sentences, diverting from the topic of the paragraph.

In addition, two cases occurred in this study where the second sentence contradicted the topic sentence, which were both from Group B students (see Figure 7-9). A further analysis revealed that these two cases might be an accidental consequence of their weak writing ability rather than a misinterpretation of the topic sentence, which will not be discussed in this paper.

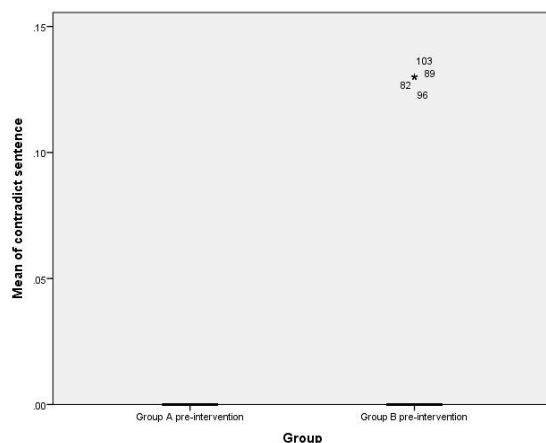


Figure 7 - 9 A comparison of the mean of the ration of the second sentence that are contradictory to the topic sentences in the pre-intervention essays of both groups

7.1.3 The impact of English proficiency on the application of logical connectors before the teaching intervention

Group A students at the lower English levels produced fewer logical connectors in their pre-intervention essays than their Group B counterparts did, though there were no significant differences between them ($p > .05$). *And*, *so* and *however* occurred with high frequency in both groups (see Table 7-1). The high frequency of *and* and *so* by both groups is in line with revelations from previous studies with L1 Chinese students (Liu & Braine, 2005; Yang & Sun, 2012); however, the result regarding the high occurrence of *however* is opposite from all other studies with Chinese students' academic writing (e.g., Lei, 2012).

In addition to those listed as the seven most frequently used logical connectors, students in Group B used the logical connectors *in addition*, *moreover* and *on the other hand* more frequently than Group A students. The use of *in terms of*, *nonetheless*, *similarly*, *likewise* and *consequently* only occurred in Group B essays. However, both groups of students regarded *such as* and *for example* as alternatives in

their pre-intervention essays, without being aware of their syntactic differences. The detailed analysis follows.

Table 7 - 1 The ranking of the most frequently used logical connectors before the teaching intervention

Ranking	Group A pre-intervention	Group B pre-intervention
1	and	and
2	also	because
3	meanwhile	however
4	however	so
5	thus	on the other hand
6	so	in addition
7	therefore	such as

And

And can be used as a conjunction to connect nouns or clauses, as well as a logical connector to link sentences. The analysis of *and* in this study only focuses on the latter. In the pre-intervention essays, both groups employed *and* as the most frequently used logical connector; however, the way they use it, is rather different.

The excerpt below was taken from a Group A student's essay (see example 16). ***And*** is in bold type.

(16)

In Haier, the voice of each staff can be heard **and** each person has the rights to speak, **and** each people are encouraged to communicate with others.

This student tried to assert that the organisational culture of *Haier*, a leading electronics company in China, was to share its values and beliefs with people in the organisation, and there existed smooth communication channels between management levels and their staff. Three simple sentences were mechanically linked together to form a long sentence, regardless of their relationship and logicity. This

reflects a common misconception that L1 Chinese students generally believe; that is, the longer the sentence is, the more complex the meaning is and hence, the higher mark they may obtain.

Furthermore, *and* was often capitalised and placed at the beginning of a sentence in the Group A students' essays, as shown in example (17). This might be the influence of oral English, where *and* is often used within conversations to indicate continuity and provide interlocutors with extra time to organise ideas. This situation affirmed the previous researchers' observation that L1 Chinese students' lack register-sensitivity (Hunt, 1965; Lei, 2012). Another reason might be attributed to misleading literal translations. In English-Chinese dictionaries, *and* is translated into *erqie* and *he*. *Erqie* also translates into *moreover*, which is often used in the initial position of a sentence for additional information. The use of the capitalised *and* in this excerpt is perfectly grammatically and semantically correct in Chinese when it is translated as *erqie* (moreover).

(17)

The company is well-known pioneer firm commitment to social responsibility (About Dame Anita Roddick, 2012). **And** it purchases of natural raw materials through fair trade.

The use of *and* in the essays of Group B is different, albeit that *and* was also the most frequently used logical connector in their pre-intervention essays. In most cases, *and* was placed properly as a coordination marker to combine two sentences together. The high frequency may reflect their lack of diversity in the application of logical connectors.

So, therefore* and *thus

Both groups used *so* as an alternative to *therefore*, *thus*, *as a result* or *consequently*. *So* co-occurred with these three resultative logical connectors in both groups' pre-intervention essays. *So* was usually placed in the initial position of a sentence, with or without a comma to separate it from the rest of the sentence. This is in line with the conclusion made by the previous studies that L1 Chinese students lack register awareness (Lee & Chen, 2009; Lei, 2012).

The high frequency of *therefore* in Group A's pre-intervention essays can also be partially attributed to the use of the chain structure *because ... therefore ... therefore ... therefore ...*. As previously mentioned, it is grammatically correct in Chinese, being translated as *yinwei ... suoyi ..., suoyi ..., suoyi ...*. In this chain, the

consequence exerted in the first resultative clause, after the first *therefore*, has been converted into the reason that results in the consequence in the second resultative clause, which again will turn into the reason of the next clause. For example,

Yinwei wo la duzi, suoyi wo qu yiyuan le, suoyi wo meiqu xuexiao, suoyi laoshi gei wojia da dianhua le.

**Because I've got a running belly, therefore I went to hospital, therefore, I didn't go to school, therefore, the teacher called my parents (to check).*

Compared with Group A, this chain structure did not occur in Group B students' essays. This might be explained by their relatively higher English proficiency comparing to those in Group A, as L1 transfer gradually gets less pronounced as ESL/EFL learners' English develops (Yeong, et al., 2017).

Meanwhile

Meanwhile (*tongshi*, in Chinese) occurred in Group A students' pre-intervention essays at a rather high frequency. Comparatively, only a few students in Group B employed *meanwhile* as a logical connector in their pre-intervention essays. The impact of English proficiency might be one of the best explanations of this phenomenon, given that both groups share the same cultural background and have experienced a similar English pedagogical system.

To my knowledge, very few studies have addressed the use of *meanwhile* in NNES learners' academic writing. One I encountered is Leedham and Cai's (2013) study on Chinese college students' assignments. They mentioned the overuse of *meanwhile* by Chinese in comparison with the data generated from a corpus of English native speakers, 70pmw (per million word) and 4pmw respectively, and a slight reduction in frequency in the year 3 students' assignments than those in year 1 and 2, from 86pmw to 72pmw. However, they did not conduct further investigation into this issue.

A detailed investigation of this study however draws a different inference from Leedham and Cai's (2013) observations. The seemingly excessive use of *meanwhile*, I believe, may be the result of misuse in the majority of cases. The participants did not seem to have a proper understanding of the meaning and function of *meanwhile* in English. *Meanwhile* generally contains two meanings according to the English Oxford dictionary. It is used either to describe things or events occurring at the same time or to conduct a comparison between two events or two features of one event, acting as *with the other hand*. Data from the British National Corpus (BNC)

affirms that *meanwhile* is favoured by newspapers, magazines and non-academic articles, rather than in an academic context.

The three excerpts below (see example 18) are taken from three Group A students' pre-intervention essays to demonstrate the logical problems regarding the use of *meanwhile*.

(18)

Excerpt 1

*A good leadership can improve motivation of the employee in working. **Meanwhile**, working effective of the employee is improved by leadership.

This student intended to establish a linear relationship from leadership, to employees' motivation and then to their working effectivity. The use of *meanwhile* does not make sense between these two independent sentences. The proper development might be as such, 'Good leadership can improve employee motivation in the workplace, *meanwhile* increasing their productivity'.

Excerpt 2

*The distinction between organizational climate and organizational culture is very important. So they are more similar Structure, **meanwhile**, the concept of organizational culture is more widely than concept of organizational climate.

This writer tried to express the thought that, although the concepts of organisational culture and climate may have similar structures, the former is a concept that may produce or contain the latter. The relationship between these two sentences needs a transitional conjunction such as *although* or *despite that*, demonstrating a change in the conveyance of information, rather than *meanwhile*, that indicates the logic of the co-occurrence of two events.

Excerpt 3

*The concept of organizational culture and climate is very important for organizational behavior. **Meanwhile**, research discovers leadership and motivation of influence culture and impact on organizational performance is very important.

The sentences before and after *meanwhile* conveyed various information, which is unrelated to the time or the location the event occurred.

Positioning of the logical connectors

All of the participants placed the logical connectors *however* and *therefore* at the initial position of a sentence when they used them. This agrees with the

conclusion that previous studies made regarding the preference for the initial sentence position (ISP) by L1 Chinese speakers (e.g., Leedham & Cai, 2013). This demonstrates their lack of grammatical variety in positioning as well as a lack of awareness of the subtleties of meaning that the position of the logical connectors conveys.

In summary, by comparing the results of the pre-intervention essays produced by the Group A Chinese students and the Group B students, it is evident that the Chinese students' English proficiency has an impact on their construction of discourse coherence in the three domains: the topical development of a discourse, the development of the topic sentence in a paragraph and the application of logical connectors. Group A students tended to develop topics by parallel progression (PP), while Group B students recursively visited the same topics in a discourse, demonstrating to some extent their awareness of the need to construct discourse coherence. The Group A students developed the topic sentence significantly less properly than the Group B students. Although both groups of students demonstrate a lack of awareness of register and a preference for placing logical connectors at the initial position of sentences, Group A students tend to inappropriately use some logical connectors more frequently than their counterparts in Group B, such as the use of *meanwhile*.

7.2 Impact of the teaching intervention on the construction of discourse coherence

RQ2. How do teaching interventions that target discourse devices impact L2 students academic writing?

This research question has been subdivided into three domains and will be addressed as follows.

- i. What is the impact of the teaching intervention on the topic development in both groups' essays?
- ii. What is the impact of the teaching intervention on the development of the topic sentence in paragraphs of both groups' essays?
- iii. What is the impact of the teaching intervention on the application of logical connectors in both groups' essays?

The data generated from the essays composed before the teaching intervention were compared to those produced after the teaching intervention within the same group of students. The results demonstrate a positive impact of this teaching intervention on both groups' writing in the domains of the topical development and the use of logical connectors, but has a more complex effect on their development of the topic sentence, which will be addressed in the following sections.

7.2.1 The impact of a customised and integrated teaching programme on discourse topical development in Chinese students academic writing

The results from the one-way ANOVA show that the direct teaching programme impacted on the application of topical development in both groups, but to different extents. Both groups have introduced significantly more subtopics after the teaching intervention ($p < .05$). Subtopics are 'a succession of subordinate ideas' that add and expand information of the discourse topic (Lautamatti, 1987, p. 71). The increase of subtopics indicated that the same student writer developed more topics in SP after the teaching intervention. If these subtopics are related to the discourse topic, this will provide readers with in-depth information about the main topic.

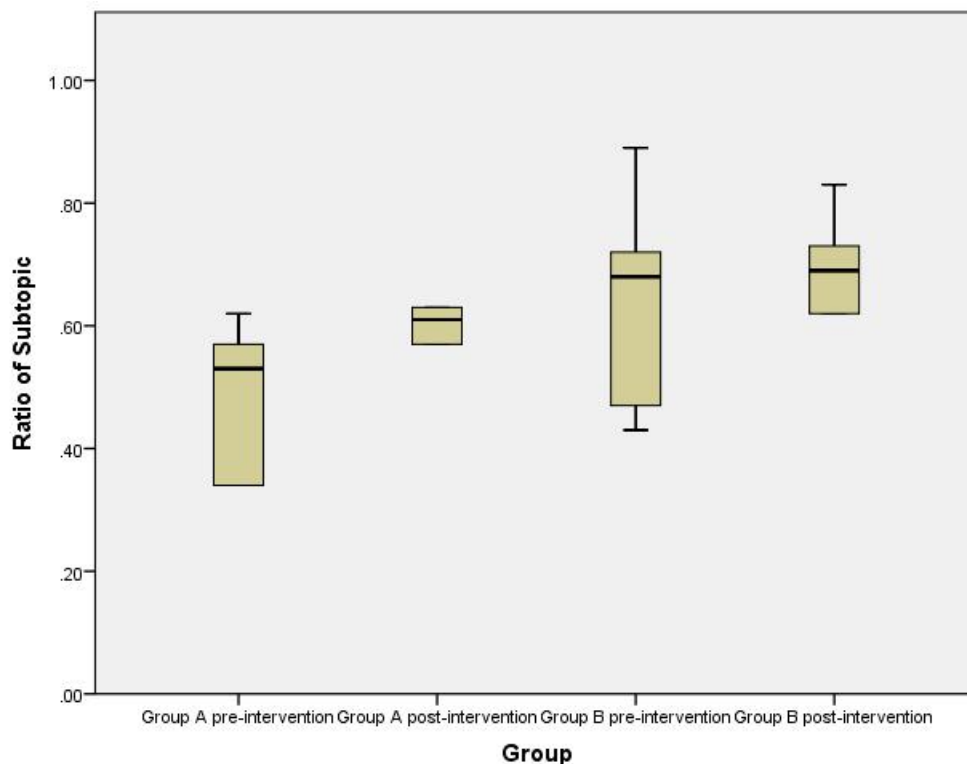


Figure 7 - 10 Ratio of subtopic in the pre- and post-intervention essays of both groups

7.2.1.1 The teaching effect on the Group A students' topical development of a discourse

A close investigation reveals that Group A students significantly reduced the repetitive topics (PP) and increased the developing of topics in sequential and extended sequential progression (SP and ESP) ($p < .05$), in the essay composed after the teaching intervention (see Figure 7-11, 7-12 and 7-13). Only the type of EPP in the topic development has not changed significantly in their post-intervention essays. The reduction of repetitive topics and the increase of subordinate ideas to the main topic, suggest the student writers' intention to add in-depth information to topics; if used properly, reflects their better understanding of the topics.

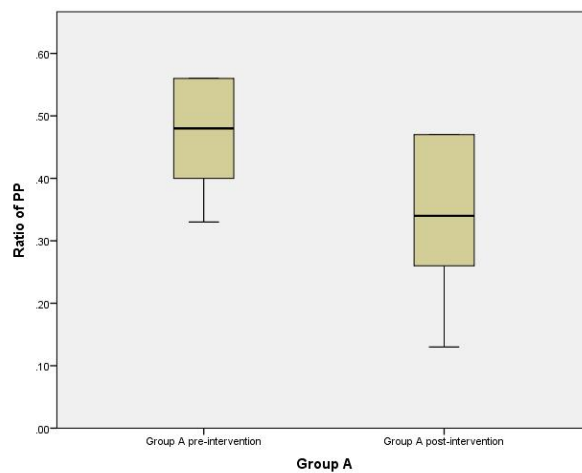


Figure 7 - 11 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the topic development in PP in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group A

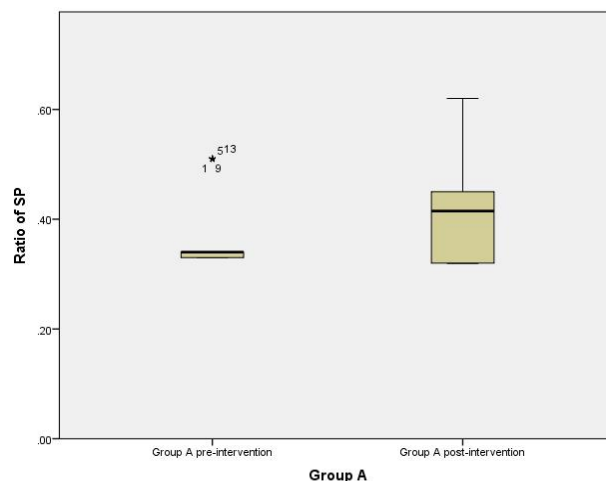


Figure 7 - 12 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the topical development in SP in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group A

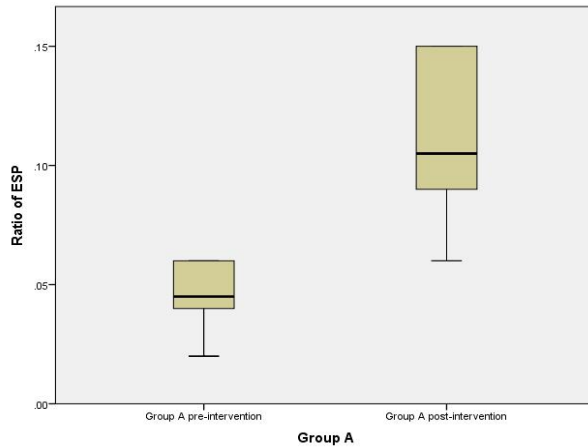


Figure 7 - 13 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the topical development in ESP in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group A

A close investigation of the topic development structure provides further information regarding changes in the post-intervention essays, in comparison to the pre-intervention essays, albeit that the possible reasons behind this change will only be fully revealed with help from the questionnaires and interviews. The topical development structure of two extracts taken from a Group A student's pre-intervention and post-intervention essays are demonstrated below. The pre-intervention extract was used to demonstrate the procedure of applying TSA to topical development (see example 12 in chapter 6.4.1.2). The table that illustrates the topical development structure of example (12) is re-displayed below, labelled as Table 7-2. The topical development structure of an extract taken from the same student's post-intervention essay is displayed below and labelled as Table 7-3.

Table 7 - 2 The topical development structure of example (12)(same as Table 6-6)

T-unit No.	Topical depth		Topic number
	1	2	
1	org. culture		1
2	↑	a good org. culture	2
3	↓	org. culture	1
4	↓	org. culture	1
5	↓	(org.) culture	1
6	↓	it (org. culture)	1

Table 7 - 3 The topical development structure of an extract of the post-intervention essay composed by the same Group A student

T-unit No.	Topical depth			Topic number
	1	2	3	
1	the corporate culture			1
2	it			1
3		a good org. culture		2
4			Starbucks company's org. culture	3
5	the org. culture			1

Table 7-2 shows that this Group A student introduced the subtopic *organisation culture* from four dimensions, repeating the topic four times, three PP (T-unit 3 and 4, T-unit 4 and 5, and T unit 5 and 6) and one EPP (T-unit 1 and 3). This provides readers with information regarding *organisation culture* in four aspects, but without further information to explain these four aspects. They appeared to be a combination of random sentences which share the same topic but without inherent coherence. After the teaching intervention, the same student introduced more information about one topic and provided readers with sufficient information to understand the topic. As illustrated in Table 7-3, the same student introduced the topic *corporate culture* in T-unit 2, then extended to the subtopic of *a good origination culture* in T-unit 3, and then exemplified it with *Starbuck company's origination culture* in T-unit 4. In this way, this student constructed a coherent micro discourse, along with an introducing and concluding sentence that shared the same topic: altogether this student constructed a coherent paragraph that allowed readers to have a thorough understanding of this topic.

7.2.1.2 The teaching effect on Group B students' topical development of a discourse

The explicit teaching of topical development seemingly posed no statistically significant impact on any of the four types of topical development in Group B students essays ($p > .05$) (see Figure 7-14, 7-15, 7-16 and 7-17). The descriptive data showed an increase in the topical development of SP and ESP and a decrease in the topical development of PP and EPP after the teaching intervention, albeit not significantly.

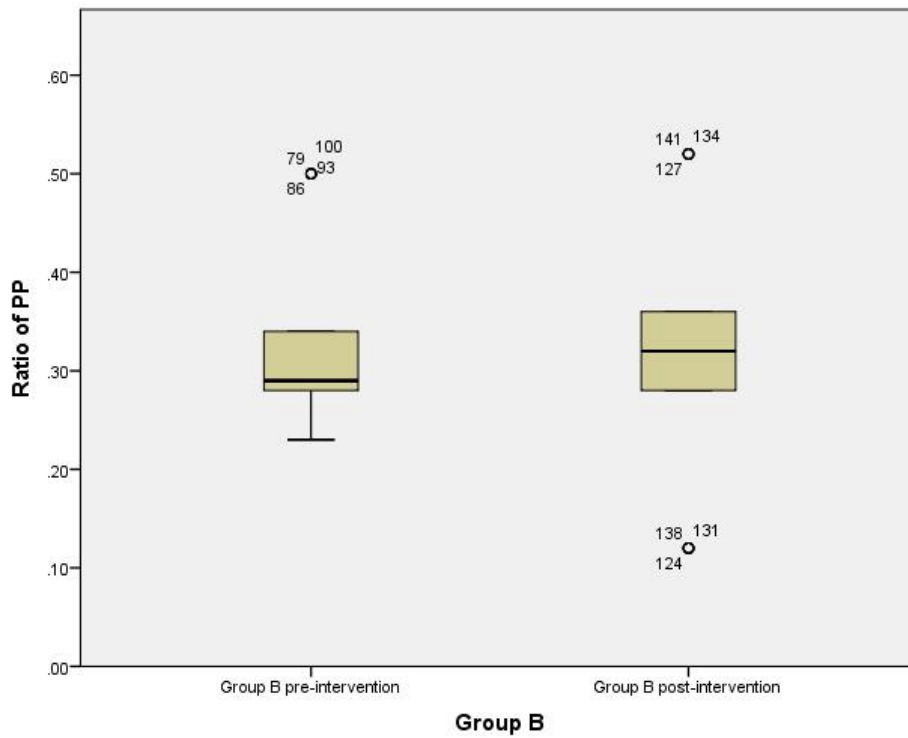


Figure 7 - 14 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the topical development in PP in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group B

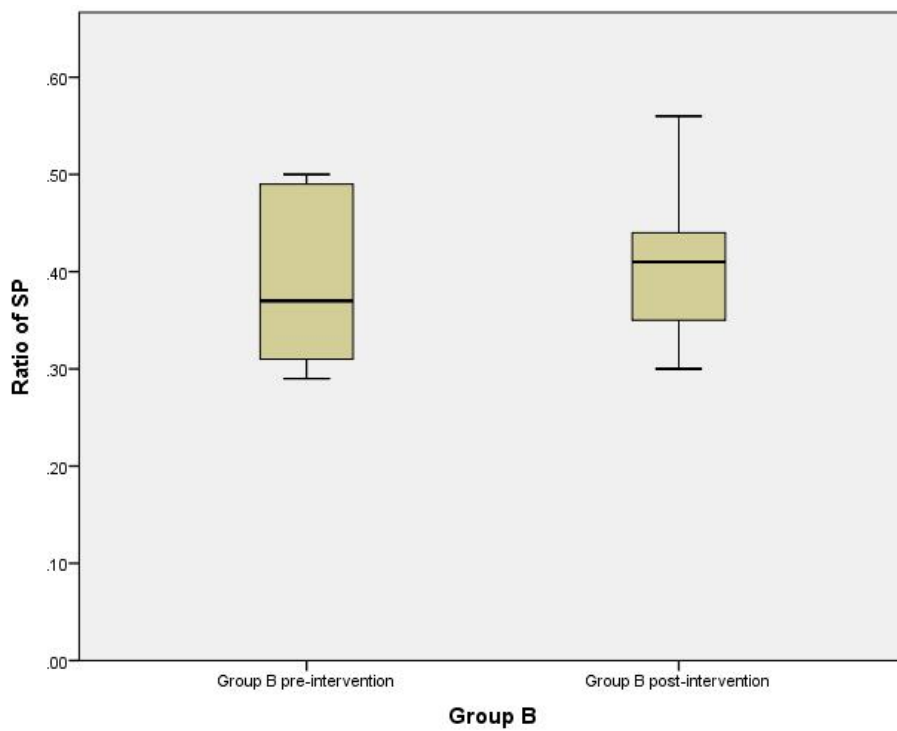


Figure 7 - 15 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the topical development in SP in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group B

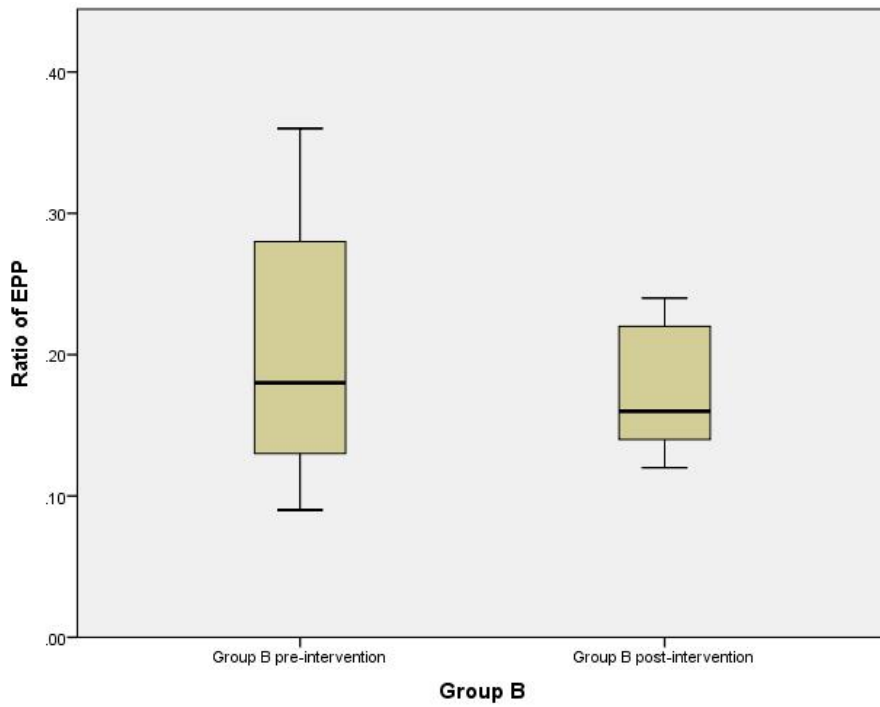


Figure 7 - 16 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the topical development in EPP in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group B

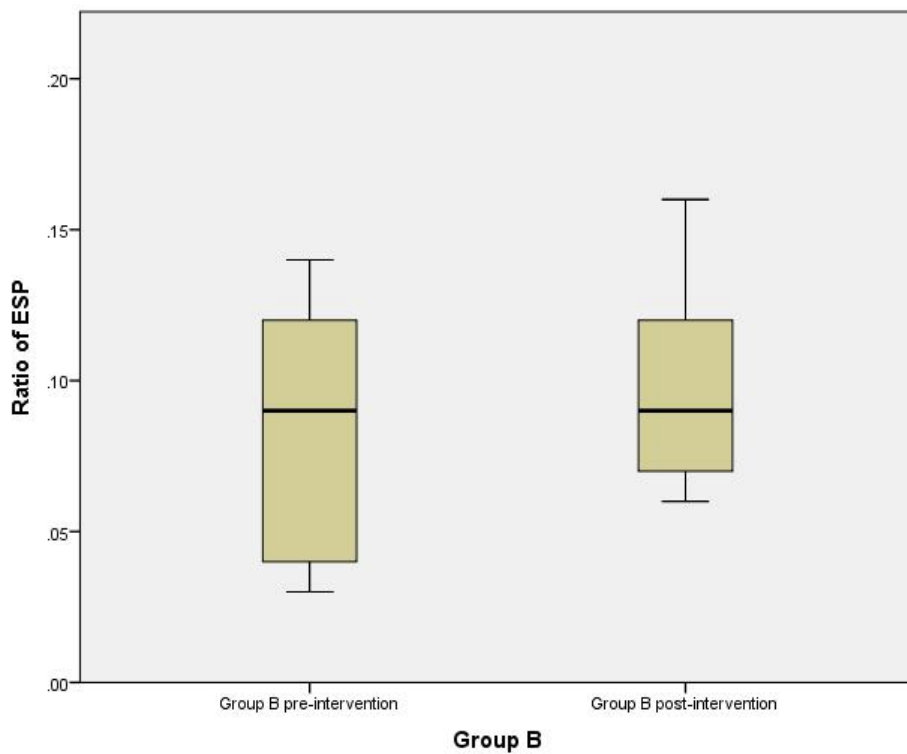


Figure 7 - 17 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the topical development in ESP in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group B

A close analysis of their pre- and post-intervention texts again revealed some information that the quantitative data could not reflect. The topical development structure of two extracts taken from a Group B student's pre-intervention and post-intervention essays are demonstrated below (see Table 7-4 and Table 7-5). The pre-intervention extract was used to demonstrate the application of TSA procedure on the topical development (see example 13 in the chapter 6.4.1.2). The table that illustrates the topical development structure of example (13) is re-displayed below, labelled as Table 7-4. The topical development structure of an extract taken from the same student's post-intervention essay is displayed below and labelled as Table 7-5.

Table 7 - 4 The topical development structure of example (13)(same as the Table 6-8)

T-unit No.	Topical depth			Topic number
	1	2	3	
1	online companies			1
2	(on line) companies			1
3		the email		2
4			the low cost of email	3
5		it		2
6	online companies			1

Table 7 - 5 The topical development structure of an extract taken from the same student after the teaching intervention

T-unit No.	Topical depth			Topic number
	1	2	3	
1	online business			1
2	online business			1
3	online business			1
4		every commodity		2
5			the sales volume	3
6			this better performance	4

Comparing the topical development structures that have been conducted before and after the teaching intervention, it is obvious that they both contain two SP in the development of the topic, *online business*. In the pre-intervention essay, Table 7-4 demonstrates that the topic of T-unit 2 *online companies* was developed into the topic of T-unit 3 *email*, and then to *the low cost of email* in T-unit 4. The logic between *online companies* and *email* is rather reluctant and tentative. Readers need to

make an effort to construct a relationship between these topics, in order to understand the embedded logic.

In the post-intervention essay, Table 7-5 shows that the same topic *online business* was developed into the topic of T-unit 4 *every commodity*, and then to the topic of T-unit 5 *the same volume*, and then to the topic of T-unit 6 *this better performance*, which actually is the theme of T-unit 1, constructed a topic development in ESP between T-unit 1 and T-unit 6. The logic between these topics is clear, and does not demand readers to think of an implicit connection between them. This may indicate that this student has started to become aware of the contribution of topical development to discourse coherence, and of their target readers' expectations of English academic essays. Further explanations will be presented from the light of the post-intervention questionnaires and after-study interviews.

To summarise, statistically, the explicit teaching of discourse topic development may have a greater impact on L1 Chinese students with lower IELTS writing results than those with higher IELTS writing scores. However, further investigation of their written products revealed that this issue may be more complex; the answers received from the questionnaire and interviews are therefore important, to help me reach a better understanding of these issues.

7.2.2 The impact of the customised teaching intervention on the interpretation of the topic sentence in paragraphs

Both groups have developed significantly more appropriate second sentences from the topic sentence after the teaching intervention ($p < .05$) (see Figure 7-18 and Figure 7-19). This demonstrates a positive effect of this teaching intervention and indicates that they have addressed the development of the topic sentence at the paragraph level. This may also suggest that they have some understanding of how a well-developed paragraph would contribute to the construction of discourse coherence.

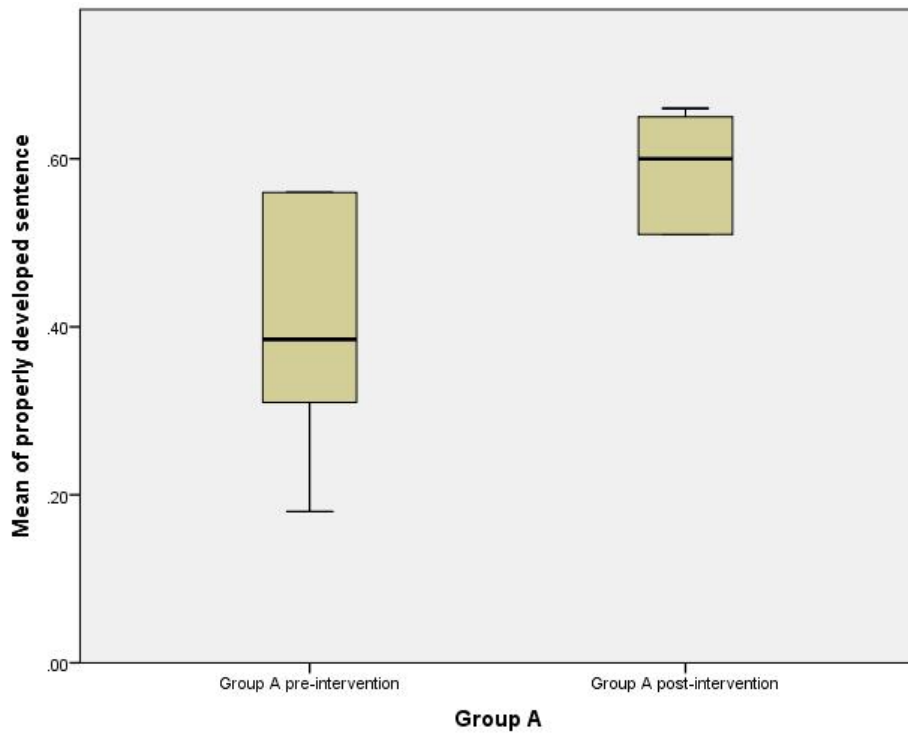


Figure 7 - 18 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the second sentence being properly developed from a topic sentence in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group A

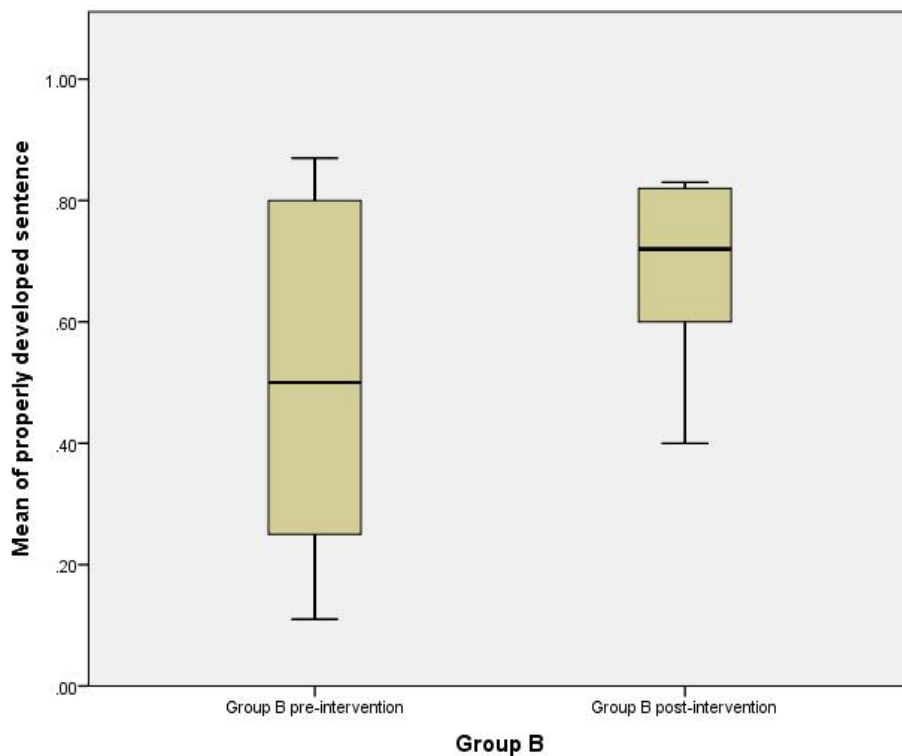


Figure 7 - 19 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the second sentence being properly developed from a topic sentence in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group B

In their post-intervention essays, both groups of students avoided developing topic sentences correctly by being repetitive or irrelevant (see Figure 7-20 and 7-21). They also failed to develop topic sentences by choosing inappropriate key words, or producing tangentially related successive sentences, or successive sentences which were more general than the topic sentence. No students in Group B produced a second sentence that was contradictory to the corresponding topic sentences after the teaching intervention, as the diagram below illustrates (see Figure 7-21). The detailed information will be displayed in the following sections.

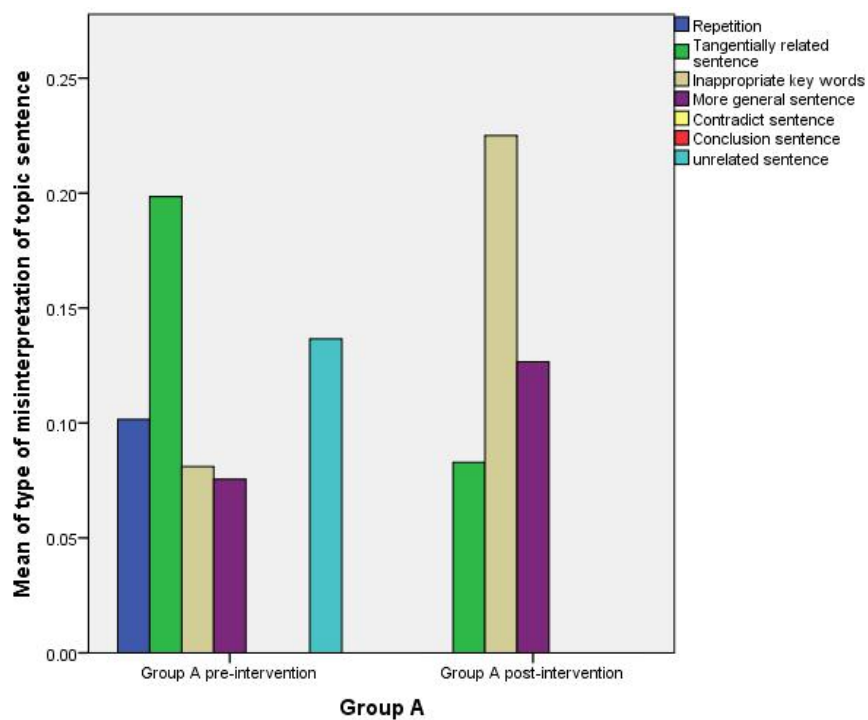


Figure 7 - 20 Mean of the ratio of the misinterpreted second sentence in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group A

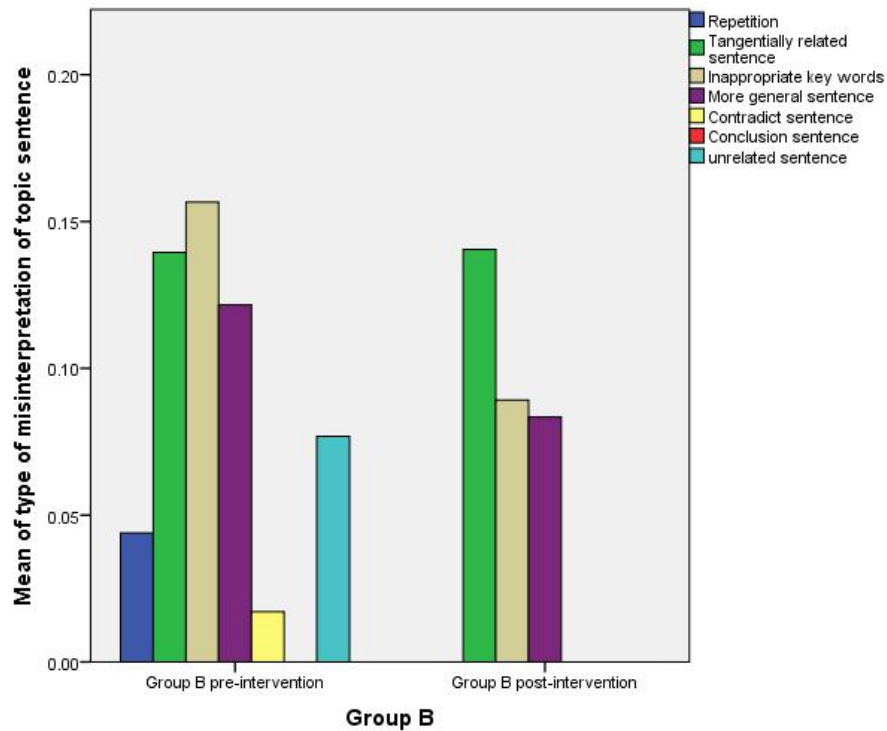


Figure 7 - 21 Mean of the ratio of the misinterpreted second sentence in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group B

7.2.2.1 The teaching effect on Group A students in their development of the topic sentences in paragraphs

After the three-month teaching programme concluded, students with Group A produced significantly fewer second sentences that are only tangentially related to the corresponding topic sentences ($p < .05$) (see Figure 7-22). However, surprisingly, they produced significantly more second sentences that were developed from improper key words in the topic sentence ($p < .05$) (see Figure 7-23). Similarly, they also composed more successive sentences that were more general than the topic sentences, albeit not significantly (see Figure 7-24).

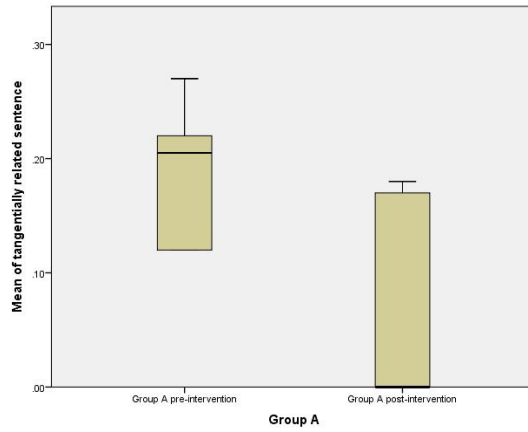


Figure 7 - 22 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the second sentence being tangentially developed from a topic sentence in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group A

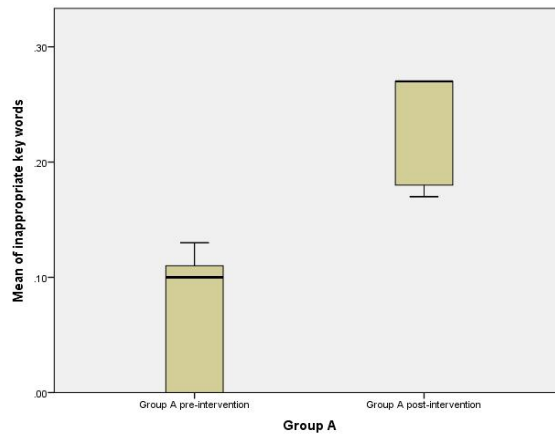


Figure 7 - 23 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the second sentence choosing inappropriate key words from the topic sentence in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group A

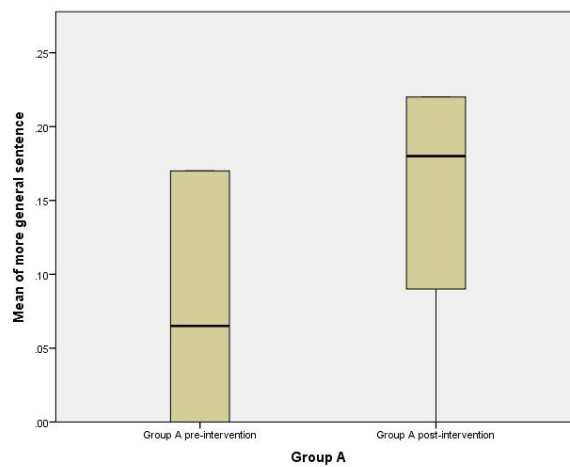


Figure 7 - 24 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the second sentence being more general than a topic sentence in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group A

The increase and the deduction of a certain type of inappropriately developed second sentence in Group A students' post-intervention essays occurred seemingly in a random way, rather than a reflection of the teaching effect.

7.2.2.2 The teaching effect on the Group B students' development of topic sentences in paragraphs

After the teaching programme, Group B students significantly reduced the ratio of second sentences that were developed from inappropriate key words in the topic sentence ($p < .05$) (see Figure 7-25), as well as when the second sentence was more general than the topic sentence, but this was not statistically significant (see Figure 7-26). Surprisingly, they produced slightly more unrelated second sentences to the corresponding topic sentences, placing themselves at a higher risk of digression from the topic sentence (see Figure 7-27), as illustrated in the following diagram.

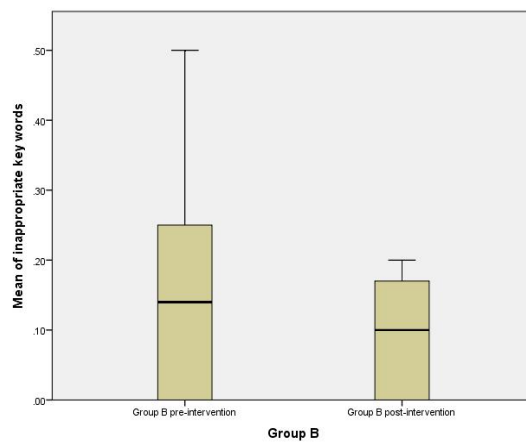


Figure 7 - 25 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the second sentence choosing inappropriate key words from a topic sentence in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group B

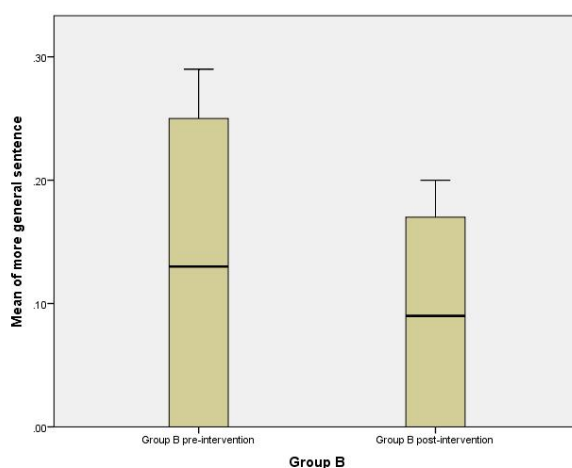


Figure 7 - 26 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the second sentence being more general than a topic sentence in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group B

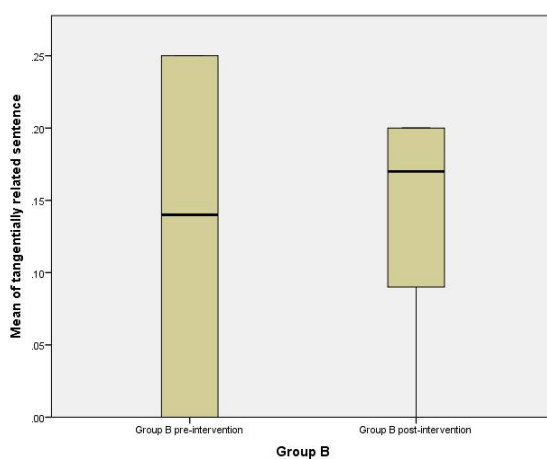


Figure 7 - 27 A comparison of the mean of the ratio of the second sentence being tangentially related to a topic sentence in the pre- and post-intervention essays of Group B

From the results of both groups, it seems that this teaching intervention did not have an overall impact on L1 Chinese students in their development of the topic sentence in paragraphs, regardless of their English levels. Although both groups desisted from developing the topic sentence into repetitive or irrelevant successive sentences, the increase of other types of improperly developed second sentence raised doubts in my mind as to the efficacy of the teaching intervention in this area.

This doubt increases my interest in the answers collected from the questionnaires and interviews regarding this aspect of the teaching programme, which may provide some valuable insight to help me interpret these results in a more perceptive way, as well as conduct a revision of the teaching content and procedure of this unit to make it more accessible to the learners.

7.2.3 The impact of customised and integrated teaching intervention on the application of logical connectors

A comparison between the ratio of the occurrence of logical connector application in the pre- and post-intervention essays reveals some changes in the top seven most frequently used logical connectors (see Table 7-6).

Table 7 - 6 The use of logical connectors by both groups before and after intervention

Ranking	Group A pre-intervention	Group A post-intervention	Group B pre-intervention	Group B post-intervention
1	and	and	and	however
2	also	also	because	therefore
3	meanwhile	therefore	however	In addition
4	however	for example	so	because
5	thus	however	on the other hand	for example
6	so	as a result	in addition	and
7	therefore	as (because)	such as	also

The changes in Group A's essays evidently show, in the following areas: the elimination of the use of *meanwhile*, *so*, and of the chain structure *because ... therefore ... therefore*. Although *meanwhile* can be used in academic writing, it is interesting to note that Group A avoided using it in their post-intervention essays. This avoidance of certain language features is rather common in the learning and application of foreign or second languages (Ellis, 1984; Liao & Fukuya, 2004). When L2 users have not fully acquired knowledge of certain L2 features or topics, they may try to resort to the features they know well or the topic they are familiar with, and avoid placing themselves in an uneasy position. The cessation of the use of *so* and *therefore* as alternatives to each other suggests that they may becoming aware of *register* in English. The discarding of the causal-resultative chain structure of *because ... therefore ... therefore* is accompanied by the proper use of either *because* or *therefore*. In addition, the proper application of *such as* and *for example* has substantially improved after the teaching programme, given that these two connectors were frequently used as alternatives to each other in the pre-intervention essays.

The students in Group B also discarded the use of *so* and *therefore* as alternatives in the post-intervention academic writing task, and they also used *such as* and *for example / for instance* correctly. In addition, they reduced the application of *on the other hand*, or replaced it with other similar expressions.

In addition, the findings of the post-intervention essays reveal that both groups placed *however* and *therefore* in a variety of positions in their sentences, compared to only placing them in the IPS (initial sentence position) in their pre-intervention essays, shown below.

Table 7 - 7 The placement of *however* and *therefore* before and after the teaching intervention

		however			therefore		
		ISP	Middle	End	ISP	Middle	End
Group A	Pre-intervention essays	100%	0	0	100%	0	0
	Post-intervention essays	91%	9%	0	85%	15%	0
Group B	Pre-intervention essays	100%	0	0	100%	0	0
	Post-intervention essays	80%	20%	0	74%	26%	0

7.2.4 Summary

In summary, the results generated from both groups' pre- and post-intervention essays demonstrate that the three-month teaching intervention had a positive impact on L1 Chinese students' academic writing in most situations. In the post-intervention essays, both groups have produced more subtopics in the discourses, through which more subordinate ideas can be introduced to the discourse topic, and in-depth information can be provided to the target readers. Statistically, Group A students adapted their topical development significantly from being predominantly

PP to a more balanced progression of the four types, by significantly increasing the topical progression of SP and ESP. Group B students with higher IELTS overall and writing results however did not make a substantial adaptation of the four types of topical progression in a discourse.

In the development of the topic sentence in paragraphs, it seems that this teaching intervention did not have a systematic impact on either groups' post-intervention essays. The increase and reduction of certain types of inappropriately developed second sentence seems to be accidental, or random in both groups of students' essays. This suggests that a further investigation into this area should be conducted, and the current pedagogical design adapted, re-organised, or scrapped.

After this teaching intervention, both groups have reduced the use of informal logical connectors in their post-intervention essays, which suggests that the explicit teaching of register can raise Chinese students' awareness of register. Group A students at the intermediate level also avoided the use of direct translation of *because ... therefore ... therefore* in their post-intervention essays. Further information needs to be obtained from the questionnaires and interviews.

In the next two sections, I will introduce information collected from the answers to the questionnaires and interviews, which will provide detailed and essential information that may explain the results generated from the discourse analysis conducted on the pre- and post-intervention essays.

7.3 The impact of the teaching intervention on students' awareness raising of cross-cultural and cross-language issues

RQ3. How does raising awareness of the construction of discourse coherence, related to cross-cultural and cross-language issues, affect L1 Chinese ESL learners' academic performance?

The results from the quantitative data generated from the pre- and post-intervention essays have highlighted the changes made by both groups of Chinese students in their ESL academic writing, and the effectiveness of this teaching intervention in some areas, and to differing degrees. Information elicited from the questionnaires is used to explore the rationale behind these changes, assisting me to achieve a more insightful understanding from the learners' perspective (for the detail of the questionnaire, see Appendix IV).

The eight questions were delivered to each student:

1. How good are you at developing topical progression in a discourse, compared with before this course?
2. How good is your ability to develop the topic sentence in a paragraph, compared to before the teaching programme?
3. How good is your ability to use logical connectors in a discourse, compared to before the teaching programme?
4. How good are you at organising a text now as compared to before?
5. How well have you realised the importance of text coherence as compared to before?
6. How well have you realised the impact of Chinese culture and your own L1 Chinese on the writing process as compared to before?
7. How well have you understood that the reader is an important factor in the construction of text coherence as compared to before?
8. Please let me know what you think of this teaching programme. (Anything related to the content, procedure, instructions, etc. are welcome, including suggestions and complaints)

The first four questions are designed to engage students in self-reflection regarding the content of this teaching intervention, and their personal awareness of their ability to organising texts in the three domains taught, after the teaching intervention. Questions 5, 6 and 7 relate to the awareness-raising process regarding cross-cultural and cross-language influences on the construction of text coherence in English. The last question tries to generate some feedback on the teaching intervention. The answers were coded on the Likert scales, 1 for much worse, 2 for a little worse, 3 for about the same, 4 for a little better, and 5 for much better.

7.3.1 The results of the close-ended questions

No student in either group chose 1 or 2 on the Likert scale; a few students chose 3. The majority of students all chose 4 or 5 on the scale. The results of a *t*-test showed that there was a significant difference between the two groups ($p < .05$). Students in Group B marked significantly higher than those in Group A did. On closer assessment, students of Group A scaled significantly lower on questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 than students of Group B did, but only slightly lower for questions 5, 6 and 7.

The lower scales chosen by Group A students for questions 1, 2, 3 and 4 may reflect their concerns about their own English ability. They did not seem to have confidence in their performance in academic writing even after this teaching intervention. However, they agreed that this intervention had a positive effect on, their awareness of the influence of cross-cultural and cross-language factors, and the importance of considering the target readers' expectations of their academic writing in terms of discourse coherence. This was reflected by their higher marks to questions 5, 6 and 7. In comparison, the higher scores in all of the first seven questions among Group B students reflected their confidence in their capability to construct discourse in ESL academic writing after the teaching intervention, and to their raised awareness of cross-cultural and cross-language factors and their influence on academic writing.

7.3.2 The results of the open-ended questions

7.3.2.1 Benefits of this teaching intervention

The open-ended question 8 generated a rather wide range of topics. Both groups agreed on the necessity of this course and its positive impact on their understanding of academic writing in a British academic context. Both groups believed that this course raised their awareness of discourse coherence and its relevant influential factors, such as their home culture and L1. Thematic analysis of this open-ended question generated several common themes among the Chinese participants.

i. Practicability of this teaching

Both groups generally praised the content for its practicability and feasibility, equipping them with tools that can be resorted to when constructing coherent discourse in ESL academic writing.

For example, one student from Group A mentioned,

I know my writing is bad, but I didn't know how to improve it, or how to start the first step to improve it, which made me frustrated. Now I've learned from this course that, I can go through it from topical development first, then down to the paragraphs, and then to the sentences, after I complete my writing, to make sure it is a whole piece of coherent discourse.

One student from Group B commented,

This course makes sense to me. In the past, I didn't know why this piece of my essay received a good mark but another one obtained a low mark. I was angry at myself when I got a low score after I spent so much effort and time modifying it without a clue. When I looked back to the good ones, I found that by accident, I produced them coherently, but I didn't

know how I did it. Now I know what to pay attention to while I'm writing and how to modify the drafts.

One student from Group B described it in metaphorical language. She said,

I am very happy to have attended this course. This course reminded me of the time when I started to learn to write English letters: My father held my right hand; with a little gentle force directed me to write from the proper direction, size and force. Now I know how to appreciate and assess other people's writing, how to construct and revise my own writing, and how to think from a reader's perspective. I think now I know how to get better grades from the simple combination of sentences to a big picture of an overall text, though I know it is just a start.

ii. The awareness-raising of cross-cultural and cross-language influences and the notion of discourse coherence in this teaching intervention

Both groups appreciated this teaching programme for its success in raising their awareness of cross-cultural and cross-language issues in their academic writing, in the aspect of global and local discourse coherence and of the target readers' perceived expectations.

One student from Group A noted,

I didn't understand the comments my tutor made on my essays when she mentioned 'incoherent' and 'I don't understand this paragraph'. I thought it was due to my weak English ability, or grammar, or vocabulary. Now I think I understand what she meant. It is not all my English vocabulary's problem; it is probably because I always translate Chinese into English when I write in English.

One students from Group B wrote,

I have never noticed the development of the topic sentence in a paragraph in the past, but now I think it is very useful. I was taught in China to write topic sentences. We were taught it was very important to write a pretty topic sentence with big words, which would bring a good mark. But now I know they are not just put there for better marks. Now I always check whether my topic sentence is consistent with the discourse topic.

iii. The awareness-raising of target readers' expectations

The Group B Chinese students particularly raised the topic of the target readers' expectations in the open-ended question. They realised that an awareness of their target readers in the writing process was one of the domains that could help them produce coherent discourses, and the concept of discourse coherence is culturally oriented. They claimed that they would bear in mind in their writing process that their anticipated readers of their essays and dissertations are British

universities faculty members, who in most cases, do not have a Chinese cultural background. One student from Group B wrote,

I was aware that L1 has some impact on L2 learning, but I didn't know how to reduce and avoid some features. But now I think I know what I should pay attention to while writing [in English], and how to revise or re-edit my writing. I don't think I can write British English essays as British students do, but I think I can at least write essays where my supervisor makes fewer 'incoherent' comments.

iv. The benefits of the online discussion panel

Students from both groups raised their positive feedback to the establishment of the online discussion panel in *WeChat*, for the support from both peers and me as a teacher. One student from Group A wrote:

I loved the online group discussion room. I don't think I could have completed my homework without it. But I know in my real writing process, there does not exist a group discussion place that I can resort to. I wish my university has a helpline like this.

In addition, in answering the open-ended question, the Chinese participants also raised the challenges that they had encountered in this teaching programme, and made some suggestions for my future pedagogical design.

7.3.2.2 The challenges raised in the teaching intervention

i. The challenge of identifying the relationship between topics

Both groups commented that it was a challenge identifying the relationship between topics. Group A students seemingly struggled more with it. One student from Group A complained that:

I thought TSA was very useful to help to improvement my English. It looked very easy to do in classes, but when I tried to use it by myself, it seemed very difficult. I couldn't tell whether the two topics were synonyms or had other relationships. I had to look up every word to understand its meaning; after that, I still couldn't figure out whether they were synonyms or not. The only situation I am 100% certain of is to pronounce a PP relationship if the two topics are in the same words. My English vocabulary is very limited and not good enough to make the correct judgement.

It seems that the Chinese students with lower English levels blamed their limited vocabulary size for their difficulty in identifying topics and topical development relationships in this study. This student's complaint mirrors comments made by several other Group A students:

I'm not quite sure whether this programme could help me with my English writing. I want to learn the vocabularies and grammars I can use in

my essays, but we only learned several logical connectors. I'd suggest you teach more grammars and formal words.

It is not surprising to hear a voice like this. As previously mentioned, it is a common situation among L1 Chinese students to emphasise vocabulary and grammar while learning English, concentrating on the size of their vocabulary knowledge but with a neglect of the depth (Fan, 2003), as is reflected in this study; the majority of the participants enthusiastically requested a re-measurement of their vocabulary size after the three months had elapsed, hoping to view some degree of increase. However, the results of the post-intervention Nation's test disappointed the majority of them.

ii. The challenge of identifying the types of inappropriately developed second sentence

More than half of the participants mentioned the challenge of following Reid's (1996) categorisations. Although Reid's (1996) participants shared some similar characteristics to mine, they did not raise concerns regarding this area, nor did participants of the pilot study I undertook. Notwithstanding the above, it seems that a rethink of the teaching content may be called for to ameliorate the acquisition of this aspect. Further research on this should focus on the adaptation and re-organisation of the content, and with the use of a larger piloting sample.

One student from Group B wrote,

It was too hard and too much for me! It seemed very easy to follow in class but when I started to do homework, I think the content was too hard for me. I still don't understand what's wrong with the second sentence. They all look ok for me. I can't tell the logic behind this.

In summary, the results generated from the questionnaires provided me with in-depth information from the participants regarding their self-reported awareness-raising, and their perspectives on the effectiveness of this teaching intervention. They also provide me with rationales behind the results generated from the discourse analysis, to some extent. I could adapt and ameliorate the current pedagogical design based on the analysis of both quantitative data and qualitative data, to satisfy Chinese students' needs in ESL academic writing.

The purpose of this teaching intervention, to raise Chinese students' awareness of cross-cultural and cross-language issues on discourse coherence, seems to have been fulfilled. Group A students who obtained lower IELTS overall and

writing scores, however, seemed to focus only on the linguistics aspect of this course. In comparison, the Group B students who had higher IELTS overall and writing results benefited more from the aspect of conceptualised discourse coherence.

In the next section, I will discuss the information collected from the post-study interviews held six months after the teaching intervention, which raised some unexpected gains from this study, that was welcomed.

7.4 The possible long-term impact of the teaching intervention on students' individual development in respect to the comprehension of coherence in English writing

A post-study interview was delivered six months after the teaching intervention, in order to identify any possible long-term effects on students' academic writing, as well as to explore the possible long-term effect of the teaching intervention, which is important for my future course design. I hoped that this six-month interval would provide these Chinese students with sufficient time to practice the tools they have learned in the teaching programme, and if possible, to integrate what they have learned into their own learning habits and subjects. The interview was semi-structured. Ten students were randomly chosen from each group. The results suggest that the more self-reflective students seemed to have benefited more from the teaching programme.

One student from Group B revealed that she applied the tools that she had learned in the teaching intervention to her academic writing, during these six months after the teaching intervention.

I'm so lucky to have attended this course. I thought my English was good enough for my British university (my overall IELTS score was 6.5; the score for Writing was 6), but that wasn't true. This course was very useful to me. I've realised what academic writing asks for and what my tutors expect from my essays in your course. Now when I'm writing, I always bear in mind the construction of text coherence in topical development, the local coherence of the topic sentence and its immediate development, and the use of connectors. I think my writing has become more meaningful than before. I also know why I should write in this way.

Another student from Group B mentioned the self-reflection that she has conducted on her ESL academic writing in a British university during these six months,

I know my writing is still Chinese-like, but now I know why and what influences my writing. This makes me happy because I know how and what I should do to modify my writing. I know it needs time but I am not in the position that I have no ideas about what I should do when I see the comments ‘incoherent’ or ‘please rewrite this part’. Now this is quite natural for me to consider the reader while writing. I want to write essays in a way that is more acceptable to university tutors.

One student from Group A however seemed to have a different opinion of the teaching programme after the six months has elapsed. She said,

I didn’t use the things you taught much in my writing. I understand the concept of text coherence and its importance in academic writing, but the things you taught are too difficult to apply in real writing. I have to think of subject content, look for proper vocabulary, write in correct grammar, and other things – There are so many things I need to take care of! But now I always use academic words in essays. Sometimes I use TSA to check the topic development in my essays.

Her suggestion for my future teaching was ‘to teach more logical connectors’. Another student from Group A also shared a similar opinion. These students represent a type of student that focuses on the linguistic features of language learning. This teaching programme does not seem to have much short- or long-term effect on their academic writing.

During the interviews, some students from both groups advanced some benefits that they had gained from the teaching intervention on their academic study, which were unexpected and welcome. Students, particularly from Group A, mentioned that they improved their sentence completeness when trying to identify the topical development of their discourse, particularly the problem of the absence of the subject in sentences. Students from Group B claimed that they adapted the skills and concepts they had learned from this academic teaching programme, which was initially designed to target their academic writing, to the areas of academic reading. More detailed discussion regarding these unexpected benefits of this teaching intervention is as follows.

7.4.1 The unexpected benefits of applying TSA - The completeness of sentences

As previously mentioned, topical structure analysis (TSA) has been applied as a revision tool for ESL/EFL speakers to improve their discourse coherence in terms of topical development (Chiu, 2004; Fan, 2003; Liu, 2009), or a tool for teachers and examiners to examine students’ topical development in written products (Almaden, 2006; Connor, 1996). However, to my knowledge, I have not encountered a study

that mentions the application of TSA to improve the grammatical completeness of sentences. This improvement to sentence-level accuracy was not the goal of this study but has been welcomed by students as well as me as a teacher. Therefore, this study may provide researchers with a new perspective on the application of TSA by ESL/EFL users.

Students from Group A described the way that they explored the use of TSA as a self-corrective syntactical tool to improve the completeness of sentences when they were practicing TSA in their writing, in these six months. One student from Group A said,

When I tried to identify the topic, I went to look for the subject of a sentence first, by following the procedure I learned from your class. That is when I found that I didn't write a subject for that sentence. So, I added the missing subject. Sometimes, I found that the subject was there, but the verb that agreed with the subject wasn't there. I think, by using TSA, I'm given the second chance to fulfil my sentence, to find the grammatical problems and correct them. My writing quality is much better than before, from this perspective.

As previously mentioned, when identifying a topic as a T-unit, it should start with the grammatical subject of the main clause, then nouns and noun phrases, and then relative clauses that contain noun properties (Lautamatti, 1987; Witte, 1983a, 1983b). This process, however, provides a type of Chinese student with a chance to have a second look at their writing with the sentence structure. Chinese is a topic-prominent language, in which there does not exist a strict subject-verb agreement; the subject is not necessary in sentences, particularly in topic chains. If Chinese students transfer this feature into their English writing, it would be easy to produce sentences without subjects or without a strict subject-verb agreement, breaking the English grammatical rules. Although this is not the purpose of this study, it seems that this is a common phenomenon among the students with lower English levels, as the Group A students raised this grammatical use of TSA in the interviews, but the Group B students did not.

Group B students seemed to enjoy the benefits of using TSA as a conventional tool to help with the topic development of their academic writing and revision. When I probed the way that they used TSA further, they also mentioned the help that TSA presented when correcting the missing subject of a sentence. However, they did not pay much attention to this as they generally treated their subjectless sentences as a type of minor error that they do not make frequently.

The most likely explanation for the divergence between these two groups' attitudes to the use of TSA in their academic study is related to learners' English proficiencies. Ascribed to L1 influence, the absence of subject and the violation of subject-verb agreement are common errors that can be frequently identified in L1 Chinese students' English writing (Darus & Ching, 2009; Fu, Yu, & Liu, 2013; Hawkins, 2001; Kirkpatrick & Xu, 2002; Sun, 2013; Tsao, 1979), particularly with those at lower English levels. When a tool that can help them with their grammatical correctness is available, Group A students with relatively low IELTS test results may resort to the TSA and prioritise its syntactical values to increase the completeness of their sentences. Group B students may have produced fewer subjectless sentences, simply because of their better English levels. Hence, their attention was focussed on its semantic value in the development of topics in a discourse.

Although utilising TSA as a self-corrective syntactical tool is divergent from the goal of teaching TSA as a tool to raise Chinese students' awareness of the topical development of a discourse. A combination of TSA in the notion of syntactical value and its discourse value, might be the most effective use and thus benefit students more.

7.4.2 The unexpected benefits of the application of TSA - Transferability of academic writing skills to academic reading

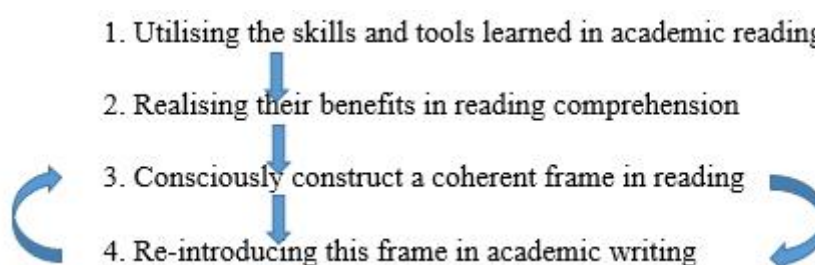
Another unexpected benefit in the application of TSA has been revealed by two students from Group B. They reported the use of TSA in the process of academic reading to wit:

At the beginning, I only used TSA to help with my topical development, to improve my discourse coherence. But I don't write often, however I still want to practice the use of TSA in case I forget it. One day, I decided to practice it on the article I was reading, to see how they developed their topics in a discourse. I found that it really helped me understand the article, which I had read three times but still have no ideas of what it was about. Since then, I started to use TSA in my [academic] reading. I think my reading ability is better than before, and I think now I understand how the academic articles are structured in English. Now I have TSA in mind whenever I'm reading or writing essays.

It seems that this transference of TSA from an academic writing tool to an academic reading tool occurred accidentally; however, two out of ten Group B students made this 'accidental' exploration individually, so this might not be a pure accident. A close investigated with the two students in the interviews revealed that

they can be labelled as self-reflective learners, who often reflect on the things and procedures they experience. The use of TSA is bi-beneficial to their academic study. The application of TSA in academic reading activities helps them have an insightful understanding regarding the topical structure of academic articles. In return, their better understanding of reading materials facilitates their writing with a clear structure of topical development. This can be illustrated in a framework as follow (Table 7-8).

Table 7 - 8 The framework of the transferable skills between academic reading and academic writing



To demolish the other variables that may pose an impact on this issue, I assessed these two students further. One possible explanation of their transferability is that these two students had better English writing ability and skills than the others in Group B. This declaration however was quickly discounted after I re-examined the data. I ran a *t*-test with the data collected from these two students to compare them with the other eight Group B interviewees. I found that there were no significant differences between their IELTS test scores and the rest ($p > .05$), and there also was no significant differences between the size of their vocabulary and the other eight Group B students ($p > .05$), collected from the pre- and post-intervention Nation test.

Another explanation could be that this skill transferability is relevant to their academic subject. A close examination shows that the other three students in the Group B interviews were studying the same subject as these two students, but they did not apply TSA to their academic reading. Hence, this explanation was abandoned too. In addition, students' motivation might be another possible influential factor. All of the participants in this teaching programme were regarded as being motivated, as this three-month teaching programme required dedication, time and effort. Although I did not assess their individual differences in terms of motivation, I doubt the assumption, that these two students have stronger motivation than the other

participants have, is true. In my perspective, the one most likely explanation might relate to learners' reflective learning ability.

Developing reflective learning skills is one of the important means of promoting learners' potential for deep and significant learning in an HE contexts (Brockbank & McGill, 2007). 'Reflective learning is the process of internally examining and exploring an issue of concern, triggered by an experience, which creates and clarifies meaning in terms of self, and which results in a changed conceptual perspective' (Boyd & Fales, 1983, p. 100). These two students described themselves as being the types of learners constantly trying and reflecting on things they have learned. They always try to summarise and extend their skills and tools while learning and using a new process. A further study regarding the correlation of this transferability and learners' learning type would be interesting and might bring various perspectives to the study of academic writing and reading.

7.4.3 The unexpected benefits of the teaching intervention: the establishment of the topic sentence in paragraphs of L1 Chinese students' ESL academic discourse

Another unexpected and appreciated finding is that the interviewees from both groups reported that they paid more attention to the establishment of the topic sentence in paragraphs after participating in this three-month teaching programme, which shifts from the initial focus of this pedagogical design on the development of the topic sentence to its properly developed successive sentence. In other words, a focus from establishing the second sentence from the first sentence of a paragraph.

The initial pedagogical design is built on an assumption that was made from previous studies, which claimed that Chinese students, particularly those studying abroad, have learned the establishment of the topic sentence in English compositions (e.g., Liu & Furneaux, 2014; Yang, et al., 2006). For example, Liu and Furneaux (2014) detected the predominant allocation of the topic sentence to the initial position of a paragraph in both English and Chinese texts. Their interviews with Chinese students also confirmed the teaching of topic sentences in Chinese English classes. Based on this assumption, I made a pedagogical design that skipped the topic sentence and directly focused on the establishment of the second sentence, and its development from its corresponding topic sentence. Reid's (1996) categorisation of inappropriately developed second sentence is employed.

However, the participants from both groups claimed that skipping teaching topic sentence seemed to make the explicit teaching of the second sentence rather difficult to follow. Particularly, almost all the Group A interviewees mentioned that they did not quite understand the content of this part albeit that it seemed to be not very difficult in the teaching programme. They stated that they started to focus on the establishment of topic sentence in a paragraph, as they contribute to the construction of discourse coherence. This was partially agreed by the Group B interviewees. Although this was not Reid's (1996) initial intention nor my study's, I think Reid (1996) would have appreciated the extra benefits her study could have, and the more 'weapons' available in her debate with Allison et al. (1999) regarding their article *A second look at second sentences*.

This provides me as a researcher with a new idea for the adapted design of this part of the teaching programme. The omission of the topic sentence and the direct involvement of the second sentence seems to be ineffective. Although the previous studies pointed out that the topic sentence was taught in the Chinese English system (Yang, et al., 2006), the Chinese interviewees in this study expressed their concern as to the different understanding of topic sentence in Chinese English classes, and the neglect of its contribution to discourse coherence. An adapted pedagogical design that contains the teaching from the establishment of topic sentence to its immediate development might be more effective. For example, the first stage focuses on how to construct a topic sentence, emphasising its importance to the global and local coherence of a discourse, such as its relationship with the discourse topic and the other paragraphs. The second stage is on the development of the topic sentence into its successive sentence within a paragraph.

7.5 The self-reflective reports

As shown in the syllabus design in Appendix VI, the participants have been required to complete a self-reflective report at the end of each teaching stage. These are conducted by the participants out of class and sent to me through email. There was no word limit on this task. The participants were asked to reflect on what they had learned in classes, the interaction between the teacher and them, the achievement they had made, and what they felt about teaching and learning process, and then email these to me. This was rather new for the participants. I aimed to foster the

participants' learner autonomy for their future language learning, develop their self-reflection capability, and help them become independent learners.

Though the majority of participants accomplished this task during the teaching intervention, it attracted more attention from the participants from Group B, who had higher IELTS overall and writing test results, and yielded more positive feedback from them. For example, one student from Group B mentioned this self-reflective report in the post-study interview,

I was never asked to write anything like this in China. At the beginning I thought it added more work with something that was meaningless. But when I started to recall what I have learned in class, I suddenly realised I could link the first week's content to what I'd learned in the second week. Since then, I started to think why the teacher taught us those things in this way, why not in other ways. At the end of the course, I think I started to see the big picture of what I had learned. Something I didn't understand in the class, I understood later. I think China should introduce this into our teaching system.

In contrast, some participants from Group A with lower IELTS test results treated it as a burden for the reason that they thought it was just a piece of writing practice. One mentioned,

I didn't know what I should write in this self-reflective report, because it should be the teachers' responsibility to know what we had learned in class and what I was not good at. It is not my duty to tell them. By the way, after I wrote it, my teacher didn't correct my grammatical mistakes at all. Why did I write it?

The majority of students from Group B completed their reports mentioning the content taught in class, compared with only half of Group A students who tried to recall some parts they had learned or remembered. Most of the Group B students composed 100 to 150 words per report on average; several produced around 300 words. However, the majority of Group A students produced reports with a mean word count of 50. Furthermore, the reports produced by the Group B students demonstrated their in-depth insight on what they learned and there was a clear indication that they tried to integrate and reflect on the content. In most cases, Group A students finished the reports as a separable piece of writing from the class teaching.

7.6 Summary

In summary, this chapter presented the data collected from the pre- and post-intervention essays, questionnaires and interviews. Both quantitative data and qualitative data have been analysed to answer the three research questions that relate

to the Chinese students' discourse coherence, and the findings that may either contribute to the research questions established after the literature review, or raise more questions.

Ultimately, this study aims to introduce a pedagogical design that can help Chinese students with the construction of English discourse coherence, and raise their awareness of the impact of cross-cultural and cross-language factors on their academic writing. The content of this pedagogical design is expected to be capable of adapting into the existing pedagogy, or being applicable as an overall package or individual aspect, depending on students' needs and purpose of study.

Now I should move to the discussion chapter, to discuss the results and findings as well as seek possible interpretations. However, I would like to use the next chapter to introduce a study that partially duplicated teaching programme but was conducted in mainland China, which has occurred after the teaching process had accomplished in the UK and the data analysis process carried on.

Chapter 8 The Duplicated Study in a Mainland Chinese University Context and Its Implications

8.1 The Duplication - the third teaching intervention

After I had completed the teaching intervention with Group A and Group B students, I started the data analysis process. During this period, I presented to a number of conferences and attended some relevant workshops, presenting my incomplete research and discussing it with other scholars and practitioners who were interested in these areas, and worked in the ESL/EFL field. One Chinese English lecturer, Lynn, was particularly in favour of my research and wondered if she could adapt my pedagogical design and some contents into her teaching. Lynn is a returning TESOL (Teaching English Speakers of Other Languages) postgraduate who had studied at a British university. She went back to China after successfully completing her Master degree in TESOL and became an English teacher at a Chinese university, which is located in the middle of southern China, funded by its provincial government, and ranked as an ordinary comprehensive university. Students are generally from the same province as their university is located. She teaches five English classes in five departments, allocated randomly, as do the other English teachers.

We were both excited about the idea of duplicating this study. The results, if positive, would suggest the possibility of generalising this pedagogical design. In addition, this duplicated study also provided me with a chance to confirm the initial findings that I had obtained and to seek possible solutions to the problems exposed when teaching Group A and Group B. So we worked together to accomplish the third teaching intervention with the university students she taught.

The timeline of the three teaching interventions is as follows and is displayed on a table (see Table 8-1): Group A students were taught in the first academic year, and their data was collected and analysed right after the teaching intervention, the data from the interviews were collected six months later. The Group B students were taught in the second academic year, with the same procedure of data collection and analysis. The duplicated study was conducted in the third academic year with two groups of Chinese students at a Chinese university.

Table 8 - 1 The Timeline of the teaching interventions

Time	Teaching intervention	Location
The first academic year	The teaching intervention with the Group A students (at the intermediate level)	British university
The second academic year	The teaching intervention with the Group B students (at the beginning of advanced level)	British university
The third academic year	A duplicated teaching intervention with Chinese students in a Chinese university (at the lower intermediate level)	Chinese university

Participants

Participants were two groups of first-year non-English major university students, divided naturally on the basis of their allocated class. Both groups were randomly selected from the classes taught by the same English teacher, Lynn. One was the experimental group (Group C) involved with the teaching intervention and the other (Group D) was the control group. The experimental group consisted of 54 students, 38 females and 26 males. The control group had 49 students, 29 females and 20 males. The mean of their age in both groups was 19. The experimental group majored in Business Management and the control group was from Marketing. 72% of my participants in the UK were in major of social sciences and business-related. The similarity of the participants' subject backgrounds in these three teaching experiments helps to reduce the possible discipline impact on their written products. In addition to this, all participants in the teaching intervention carried out in the UK and China were all newly enrolled in universities; the impact of their disciplines on their English products therefore can be considered as negligible.

The Chinese students in Group C and Group D were regarded as having a similar level of English. Based on their English results at the Chinese university entrance examination, there were no significant differences between the means of

these two groups. Compared to their counterparts in the UK, they had a lower English proficiency. This is based on the fact that the Chinese students in Group A and Group B were university graduates and had received their BA degrees. They had two more years' English experience at the undergraduate level and had already passed the CET-4 band test in China and took an IELTS test before enrolling in a British university. In comparison, those in Group C and Group B were first-year undergraduates who just entered a Chinese university. None of them had taken any IELTS tests.

Pedagogical design

The experimental group (Group C) used adapted teaching materials. Their official English textbooks were delivered to me before this duplicated study began. I selected, re-organised, and then adapted the contents under the same teaching scheme: the topical development of a discourse, the establishment of the topic sentence and its immediate development, and the application of logical connectors.

The first stage is the same as the initial pedagogical design. It focuses on the construction of global coherence in terms of the topical development in the text.

The second part has been amended based on the suggestions made by the participants of Group A and Group B. It engages students with the establishment of a topic sentence first and then learn to develop it coherently, where Reid's (1996) categorisation of the inappropriately developed second sentence is introduced. As mentioned in the post study interviews, the interviewees believed a revisit to the topic sentence in the teaching intervention would benefit them more. Although my initial research showed that L1 Chinese students were taught to produce a topic sentence in the body paragraph (Yang, et al., 2006), it seems that they were still unclear about how to establish an *effective* topic sentence. Hence, at the second stage, the teaching involved the first two sentences of a body paragraph, the establishment of topic sentence and the second sentence.

The last stage has not been changed. It still concentrates on the teaching of particular logical connectors and their contribution to the local coherence, with an awareness-raising of the cross-cultural and language impacts.

There are two reasons that I retain the Chinese university's English textbooks. One is because I tried to disturb this university's routine administrative schedule and pedagogical design as little as possible. The student participants in China are all required to attend the English exams organised by their university based on their curriculum. An introduction of new content to replace their textbooks would have

placed them at risk of failing their exams, which also places the danger that the university may not have allowed this study to be conducted. The second reason is that I tried to avoid forming an incorrect impression to Chinese students and Chinese English teachers that discourse coherence is an entirely new concept. Despite that an explicit teaching of discourse coherence cannot be detected in Chinese English texts that non-English majored students normally use, teachers can teach it based on the textbooks if they have a clear awareness of this issue. If the re-organisation of the existing materials could help students achieve this goal without raising students' learning load, it will be welcome and easily promoted to the other teachers.

After I organised the teaching content, I discussed with Lynn about the lesson plans and materials, ensuring that she understood all the content and the teaching philosophy behind them, as well as all the appropriateness of the content. I demonstrated two teaching classes through *weixin* (WeChat) visuals. During the whole teaching process, Lynn and I kept interactive communication channels between us open so as to resolve any problems we may have encountered. The control group was taught in the conventional way as were the rest of the other English classes in this university.

This duplicated teaching programme lasted for the whole autumn term, two classes each week for four months. Each class lasted 45 minutes. Quantitative data was collected from the writing task of term-end examinations, scheduled as part of the university's routine pedagogy. As previously introduced in Chapter 2, Chinese college English composition topics are descriptive, for example, *shall we study in the library or on the Internet? Or how to be a good teacher or how to succeed in college*. It generally requires no less than 100 words and with a time limitation. Guidelines for this type of English test normally suggests students allocate 40 minutes for this writing task. Qualitative data was generated from interviews by me through *weixin* (WeChat), organised immediately after the examination, with the same questions as the initial study conducted in the UK.

Their compositions were marked by Lynn and her colleagues based on their university assessment criteria. With the permission of the university's principal, writing tasks and the scores allocated were taken from both experimental and control groups, copied, and sent to me for study. The methods and data analysis tools are the same as in the initial study.

8.2 Results and implications

The result of a *t*-test showed a significant difference between these two groups (Group C and Group D) in the scores given ($p < .05$). The experimental group (Group C) performed significantly better than those being taught by the conventional approach. In addition, the results of the compositions from the same analytical tools used in the initial study also revealed the following:

- significantly less topic development in PP and more in SP in the experimental group's writing compositions ($p < .05$), compared to the control group (Group D).
- a significantly higher ratio of topic sentences placed in the initial position of paragraphs and fewer improperly developed second sentences ($p < .05$), compared to the control group.
- significantly less use of informal logical connectors in the experimental group's compositions ($p < .05$) than in their counterparts.

The post-intervention interviews revealed that the students from the experimental group had

- a better understanding of the construction of a discourse as a whole, regarding it as a coherent unit, rather than just a combination of sentences.
- shifted the use of TSA as a tool to develop discourse coherence to a syntactical tool to fulfil the non-subject sentences, as did Group A Chinese students in a British university.
- raised awareness of the contribution of the topic sentence and its successive sentence in paragraphs and the application of logical connectors to the conveyance of information in a notion of discourse.
- raised awareness of the impact of cross-cultural and cross-linguistics factors on their writing, such as L1 influence, the difference of rhetorical styles.
- had a raised awareness of the formality requirements of academic writing.

In summary, this duplicated study generated similar results as my initial empirical study with Chinese students studying in UK universities did. I may conclude that this pedagogical design may be capable of disseminating in a wider

academic context. It suggests that the explicit teaching of certain linguistic factors to ESL/EFL learners helps them with their understanding of metalinguistic and metadiscourse factors, and raises their awareness of cross-cultural and cross-linguistics impacts on ESL/EFL academic writing with respect to discourse coherence. A discussion on the results of all three teaching interventions will be conducted in the next chapter.

Chapter 9 Discussion

9.1 A general discussion

It is clear that there is no *unique* or *standard* criterion for academic writing in British higher education; however, it is also evident that a basic requirement exists regarding a perceived high quality of academic writing from NNES students. This requirement can prove to be particularly challenging for inexperienced academic writers at British universities who are from different cultures and language backgrounds, with different criteria or rhetorical styles and logical thinking patterns.

This study represents a comprehensive investigation into the effect of a teaching programme, that introduces diagnostic tools to ESL/EFL students and raises their awareness of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic issues on the construction of academic discourse coherence. Three questions were raised: 1) whether L1 Chinese students' English proficiency affects the construction of discourse coherence in three domains, the topic development of a discourse, the development of the topic sentence and the successive sentence in a paragraph, and the application of logical connectors at the sentence level, 2) whether the pedagogical design of this customised teaching programme facilitates L1 Chinese students to understand the contribution these three domains make to their ESL/EFL academic writing, and 3) whether their raised awareness of cross-cultural and cross-linguistic issues modulates their understanding and academic performance in ESL/EFL academic writing. In order to answer these questions, 76 Chinese students' pre- and post-teaching intervention essays, and their answers to questionnaires and interviews, were assessed. The results provide an affirmative answer to all three questions.

The results advance our understanding of the teaching of academic writing to L1 Chinese students in several ways: the challenges that L1 Chinese students encounter in ESL/EFL academic writing and the needs they have regarding ESL/EFL academic writing; the effect of a customised teaching programme that equips Chinese students with specific diagnostic tools, and the contribution that an awareness-raising teaching programme can make in terms of the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic factors of academic writing.

Firstly, this study reveals that L1 Chinese students' English proficiency has an impact on their construction of discourse coherence in their ESL/EFL academic

writing, in the three domains analysed. This is in accordance with conclusions made by previous studies with L1 Chinese students (Chiu, 2004; Fan, 2003; Fan & Hsu, 2008; Liu, 2009; Schneider & Connor, 1990), underpinning the findings that L1 Chinese students' ESL/EFL proficiency is not a factor that can be neglected when making a pedagogical design that focuses on the teaching of academic discourse coherence. However, in my perspective, this teaching may benefit the low proficiency ESL/EFL learners more in their future, as this teaching helps them at the very early stage of their English developmental process by engaging them with cross-cultural and language issues which may encounter at certain stages, preparing them for the future. This is an area that I am interested in and have started to conduct a follow-up study on the Group C participants, with the hope of completing a longitudinal study paper with this group of students after this doctoral study.

Secondly, this study advocates explicit teaching programmes regarding the construction of discourse coherence in ESL/EFL academic writing with appropriate learning and revision tools. Equipped with TSA tool and self-reflection, students can develop the topic of the discourse conscious that different types of topical progression contribute to the conveyance of information. The teaching of Reid's (1996) categorisation, albeit the teaching method needs improving, provided the Chinese students with a tool to analyse the development of the topic sentence and its successive sentences, and the impact of rhetorical styles on the structure of the movements within a paragraph. The direct teaching of commonly inappropriately used logical connectors by L1 Chinese speakers, and the revelation as to the causes of their misuse, raised the Chinese students' awareness of the contribution that logical connectors make to the construction of deep logicity of a discourse, and of the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic impacts.

Based on the results from the initial study at two British universities and the duplicated one at a mainland Chinese university, it would not be unnecessary to substantially change the established system of English teaching nor produce entirely new textbooks for the teaching of discourse coherence to implement of findings. Rather, an effective adaptation of the current Chinese English textbooks and teaching system could achieve a satisfactory outcome. The principal is to design the pedagogical content and procedure based on the ESL/EFL learners' English proficiency and their particular cultural and language background.

In the following sections, the findings from the three teaching interventions will be interpreted, and used to answer the three research questions. I will refer to the research data and to other studies to support my arguments. I will begin by exploring the impact of Chinese students' English proficiency on their understanding and construction of discourse coherence. The effect of an explicit teaching programme, equipping students with tools that can help with their academic writing, in the domain of discourse coherence, will be discussed. I will conclude with the implications of awareness-raising, on the metadiscourse of their academic writing.

9.2 The impact of Chinese students' English proficiency on their academic writing in the construction of discourse coherence

Findings from the pre-intervention essays revealed that Group B Chinese students preferred to progress topics of a discourse in sequential and extended progression whereas Group A students did not. This echoes the finding from previous empirical studies (Chiu, 2004; Fan, 2003; Fan & Hsu, 2008; Liu, 2009; Schneider & Connor, 1990) that suggests a positive relation between ESL/EFL English proficiency and the inclination for sequential and extended progression in the topic development of a discourse. However, findings regarding the development of the topic sentence in a paragraph suggests the complexity of language study and the need for the adaptation of the pedagogical design. Although Group B students developed the topic sentences of the paragraphs in a more appropriate way than Group A students did, the inappropriate development of topic sentences appeared to be unsystematic in both groups' pre-intervention essays. This to some extent is in line with issues that Allison et al. (1999) raised with regard to Reid's (1996; 2000) conclusions and categorisations.

In addition, both groups of students applied both formal and informal logical connectors in their academic essays, and all placed *however* at the initial position of sentences, and *therefore* at the initial position of clauses. These findings mirror a body of work that has observed similar phenomenon (Chen, 2006; Field & Oi, 1992; Leedham & Cai, 2013; Lei, 2012). Some logical connectors, such as *meanwhile*, were heavily misused by Group A students.

The next sections will discuss potential influential factors that compromised the success of Chinese students' development in the areas discussed above.

9.2.1 Vocabulary knowledge

Chinese students typically concentrate on the size of their vocabulary and neglect the depth of their English vocabulary knowledge. Size of vocabulary knowledge refers to the number of words that language learners know or recognise at a particular level of language proficiency (Nation, 2013). Depth of vocabulary knowledge refers to how well a language learner knows a word in the multiple dimensions of vocabulary, such as its morphological features, its contextual use in syntactic, semantic and pragmatic domains, etc. Knowing a word is not only recognising a word (Nation, 2013).

Their enthusiasm for the size rather than the depth of English vocabulary knowledge is not surprising, as vocabulary size is an assessment criterion and pedagogical objectives of Chinese English pedagogy (Qian, 1999). Chinese secondary students are required to master over 3,000 individual and phrasal words, and college students in non-English majors are expected to know over 4,000 words and common expressions (MOE, China). This assessment system enhances Chinese students' enthusiasm for how many vocabulary items they know or 'recognise', which is the word that Nation (2013) preferred to describe this phenomenon. Consequently, they generally draw a linear link between the increased number in vocabulary tests with an improvement in their English. In addition, the existence of a variety of assessment tools that measure learner's size of vocabulary knowledge has also enhanced Chinese students' interest in counting words, such as Nation's test for the size of vocabulary families, and the Productive Vocabulary Levels Test developed by Laufer and Nation (1999).

The depth of vocabulary knowledge, however, is not so easily assessed. Wesche and Paribakht (1996) compared and analysed the existing measurements and software of vocabulary size, and concluded that these were not the best indicators of the depth of knowledge. Milton (2009) pointed out that the inconsistency between the multiple dimensions of the depth of vocabulary, and the complexity and subjectivity of vocabulary depth result in difficulties not only with how to measure it, but also what aspects should be measured. For example, Read (1993, 2004) developed a Word Associates Test (WAT) to measure breadth of vocabulary knowledge; however it only included some components of vocabulary depth and measured one type of context. The results recorded of course cannot reflect the nature of the learner's vocabulary knowledge.

Although an overall measurement of vocabulary depth is difficult, based on the existing measurement tools, there seemingly exists a positive relationship between the size and depth of advanced ESL learners' vocabulary knowledge, but this is variable with regard to low-proficiency learners' (Akbarian, 2010; Chui, 2006; Nurweni & Read, 1999). This is to say, when ESL learners achieve an advanced level, the size and depth of their vocabulary knowledge is broadly balanced. The more vocabulary they know, the better they know how to use it properly, in most situations. However, this is not the case for ESL learners at the lower levels. The size of their vocabulary does not reflect their knowledge of vocabulary. They may know a lot of vocabulary; however, they may not know how to use it properly in different contexts.

This might explain the different responses of Group A and C and that of Group B students to the challenges of this study. Group B students, being regarded as advanced English learners, possess a larger vocabulary size, did not show much difficulty when identifying T-unit topics and the types of topical development of a discourse. Comparatively, Group A and Group C students raised the identification of the synonyms, antonyms and collocation components as a challenge for them when applying TSA. This also occurred when they tried to identify the key words of topic sentences, and their incorrect use of logical connectors such as *meanwhile*.

9.2.2 Learners' metalinguistic ability

Zhang (2001) noticed that Chinese students with better English levels more frequently resorted to metacognitive-knowledge-related reading strategies than those with lower English proficiencies did. Zhang (2001) pointed out that, while conducting reading comprehension activities, the high-proficiency Chinese students engaged with their existing linguistic knowledge and background knowledge to solve challenges in processing texts, whereas the low-proficiency students greatly relied only on their linguistic ability. This observation is in accordance with the assertion made by Tunmer, Herriman and Nesdale (1988) that pragmatic awareness might be out of the early language learners' reach, as a comprehensive awareness of metalinguistic elements such as background knowledge, genre diversity and cultural influence might not be fully developed until their language achieve certain advanced levels.

Tunmer et al. (1988) identified four dimensions of awareness: *phonological, word, syntactic and pragmatic awareness* in NES children' development of

metalinguistic ability (p. 136). Metalinguistic awareness or metalinguistic ability is used to describe the ability where one can reflect on and manipulate the use of language in a variety of contexts (Tunmer, et al., 1988). The four dimensions of metalinguistic awareness have been illustrated as below.

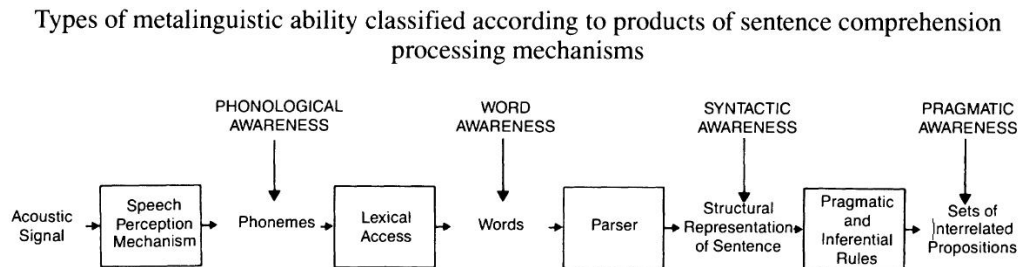


Figure 9 - 1 Types of metalinguistic ability classified according to products of sentence comprehension processing mechanisms

Among the four dimensions, phonological awareness is, although relevant, not within the focus of this study and will not be discussed here. Word consciousness or word awareness has been defined as an awareness of literal words, their meanings, their relationships with other words and the context in which they are embedded, and the way that writers manipulate them (Baumann, 2009; Graves, 2006; Nagy, 2005). Syntactic awareness facilitates the readers' understanding of sentential meanings by manipulating word order and word choices and thus defining the readability of a text. Speakers equipped with phonological, word and syntactic awareness can place themselves in a better position of understanding the sounds, the orthographic properties, and correlation between words' surface features and related meanings (Kuo & Anderson, 2006), and it is necessary for readers when comprehending a sentence and a discourse (Nagy, 2007). Pragmatic awareness has been indicated to be a strong predictor of a high language level.

Pragmatic awareness refers to the ability to perform mental operations on the output of the mechanism responsible for integrating individual propositions into larger sets of propositions through the application of both pragmatic rules and inferential rules. Thus, pragmatic awareness can be seen as awareness of the relationships engaged between a given sentence and the context in which it is embedded, where context is defined broadly (prior text, prior knowledge, situational context, etc.).

(Tunmer et al., 1988, p. 136)

Findings of the post-intervention study with the Chinese students at the British universities show that Group A students shifted the focus from applying the TSA tool to enhance the topical development of a discourse for the sake of discourse coherence, to helping the grammatical completeness of a sentence. This did not occur with Group B students; they generally focused on the structure of topic development to the construction of discourse coherence (see Chapter 7.1.1). It seems that the intermediate level Chinese students have not developed an adequate pragmatic awareness to help them integrate the individual propositions such as words, to construct a coherent discourse; their focus still dwells on the syntactical elements at the individual sentence level. Therefore, when they realised that the usage of TSA can help them reduce the possibility of producing non-subject sentences, they started to use it as the more ‘concrete’ syntactical tool to correct their grammar mistakes. Group B students however seem to be at an appropriate stage to understand and apply TSA as a tool to enhance the construction of discourse coherence.

Findings from the experimental group (Group C) in the duplicated study at a Chinese university also revealed a similar tendency as the Group A students did, by transferring TSA to a syntactical tool to correct their subjectless sentences. As previously mentioned, these Chinese students were first year undergraduate students, whose English level is lower than Group A and B postgraduate Chinese students and probably with lower writing ability as well. Their performance echoes the statement that Zhang (2001) and Tunmer et al. (1988) made that related, learners’ language proficiency with their metadiscourse and metalinguistic ability.

9.2.3 Decontextualisation

Decontextualisation has been heavily criticised for its neglect of the nature of language use; however, it is the typical way of teaching vocabulary in Chinese English teaching systems (Crewe, 1990; Liu, 2008; Milton, 1999, 2009; Milton & Tsang, 1993; Qian, 1996, 1999). Almost all English textbooks published in China contain a new-word list (*Shengci biao*) with English-Chinese translation in each text. At the end of the textbook, an overall vocabulary list is added alphabetically, to address the vocabulary size required by the particular levels of Chinese English pedagogical objectives. The Chinese translation of each word is limited and complies with the assessment criteria of MOE (Ministry of Education, China). For example,

the Chinese translations of *in addition* and *besides* are both *ciwai* or *chucizhiwai* in the new word list. No lexical-semantic-syntactic features are introduced.

Gao and Ma (2011) noted that Chinese English teachers generally direct students to memorise the pronunciation, spelling and Chinese translation of new vocabulary rather than encouraging them to practice it in context. This way of teaching vocabulary encourages the vocabulary learning strategy that Chinese students favour, such as learning vocabulary through dictionary look-up and word listing, and discourages the word association strategies (Fan, 2003) or contextualised learning strategies.

A thorough understanding of a lexicon, actually, is context oriented. An example taken from a teaching practitioner Dale Holloway's (1981) work explains the complexity of the semantic values of lexicon and its contribution to the construction of discourse coherence. In this context, the synonyms of 'Mary Smith' are 'Portlander, mother, woman, American, *homo sapiens*, labourer, family member, welder, Oregonian' (p. 213), shown below. Each synonym of *Mary* represented a dimension of *Mary's* life. If being deprived of this context, the synonymous relation, for example, between *Mary* and *labourer* will be lost (Holloway, 1981).

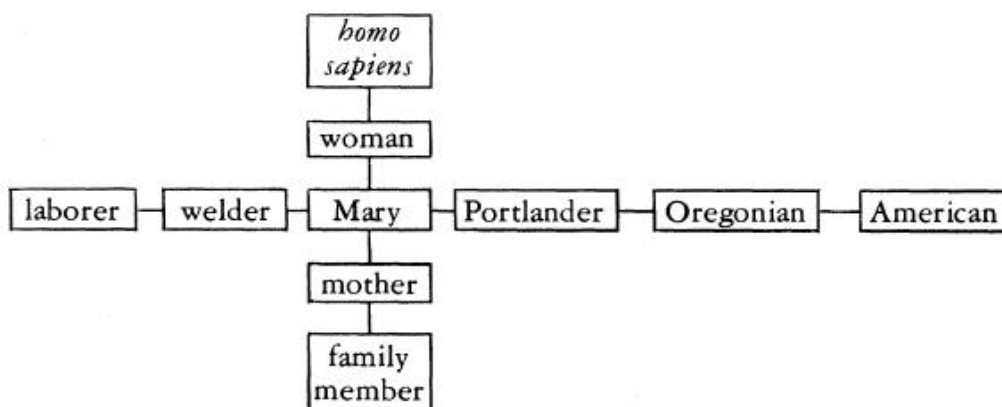


Figure 9 - 2 A semantic relation to *Mary*

The decontextualisation of vocabulary teaching in Chinese English teaching systems deprives Chinese students of the opportunity to learn and understand words thoroughly. Just by looking at the above diagram, it is almost impossible to claim a synonymic relationship between *Labourer* and *Mary*, and as a result, an extended parallel progression (EPP) between these two topics cannot be detected. EPP represents the topic development of two T-units that share the same topic, but not in

successive sentences. Consequently, the contribution of this topical progression to discourse coherence cannot be identified either.

Although all three experimental groups of participants almost identically experienced the decontextualisation of the English vocabulary teaching approach in China, Group B students demonstrated a better understanding and performance. Group B students did not demonstrate particular difficulty when identifying topics and the progression of the topical development, nor the key words of the topic sentence of a paragraph, as previously mentioned. They also employed logical connectors, such as *in terms of*, *nonetheless*, *similarly*, *likewise* and *consequently*, which did not occur in Group A students' essays. These phenomena might be attributed to the difference in their English levels or writing ability.

9.2.4 The avoidance strategy

The avoidance strategy applied by language learners, particular L2 learners, to avoid particular target language features is not a new topic in the L2 learning developmental process such as the avoidance of relative clauses, passive voice, infinitive complement and phrasal verbs (particularly figurative), forms and topics (Laufer & Eliasson, 1993; Liao & Fukuya, 2004; Schachter, 1974; Tarone, Cohen, & Dumas, 1976). It has been perceived as a characteristic of interlanguage, in learning and processing a second or foreign language. It is common for NNES users to incline towards the language properties that they feel they are capability of handling, or having an adequate comprehension of, when processing some difficult situations.

The shift of TSA from a tool for analysing topical development to a syntactical tool by Group A and Group C students might also be the result of their avoidance strategy. Some Group A students in the interviews mentioned that they tried to apply TSA to facilitate the topical development of a text, but claimed that they could not manage, therefore subconsciously and consciously seeking a 'more direct and easier' way to use TSA, to avoid the 'deep thinking' that discourse coherence demands, and which involves knowledge of lexicon, semantics and pragmatics. Group B students with a higher level seemingly did not resort to an avoidance strategy for this aspect. However, this strategy seems to be the cause for them to place *however* and *therefore* at the ISP. Although the other three groups (Group A, C and D) also preferred the ISP, the avoidance strategies are not the cause as they claimed in the interviews that they did not know that there were other choices

of positioning *however* and *therefore* in sentences. Lack of this knowledge is the reason why they only chose the ISP for logical connectors.

Hence, the avoidance strategies only can be applied when learners have some awareness or certain knowledge regarding particular linguistic features or cross-cultural effects, which may be applied by language users at any levels. For instance, although this research did not study the underuse of logical connectors by L1 Chinese students, previous researchers have related learners' avoidance strategies to their underuse of certain logical connectors. Lei (2012), in her study with the PhD dissertations produced by English majored L1 Chinese speakers, arguably labelled as the most advanced Chinese speakers of English, nominated the underuse of logical connectors *however*, *again*, *despite this*, *in contrast*, *nevertheless*, and *conversely* to their avoidance strategy, which had them resorting to the use of *but*, *and*, *also*, etc., the logical connectors that they were familiar with.

Related to this study, the impact of English language proficiency can be detected in that Group A and C students seek avoidance strategies when applying TSA, while Group B students did not. But the preference to the ISP when using logical connectors cannot be simply attributed to the impact of language proficiency, as Group B students indeed resorted to avoidance strategies while positioning some logical connectors such as *however* and *therefore*, whilst Group A, C and D students actually were lack of knowledge regarding the variety of positioning.

The next section will discuss the effect of explicit teaching on the Chinese participants' academic writing in order to raise their awareness of the effect of cross-cultural and cross-language factors on the discourse coherence.

9.3 The benefits of explicit teaching in the aspects of discourse coherence

Findings of the post-intervention study reveal that the explicit teaching of rhetorical styles, the topical development of a discourse and the use of logical connectors, has a positive impact on Chinese students' academic writing. These findings echo previous studies that advocate the benefits of explicit teaching in these fields (Chiu, 2004; Connor, 2004; Crewe, 1990; Fan, 2003; Li, 2008; Liangprayoon, et al., 2013; Liu, D., 2008; Liu, M., 2009). However, the direct teaching of the development of the topic sentence in paragraphs, did not show an overall positive

effect in either of the empirical studies conducted in the UK, nor the one in China. Although the adapted pedagogical design, including the construction of the topic sentence and its successive sentence and conducted in a Chinese university, demonstrated a positive impact on their employment of the topic sentence in a paragraph, the results of its successive development still has not demonstrated a systematic change.

9.3.1 Explicit teaching to satisfy Chinese students' needs

It is the British HE institutes' duty of care to help L1 Chinese students ease any academic culture shock that they may experience when studying in the UK. Academic culture shock is a subset of culture shock that mainly affects international students in HE regarding the incongruence of the education system in their home country and the host country's. Snively (1999) pointed out that it was unrealistic to expect every Chinese student in Western institutes to have the competence and confidence to successfully explore English rhetorical conventions and achieve the requirements of academic societies by themselves, given the distance of typologies and cultures between these two languages. He argued that it was pointless and a waste of time to leave L1 Chinese students who enter American HE institutes in the situation where they did not know how to adapt to Western academic writing systems. Even though some may be able to develop this competence by themselves, it could be a long and ineffective journey, which could be eased by an effective explicit teaching programme that addressed some of the cross-cultural and cross-linguistic issues. In his PhD dissertation regarding a longitudinal study with Chinese graduates studying at Harvard, Snively (1999), proposed the necessity of modelling and the explicit teaching of English rhetorical conventions and language features to L1 Chinese students.

It is also necessary for Chinese students to understand and learn English rhetorical and academic styles in the context of Western HE, as this one of the main reasons that they choose to study abroad (He & Li, 2009; Wu, 2014). Experiencing Western cultures and learning what Chinese students perceived to be 'correct English' or 'Standard English' are the top two reasons behind the increase in the numbers of overseas Chinese students, and that of the Chinese students who plan to study overseas, particularly in conventional native English-speaking countries (He, 2015; He & Li, 2009; Sánchez, Fornerino, & Zhang, 2006). Although the meaning of

‘correct English’ or ‘Standard English’ can have various interpretations, the fundamental meaning is that they aim to write and speak English in the way that is accepted by the Western academic world.

A conscious assimilation to British academic and rhetorical styles does not infer a superordinate status of English over other languages or other variants of English. An awareness of the similarities and differences between cultures and languages, and their impact on their ESL/EFL academic writing will however, provide Chinese students with a better understanding of the information conveyance in a discourse, and have options to produce a text that is regarded as coherent by the anticipated readers - HE academics in this case - and in a specific context.

9.3.2 The explicit teaching of metadiscourse matters

The explicit teaching of metadiscourse matters benefits language learners (Cheng & Steffensen, 1996; Hyland, 2005). Hyland (2005) suggested the explicit teaching of metadiscourse matters, as ‘it represents the writer’s and speaker’s overt attempt to create a particular pragmatic or discursal effect’ (p. 28). Metadiscourse is perceived as ‘an important link between a text and its context as it points to the expectations readers have’ and ‘these expectations are social, affective and cognitive, based on participants’ beliefs and values, their individual goals and their experiences with similar texts in the past’ (Hyland, 2005, p. 13). He also addressed the point that ‘metadiscourse cannot be regarded as a strictly linguistic phenomenon at all, but must be seen as a rhetorical and pragmatic one. This is because we cannot simply read off particular linguistic features as metadiscourse, but have to identify the strategies that speakers and writers are using in producing those features at particular points in their discourse’ (Hyland, 2005, p. 25).

In this study, the explicit teaching of metadiscourse matters is located in the three domains that contribute to the construction of discourse coherence. The strategies and tools that were taught to students to help them convey information in ways that will satisfy their potential target readers. Findings of this study confirm Hyland’s (2005) suggestion that the explicit teaching of linguistic features and the strategies can have an impact on the metadiscourse matters.

9.3.3 The teaching of TSA

Some researchers suggest that the most commonly used type of topical progression should be taught to students in genre specific writing samples, to

compensate for the present teaching of coherence in the ESL/EFL English education system (Ghazanfari, et al., 2011). If this suggestion is followed, the sequential progression of topical development might be the one worth teaching in Chinese English classes, as a high proportion of SP in topical development is related to a better quality of writing, and is often detected in high-rated essays produced by NES students at the tertiary level (e.g., Connor, 1996). However, to only teach one type of topical progression might result to a similar situation to teaching all types, and risk forming another type of prejudices to topic development. A balanced type of topic development, that develops topics that convey information that best satisfies the target readers' expectations, should be the foundation of a pedagogical design regarding the teaching of discourse topical structure.

As discussed in section 9.2.2, L2 learners' metadiscourse and metalinguistic ability is related to their English proficiency. After the explicit teaching of TSA as a tool to facilitate the topic development of a discourse, Group A and Group C students shifted their focus to its use in improving the completeness of sentences in the domain of grammar correctness, while Group B students with higher IELTS overall and writing test scores enjoyed the benefits of this instruction on their construction of discourse coherence. Based on their reflected thought expressed in the interviews, they also transferred the use of TSA from academic writing to academic reading.

It seems that the benefits of the explicit teaching of TSA in the notion of discourse can be maximised after L2 learners have achieved a certain language ability level. Although I did not conduct a longitudinal study with Group C Chinese undergraduates, she believes that they may be able to benefit to some degree from the use of TSA in topical development in their future academic writing; however, I assumes that the maximal benefit of teaching TSA to them should occur when their English proficiency reaches a certain level, such as the minimum of 5 for an IELTS overall and Writing test results.

9.3.4 The teaching of the topic sentence and its successive sentence within paragraphs

The explicit teaching of coherent development at the paragraph level generated some issues in this study. The initial pedagogical design was to build on the reviews of previous studies that asserted that Chinese students know and have the ability to construct a topic sentence in an English paragraph. The teaching design

therefore focused on the development of the topic sentence with its successive sentence, as this has been regarded as an issue for ESL learners, for example, in Reid's (1996) study. However, the findings of the initial pedagogy demonstrated that Chinese students may know of the existence of the topic sentence in a paragraph, but may have not been taught in the notion of discourse, and hence, they may not be capable of establishing a topic sentence that contributes to the coherent development of a discourse topic.

An adapted pedagogy was introduced into the duplicated study in China. The findings of this study reveal the positive effect of explicit teaching of the construction of the topic sentence in paragraphs. However, the benefit of teaching Reid's categorisations is still not evident. The most common feedback from Chinese students who were with lower IELTS test results is that the teaching of the difference of rhetorical styles and that of the move structure of English and Chinese, is proficient, and most of them were able to perceive the difference, and started to raise their awareness of this aspect; however, they felt that it was a big challenge to develop from the unit of a sentence. The Group B students who were with higher IELTS test results also experienced this as a challenge, but to a different degree.

These findings and feedback expose the complexity of the explicit teaching of textual development within a paragraph. Probably this is the reason that there have not been many studies researching the development of the topic sentence and the successive sentence. As mentioned at the start of this discussion chapter, there are no unique academic writing styles in English. At the paragraph level, there are a variety of possibilities to appropriately or inappropriately develop a topic sentence, even to the same group of target readers and/or in the same contexts. Teaching a fixed categorisation of inappropriately developed second sentences may not be practical; however, raising L2 learners' awareness of this domain is highly recommended by me and welcomed by the participants of this study. Further study regarding this area may be able to generate more practical pedagogies for particular groups of L2 learners.

However, the explicit teaching of establishing a topic sentence within a body paragraph has received positive feedback from Group C students in the duplicated study. Although a topic sentence locates in body paragraphs, an effective one actually takes responsibility for both global and local discourse coherence. It reflects the development of discourse topic and at the same time, leads to the development of

a body paragraph. This direct teaching raised the students' awareness of the function of topic sentence in this field.

9.3.5 The explicit teaching of logical connectors

The Chinese students' lack of register awareness is evident in this study such as the alternative use of *but* and *however*, *so* and *therefore*. This is in line with the conclusion made by previous studies (e.g., Liu & Braine, 2005; Yang & Sun, 2012). Gilquin and Paquot (2007) described ESL/EFL learners' academic writing as being 'too chatty'. The reduction of informal logical connectors in the post-intervention essays of both groups demonstrates the effectivity of this teaching intervention (see Chapter 7.2.3). This concurs with previous studies regarding the positive effect of the explicit teaching of logical connectors (Crewe, 1990; Shaw & Liu, 1998). For example, Shaw and Liu (1998) noted an increased formality in Chinese students' academic essays after a three-month pre-session course in an English-speaking university. They attributed this learners' 'register development' to the explicit teaching in this pre-session course. Here the 'register development' means the reduction of informal English in NNES users' academic writing.

Chinese students' lack of register awareness does not seem to relate to their English proficiency. It has been attributed to the absence of a natural development as well as the Chinese English teaching system (Liu, 2008). The absence of the study of register in Chinese English pedagogy has been seen as one main reason for Chinese students' lack of knowledge of this domain. Liu (2008) regarded the *register-inappropriate use* by Chinese students as a deficit in Chinese English pedagogical design and textbooks, as due to this absence, students are not supplied with a full picture of logical connectors. Despite that there is no nationwide corpus-based study regarding the use of logical connectors by L1 Chinese English learners, a small pool of connectors, such as *so*, *and*, *but*, and *or*, are used at high frequencies, based on the finding from previous studies that include L1 Chinese speakers with a variety of English proficiencies, from middle school students' compositions to PhD candidates with an English major in their academic essays and theses (e.g., Bolton et al., 2003; Lei, 2012; Liu & Braine, 2005; Yang & Sun, 2012.). For example, Chinese English textbooks categorise '*of course*' as spoken language, which however can be found in ENS academic writing (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). *What's more* is translated as *erqie* and *lingwai* in Chinese, and taught as alternatives to *in addition*

and *furthermore* in Chinese English textbooks, whereas Leedham and Cai (2013) found nil use of *what's more* or *what is more* in BAWE academic essays produced by NES university students, compared to the 46pmw (per million word) in essays produced by L1 Chinese students.

The way that Chinese English teachers teach logical connectors has also been criticised as one of the reasons for Chinese students' inappropriate use of logical connectors. Milton and Tsang (1993) addressed the danger of a 'false framework' formed by Chinese English teachers, which is the misleading correlation between the frequencies of logical connectors and the test marks. Some educators incorrectly suggested that the more logical connectors students apply, the more coherent that piece of writing is⁹. This should take the responsibility for the overabundant use of logical connectors. Milton and Tsang (1993) pointed out that Chinese English teachers over-emphasise and mislead students to use 'logical connectors as the magic glue', which can bind 'their disorganised ideas together' (p. 235), to forge an 'educated' or 'academic' look to their writing. Crewe (1990) warned against ESL learners using logical connectors as *decoration* tools to form the 'surface logicity' of a discourse, which has been called *stylistic enhancers* by Milton and Tsang (1993). Similarly, Enkvist (1978) warned that 'pseudo-coherence arises when the formal cohesive links on the textual surface fail to reflect an adequate underlying semantic coherence in terms of textuality and contextuality' (p. 100). The feedback of students in the interviews confirmed Milton and Tsang's (1993) critique of Chinese English teachers.

NES pupils normally acquire a knowledge of register naturally, and at a nonspecific age. Kress (2003) postulates that NES children manifest a natural sense of the development of writing, which is probably due to their immersion in an English rich environment. They, for instance, naturally treat writing as a whole piece of work rather than a combination of individual sentences. Gradually they acquire a feeling for developing discourse coherence by embedding lexical cohesion devices into texts, using referential cohesion and 'topical connectedness' throughout the

⁹ This has been criticised in NES teaching as well. Durst, et al. (1990) examined persuasive compositions produced by 99 eleventh-grade American students and noticed the existence of a positive correlation between the use of logical connectors and the score marked. They speculated that this might be attributable to the pedagogical factors and textbook design, as teachers in the middle schools generally encourage the use of logical connectors in composition.

whole discourse. They also gradually develop from using informal language to formal language in their written texts. Hunt (1965) detected an emergence of register sensitivity in NES children, after assessing written compositions at grade 4, 8 and 12 in an American school. He noticed a high frequency of the use of coordinators ‘*and*, *but* and *so*’ among the youngest group and then an evident decrease among the higher grades. He concluded that this tendency reflected an awareness raising of register, along with the development of their cognitive ability.

China is regarded as a poor English environment. The informality of language use, including logical connectors, has been identified in the most advanced English learners in mainland China, such as in the essays and dissertations of postgraduates and PhD students majoring in English (Lei, 2012; Yang & Sun, 2012). Leedham and Cai (2013) studied the essays collected from BAWE, which contains high-quality academic essays produced by NES and NNES university students studying in British HE institutes. They observed a high frequency of *what’s more* in the ESL assignments of year 1 and 2 Chinese students and a reduction in year 3 Chinese students’ ESL essays, from 64pmw to 29pmw. Their study demonstrates that to some extent register awareness was present in the essays written by year 3 Chinese students who were exposed to English academic society one or two years longer than their year 1 and 2 counterparts.

A rich English environment seemingly enables NNES learners to acquire register, in the same way as NES learners do. An immersion in an English environment combined with adequate input (e.g., through reading academic articles) may facilitate this gain either consciously or subconsciously. Lee and Chen (2009) believed that first language users benefit from both their intuition and their greater comprehension of the implicit meanings semantically and pragmatically, which places second language users at a disadvantage.

The explicit teaching of logical connectors seems to have a more effective impact on Chinese students’ awareness-raising of formality in the use of logical connectors than them only being immersed in a naturally rich English environment, as in Lee and Chen’s study (2009). It has been widely acknowledged that simple exposure may not lead to a *significant* improvement in language learning (DeKeyser, 1995; Marsden, 2006), which is supported by experimental psychologists’ case studies (Jiménez & Méndez, 1999; Logan & Etherton, 1994), in which they reported that selective attention was necessary for learning. In addition, L1 Chinese students

have been labelled as being accustomed to explicit teaching, due to their teacher-centred instruction strategy (Kumaravadivelu, 2016). The explicit teaching of content that is absent from their current pedagogy, such as English register, might be the most effective way of raising their consciousness in this domain.

9.4 An awareness-raising of the cross-cultural and cross-language issues

Findings from the questionnaires and interviews reveal that this teaching programme promoted Chinese students' understanding and raised their awareness of the impact of cross-cultural and cross-language factors on their academic writing. The participants become aware that discourse coherence is culturally oriented, and thus a consideration of target readers before and in the process of writing is necessary. They also reported their realisation of the metadiscourse factors after the teaching programme (see Chapter 7.3).

Awareness-raising has been perceived as one of the initial and essential stages in language learning, particularly for L2 learners (Ellis, 2002; Schmidt, 2012). For more details on the functions of awareness-raising in language acquisition and L2 learning, see Ellis' (2002) discussion. They both addressed the importance of explicit teaching linguistic factors in ESL/EFL learners' awareness-raising in terms of the differences and similarities of cultures and languages, and the impact on their L2 learning and production. It seems that the explicit teaching of certain language factors benefits L2 learners, particularly late learners and/or those in poor English input environments, as conscious noticing or selective noticing of certain features might be the key to *start* to learn and facilitates L2 learners to reset L2 parameters (Schmidt, 1990). This is in accordance with Ellis' (2002) statement that consciousness-raising is an essential step in the conceptualisation process of learning, as its aim is to assist learners to *know about* certain information and then the practice process can help them to learn it. The learning results rely on a variety of comprehensive factors such as individual differences, the purpose of learning, learners' language proficiency, etc.

9.4.1 An awareness-raising of anticipated readers' expectations

Both groups have rated question 7 in the questionnaire rather highly (Mean=4.5), 'How well have you understood that the reader is an important factor in the construction of text coherence as compared to before?', this demonstrates that

they have become aware of the target readers' role in the identification of discourse coherence. Their readers need to understand the discourse and to some extent be able to predict, or at least not be puzzled by, its logical development. As previously mentioned, Chinese writing is reader-responsible (Hinds, 1987; Hinkel, 1994). It is a reader's responsibility to understand a writer's meaning embedded in the text. Their raised-awareness could help them engage their target readers with their writing process, which would help them compose academic essays that may satisfy these readers' expectations or produce academic essays that are regarded as coherent by their target readers.

Texts, writers and readers are the essential elements of determining whether a discourse is coherent (Anderson & Armbruster, 1984). L1 writers and readers generally share the same cultural and rhetorical values; L2 writers, if writing for L1 readers, need to be aware of the different backgrounds between readers and writers, and the differentiation between cultures and languages. Chinese students' potential readers are Chinese English teachers and examiners in mainland China. Their English teachers generally are their predecessors and mostly learned English in China. Their expectations of English compositions, shaped by examination criteria exerted by Chinese curricula, obviously varies from readers in British HE institutes. Therefore, an awareness of readers' expectations from British HE institutes is essential for Chinese students studying or intending to study in the UK.

The anticipated readers in British HE institutes are labelled as high-knowledge readers by McNamara et al. (1996). McNamara et al. (1996) pointed out that knowledge-equipped readers can comprehend more than those without sufficient knowledge can, by accelerating an 'active processing', thus an inconsistent article may make more sense to readers capable of adding and remedying the gaps between information. Nevertheless, it does not mean that they are highly equipped with all types of knowledge regarding international students' cultural and rhetorical style backgrounds, or have the capability to handle all types of incoherent discourse.

An awareness of the engagement of texts, writers and readers, and that of the potential readers' expectations has been seen as crucial when producing a successful essay. In other words, explicit teaching has demonstrated a positive effect that will benefit ESL/EFL learners in the long term.

9.4.2 An awareness-raising of cross-language factors

The Chinese participants of this study, or most L1 Chinese speakers who were not born in a bilingual environment or had attended a bilingual pre-school teaching system in China, have already formed a consolidated linguistic representation in Chinese, by the time they start to learn L2 (Hernandez & Li, 2007). L1 influence therefore seem to be inevitable in most cases. For example, Yang and Li (2012) predicted that Chinese students would encounter a challenge shifting from the topic-prominent Chinese language to subject-prominent English. They examined both oral and written products of their Chinese participants ranging from middle school to tertiary level, and then concluded that their supposition was supported. They detected some typical Chinese language features, such as topic-prominent properties, null elements (null subjects and null objects) and subject-predicate disagreement in the English essays written by participants at the advanced level and with more than 10 years' experience of learning English. They again confirmed their conclusion in a study that they conducted two years later with 90 Chinese students (Li & Yang, 2014).

L1 influence, such as the heavy reliance on the repetition of the topic in a discourse, the use of the co-occurrence of *because ... therefore ...*, has been identified in academic writing produced by both Group A and B before the teaching intervention and by the control group (Group D) in the duplicated study. After the teaching intervention, both Group A and B as well as the experimental group (Group C) of the duplicated study have reduced and/or eradicated some types of L1 transference, such as the reduction of the discourse topic development in PP, and the aforementioned correlative logical connector *because ... therefore ...*. These findings suggest that it is possible for Chinese students to become aware of L1-L2 parametric differences, appreciate Chinese and English rhetorical variations and overcome the parametric value of their L1 when producing English as a L2.

Although this study has witnessed some changes, the teaching only covered limited language features that are a particular challenge for L1 Chinese speakers. Hence, a self-reflective ability is crucial for ESL/EFL learners who wish to gain long-term benefits.

9.5 The contribution of a self-reflective report

Self-reflective practice in language learning has been seen as an effective learning strategy that actively involves the learners themselves making self-

observation, self-assessment and self-analysis, all of which can help them enhance what they have learned and provide them with an opportunity to internalise it. It also has been regarded as an active learning strategy that integrates learners' existing knowledge with the new input, raise their learning awareness, develop their learning awareness and prepare them for the learning to come (Xhaferi & Xhaferi, 2017).

The different responses from the Group A and B students regarding the self-reflective report invoked some interesting points. As reported in the Data analysis and Findings chapter, the students from Group B with higher English levels composed reports with more in-depth insight by reflecting on what they had learned in class but those from Group A students were more likely to treat the reports as the burden of an extra piece of writing. It confirms the observations made by other scholars that learners with high self-regulation capability and having higher self-assessment skills seemingly always have better learning outcomes and higher academic achievement (Bempechat, Li, & Ronfard, 2018; Cleary, 2018). On the other hand, individuals who have always achieved higher academic attainment seemingly have a better self-reflection ability and/or welcome self-reflective thinking.

The benefit of this self-reflection report writing has not been restricted to learners; it has also translated to me as a teacher. Based on their reports produced at the end of the first and second stages, I asked myself reflective questions regarding the teaching method and the pace of delivery and consequently, I made some slight adjustment to optimally meet the students' needs. In several cases, I re-explained the concepts or practices that confused students and were mentioned in the self-reflection reports in the online WeChat discussion forum. What I have done is in accordance with the results of recent research that the teachers' reflection process and practice can benefit their teaching development and contribute to the teacher-learner collaboration practice (Farrell, 2017; Zwozdiak-Myers, 2018).

However, this self-reflective report project also has revealed some challenges, particularly, with the preparation process in which an awareness-raising and training practice should be provided to help learners understand. At the beginning, teachers should explain what self-reflection thinking and writing is, what purposes this type of report aims at, and what they can learn from it. At the second step, model texts of self-reflective report should be supplied to train students to write. The focus should be placed on the engagement of reflective thinking in the process of writing. On top of these, teachers should provide proper feedback to react to the challenges that

students may have met, but not on the grammatical errors they may make. With proper training, I think students would produce reports containing reflective thinking, on what they have learned and integrating their existing knowledge with the new input. This can truly demonstrate the implications of this written report. Otherwise, it may become an ‘extra’ piece of written work as some students complained.

9.6 The contribution of online discussion forum in WeChat (peer support and academic discourse socialisation)

Although the effect of online peer support is not one of the foci that this study focuses on, it is worth noting that the online discussion panel that I initiated to support the participants’ study during the teaching intervention has received positive feedback in the questionnaires and the interviews. Asian students (such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean students) are regarded as being a ‘silent group’ in the British HE environment, due to cultural differences and other factors such as weak English proficiency and concerns about ‘losing face’ in public (Wen & Clément, 2003). The establishment of online group discussion in this study provided them with a sense of security and equality while discussing with others rather than in a face-to-face situation (Kobayashi, 2003; Warschauer, 1995; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015).

An online-discussion panel was introduced in the first week of this teaching programme, included all participants within the same group, and located on *weixin* (WeChat). A question-and-answer schedule was initiated for the panel; based on this schedule, I answered collective and individual questions. In addition, students were encouraged to raise questions and answers with each other, in order to maximise the functionality of this chatroom in support of their academic study and establish a rapport between them.

The findings of the questionnaires and interviews cover four fields that these Chinese participants benefited from. The priority benefit is its function to help them consolidate the information taught in class. Six Group A students, in their questionnaires, appreciated the effectivity and efficiency of this chatroom for homework, where they could solve problems instantly by asking and discussing with other users. The involvement of me as a teacher in this online WeChat forum was seemingly welcomed by the participants. Some participants particularly mentioned this in the after study interviews. It seems that they believed my authority and they

thought my answers were more ‘correct’ than their peer’s feedback and responses. This actually demonstrates an interesting phenomenon, which is the conventional relationship between Asian students (Chinese, Japanese and Korean) and their teachers. Chinese students generally do not challenge their teachers’ authority, which has been criticised as one of the main essential elements that lead to their silence in class, and lack of critical thinking, which was discussed in the literature review. The welcome involvement of the teacher in the online forum also reflects the reality that Asian students (Chinese, Japanese and Korean) are traditionally used to a ‘teacher-centred’ teaching approach rather than student-centred way of learning such as discussion between peers, which is popular in the western HE systems. To reduce this dependency, further studies should be conducted to balance the benefits and the downsides of a teacher engagement in the online learning forum.

The second benefit of this online forum is that they felt that this process redeemed their confidence, when they found they were not the only one who was struggling with the teaching content and homework. Chinese students’ silence in the class discussion has also been attributed to their lack of self-confidence. The boost of learners’ self-confidence is particularly essential for some East Asian students such as Chinese, Japanese and Korean. They tend to only answer questions when they are sure their answers correct and their English is ‘perfect’ when answering questions in public. One student said in the after study interview,

Sometimes I felt ashamed to ask a simple question, but when I saw someone asked that same question in the WeChat, I felt relief – I was not the only one with this ‘stupid’ question, or this question was not that stupid.

Benefited from the anonymity of the online forum, learners seemed to feel more comfortable asking questions and/or daring to answer questions which they did not feel confidence to do with their real identity exposed. The shared questions also brought them a sense of belonging, which promoted their self-confidence in the way that they felt they were not the ‘only’ one. When they are able to answer some questions, their self-confidence was enhanced.

The most obvious benefit of this online forum of course is the peer support in language learning, particularly for the participants from Group A. Several of them appreciated the help from their peers with better English levels and/or those who had mastered the teaching content in class. It is evident that not only who asked questions

online but also those ‘silent’ ones have benefited from this. One student from Group B said in the interview,

One day I saw some were talking about how to divide the types of PP and SP in topical development, which I thought I had mastered very well in classes. But when I really read what they discussed, I realised I was wrong. So I went through all the records in WeChat, to see what I had missed.

Her response introduces another benefit of this online discussion forum, which is the almost endless opportunities of revisiting the contents in WeChat. It is one of the functions that WeChat is very useful for language learning and teaching. The record of all involvers can be preserved and stored for ever as long as the preformed group exists, which provides learner opportunities to revisit the desired content for almost unlimited time and anywhere convenient. This is particularly welcomed by students who live and benefits from the current virtual communities and networks. In addition, another function of WeChat that was used frequently by me and the participants is the audio recording. It was often used when a relatively long explanation was involved. It covers more information and saves time compared to text feedback in WeChat. It can also be listened without time boundaries. In this way, the users of this online discussion forum benefit from both written and spoken feedback.

In addition, being able to discuss with people at similar English levels has been appreciated, which raises the positive effect of language socialisation for non-native speakers in a new environment. The study of language socialisation, in the field of sociolinguistics, suggests that a quality linguistic action between contacts can help to form a rich learning environment for language learners, and facilitate newcomers’ written language development as well as help them better understand academic discourse and communities (Duff, 2012; Seloni, 2012; Zappa-Hollman & Duff, 2015). For a good overview of this area, see reviews in Duff (2010, 2012). The online discussion panel of this teaching programme provided these newcomers with emotional and academic support, from people with similar English proficiencies and a similar cultural background. This support correlating with the outside academic environment helped them with their learning process and life experience in British HE societies.

On topic of this, both groups also appreciated the help of this online discussion panel with their social life in universities. They mentioned the feeling of

collectivism, the reduction of anxiety due to peer support (Huang, Eslami, & Hu, 2010), and the enhancement of their learning autonomy (Kobayashi, 2003), which prompted them to adapt to a British academic culture more effectively at the early stage of their study in the UK.

The benefit of using of L1 in the online discussion panel has also been mentioned by the participants. The use of L1 as a scaffold for L2 discussion is important for the success of this online discussion panel. Some participants, particularly the learners with lower IELTS test results, reported in the interviews that the use of Chinese in the online discussion panel encouraged them to ask questions and share information with others in a comfortable way. The benefits of involving L1 in L2 learning and teaching in a cautious way have been sufficiently discussed by previous researchers in the fields such as sociolinguistics, psycholinguistics and L2 learning (Cook, 2001, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 2013). The welcome response of this online discussion panel, and the involvement of L1 to a certain degree, supports their perspectives of the appropriate use of L1 in L2 learning and teaching.

To sum up, the involvement of an online discussion forum has evoked many benefits in this study, and has aroused my interest in this field. I intended to start a case study regarding the use of WeChat as a feedback tool after this doctoral research, and will continue to work in this field with the aim of introducing the use of online technology as an effective complementary teaching and learning tool.

9.7 Improvements for future teaching interventions

Despite of the fact that this pedagogical design and the teaching intervention have generated productive outcomes, some improvements can be made based on the participants' feedback and my own reflective thinking regarding this teaching practice.

The entire teaching procedure does not need to be changed, but at the second stage it is necessary to teach *the topic sentence* at the paragraph level. The participants' lack of discourse coherence awareness seriously damaged the topic sentences that they produce, and their contribution to the discourse topic. Consequently, the teaching of the development of topic sentence became less meaningful and practical if the quality of topic sentences was in doubt, or there was no topic sentences produced. The non-existence of topic sentences also reduced the amount of data that could be collected for this research. Hence, future pedagogical

designs should include the teaching of topic sentences at the paragraph level. This also reinforces the concept of discourse as a coherent whole.

In addition, the use of Reid's (1996) categories does not seem to produce the clear benefits I expected. The categories described by Reid (1996) are not initially suitable to L1 Chinese speaking writers when used to diagnose their logic development fallacies. When explaining them to the participants, they seem rather tentative, particularly for those with lower English levels. In the future teaching, probably the best option is that Reid's (1996) categories be used as a complementary source to raise students' awareness of the issue of developing topic sentence and the development of a paragraph.

Apart from the addition of *topic sentence* teaching and an adjustment to the use of Reid's (1996) categories, the self-reflective reports and the use of WeChat as a panel discussion mode in this teaching intervention should be reinforced. They were designed as peripheral parts of this teaching experiment, however, they were greatly welcomed by the participants for a variety of reasons. They do not only help researchers generate more in-depth qualitative data, but also construct a channel between teachers and learners for instant and effective feedback. In the future, these two teacher-learner collaboration practices should be emphasised. A training course should be introduced in order to help students generate reports with reflective thinking. A proper analysis of reports should be conducted to help teachers understand students more thoroughly. Regarding the online WeChat discussion panel, it should be introduced in a more organised ways such as the appointment of coordinators in each group and the categorisation of question-and-answers for a more collective outcome.

9.8 Summary

In summary, this chapter has discussed the results from the three established research questions, regarding the impact of Chinese students' English proficiency, the effectiveness of the teaching intervention, and the raising of students' awareness of cross-cultural and cross-language factors on the construction of discourse coherence in their academic writing. The involvement of the self-reflective report and the online discussion forum on WeChat have also been discussed regarding their contribution to the participants' learning outcomes.

Chinese students' English proficiency has an impact on their topical development of a discourse, the proper development of the topic sentence in paragraphs, and the use of logical connectors in their academic writing. In general, Group B students with higher IELTS overall and Writing test results performed better than Group A students with lower IELTS results in all four test units did in the three domains analysed.

All three experimental groups have benefited from the explicit teaching programme, to different degrees. The participants of Group A, B and D all appreciated the direct teaching method regarding the language and cross-cultural factors and the implication of the awareness-raising regarding these impacts on their ESL/EFL academic writing. They also raised their awareness of metalinguistic and metadiscourse factors, such as the understanding of a word or a text in a larger context, and an awareness of the target readers' expectations.

After the teaching, the participants were able to develop topics with the balanced development of all four types of progression, and reduced the predominant reliance on the repetition of topics. They also had a better understanding of topic sentence and the second sentence, and their contribution to the development of a coherent paragraph. In addition, they related the use of logical connectors to the information flow and reduced the occurrence of informal logical connectors. The explicit teaching of usually misused logical connectors by L1 Chinese speakers also showed a positive result.

In addition, the self-reflective report required and the online discussion panel established for academic reasons have also benefited the participants, in the domains of both academic and social life. The introduction of self-reflective report has provided the participants with an effective tool that they could incline to as independent learners and engage them with critical thinking and autonomy learning. The benefits of online WeChat forum are evident as being a complementary tool to consolidating the teaching results by supplying them with opportunities to revisit the teaching content in both audio and text modes, and with peer and teacher support, helping the participants establish self-confidence.

The next chapter will conclude this thesis with a discussion of its contribution and limitations.

Chapter 10 Conclusion

10.1 Overview of key research findings

This study focuses on L1 Chinese students' ESL/EFL academic writing in the field of the construction of coherent discourse, and investigates the effect of awareness-raising and that of explicit teaching of the cross-cultural and language factors that conventionally challenge L1 Chinese speakers of English. I developed a pedagogical design and syllabus and conducted a teaching intervention with two groups of L1 Chinese university students at two British universities and one group at a Chinese university.

This teaching programme has been designed to be applied as a coherent teaching project or as independent modules based on the target students' needs. It covers three domains: topic development at the discourse level, the development of the topic sentence and its successive sentences (normally the second sentence), and the application of logical connectors at the sentential level. Teachers can integrate one or all of these modules into their own pedagogical plan, based on the needs of their students, as can learners themselves.

The findings of this study suggest that this teaching programme is effective in helping Chinese students with awareness-raising regarding some areas relating to the coherence of academic written discourse. This study shows that Chinese students' English proficiency is closely related to the effectiveness of the teaching. A threshold set at the certain level, in this study which means that the IELTS overall and Writing test scores are roughly over 5, might be required to achieve the maximal benefits of this pedagogy, though a positive impact on the learners who have lower IELTS test results have been evidently detected in some domains such as the completeness of sentences and an awareness-raising of cross-cultural factors in writing.

The findings also reveal some unexpected benefits of this teaching intervention, such as the extended use of TSA as a tool of grammatical correction, and the transfer of skills from academic writing to reading. The former was more popular among the relatively lower English level ESL/EFL learners and the latter was demonstrated by the higher English level learners and/or those with self-reflective ability, for this demonstrates a transferability in language learning. Encouragingly, the introduction of a self-reflective report and that of an online discussion forum on

WeChat have received positive feedback from the learners in facilitating and enhancing their learning experience.

However, the findings from the teaching conducted in the UK exposed some problems with the initial pedagogical design such as the direct application of Reid's (1996) categorisation without teaching the establishment of topic sentence first, which is one of the main causes for the mixed results after the teaching intervention. Redesigned with the aim of teaching the construction of both topic sentence and the second sentence in the duplicated teaching intervention in the Chinese university generated better responses but also exposed the complexity of the teaching of paragraph coherence.

10.2 The pedagogical implications

Although studies regarding Chinese students' academic writing are abundant, to the best of my knowledge, I have not encountered any other similar pedagogical designs as this study which focuses on the awareness-raising of global and local discourse coherence, in these three domains: the topical development of a discourse, the development of the topic sentence and its successive sentence, and the application of logical connectors. The findings of the current study would be of interest to these groups: teachers, policy makers and learners.

The implications for teachers

It is unarguable that the conventional Chinese English teaching approach and Chinese pedagogy have a responsibility for Chinese students' lack of knowledge in some areas such as discourse coherence, rhetorical differences between Chinese and English, and the contribution of logical connectors to coherence. However, it is unreasonable to denounce the entire English teaching system and its contributions to the achievement of Chinese students in learning English. This pedagogical programme and its adapted design therefore, aims to provide English teachers in Chinese and British education systems with an additional perspective regarding the teaching of academic writing to Chinese students. This study also supplies practical teaching contents and procedures for teaching practitioners to adapt for their own use after assessing their students' particular needs, along with a consideration of other factors such as the length of each class, the purpose of teaching, and learners' English levels and their English writing competence.

The implications for policy makers

This study provides policy makers in British and Chinese English education systems and pedagogical designers with a different perspective of the teaching of English academic writing and the possibility of integrating this pedagogical design into their existing curricula. Both Chinese and British policy makers' ultimate goal is to maximise students' potential, including Chinese students', in the contexts of higher education. This study will complement current Chinese English pedagogy and halt the neglect of conceptual coherence, discourse as a whole and that of the cross-cultural and cross-language influences in English teaching systems. At the same time, this study will also provide British HE institutes with information regarding the needs of Chinese students with their English academic writing at British universities. It raises an issue for the ESL teaching system in British HE as to whether ESL learners' needs and background should be taken into account when providing education to particular groups of ESL learners, or whether a universal English pedagogical designed for all international students can be more effective. I hope this study may inspire more relevant studies and more discussions about this topic.

The implications for L1 Chinese students

The results of this study strongly suggest that this pedagogical design contributes to Chinese students raised awareness of discourse coherence in academic writing, equips them with practical tools that can be applied to diagnose the three domains of their academic writing, and facilitates them to become independent learners. This teaching programme may also advance their intellectual development, as Ellis (2002) reported that consciousness-raising might be 'unlikely to result in immediate acquisition' but 'have a *delayed* effect' in learners' gain of implicit knowledge. The application of TSA into both academic writing and academic reading processes by Group B students may have reflected some type of acquirement of implicit knowledge, as Ellis (2002) suggested.

In addition, this teaching on linguistic elements provides students with strategies and tools that they can resort to, to improve their metalinguistic ability and become aware of metadiscourse matters. I believe that further investigation will reveal more benefits of this awareness-raising process for students.

10.3 Limitations of the research

There are several limitations which need to be considered when interpreting the design of this study and its results.

Firstly, the participants of the teaching intervention chosen from two British universities are regarded as motivated ESL learners, and may not be an accurate representation of Chinese students in British HE. This may lead to doubts as to whether this pedagogical design is effective for all overseas Chinese students. Although the findings from the duplicated study may allay some doubts raised from the initial study, the differences between the initial experiment and the duplicated one can still be challenged. For example, the differentiation of the learners' English levels and their English writing ability and skills between groups as well as the adaptation of pedagogical content.

Secondly, the design of pedagogical content is based on my teaching experience with Chinese students and careful research of previous literature. Analytical tools such as Topical Structure Analysis (Lautamatti, 1978), Reid's (1996) categorisations, and the over-, under- and misuse of logical connectors (Milton & Tsang, 1993) were embedded into this study. Although I intended to construct a holistic teaching programme to raise students' awareness of discourse coherence with the help of linguistic factors, it only covers very limited dimensions related to the construction of academic discourse coherence. Even within these domains, the teaching content was still limited. For example, only several logical connectors that were frequently misused by L1 Chinese ESL/EFL learners were chosen to be taught in this programme.

Thirdly, due to time limitations, I did not collect the participants' daily English use during the teaching intervention. The amount of English used is correlated with the outcomes and accuracy of the English of late arrivers (Birdsong & Molis, 2001). Hence, I could not analyse the impact of this variable. However, studies regarding the adaptation of overseas students to the host country suggest that this initial three-month stage may not present a fundamental change to their English performance, as it is such a short period. Therefore, it might not need to be considered.

Fourthly, despite that the previous studies in Chinese written discourse suggested the predominance of PP in the topical development (Fan, et al., 2006; Shi,

2000), there may exist individual differences and the impact of topic and genre on the means of developing topics. Although in this study almost all participants developed topics in the predominant parallel progression (PP) type in their pre-teaching intervention ESL compositions, the conclusion that it was due to the cross-cultural and cross-language impact is still challengeable.

Lastly, in this study I applied the participants' writing scores in English tests to represent their writing ability, which places this study at the risk of oversimplifying this issue, and of neglecting the other influential variables such as learners' L1 and L2 levels, L1 writing ability, the maturity of their L1 and L2 writing skills, their familiarity with the writing topic, and their individual differences. Although I have explained the reasons why the writing scores have been chosen as the best indicator of the participants' writing ability in this study, it is evident that research including more careful investigations on other variables would strengthen the conclusions this study made.

It is important to note that it is by no means expected that all students would benefit from this pedagogical design. There were only three groups of Chinese students involved in this teaching intervention, which cannot represent all 'types' of Chinese students. It is also important to acknowledge that the influential factors were at the complex and dynamic range during this study, which may change overtime. The involvement of teachers also places the experiences of educators as an inevitable variable that influences the teaching results.

10.4 Recommendations for further research

This study has generated useful findings and proposed a pedagogical design that is practical for certain types of L1 Chinese university students and at a certain stage of ESL/EFL learning; it has also provoked some interesting phenomena which are worthy of further investigation. I would like to work on the further empirical research regarding the use of WeChat as a tool of feedback, and the effectiveness of self-reflection reports by L1 Chinese students.

I would also suggest further investigations with a larger scope of Chinese students with a variety of English proficiencies, to identify more accurately the effect of the pedagogical design on different types of Chinese students. Or further studies focused only on a small range of students to collect more qualitative data, in order to have in-depth insights to the impact on individual students' writing development.

In addition, it would be particularly interesting to see how this design can be converted into part of a teacher training programme. Only one local Chinese English teacher was involved in this study to teach Group C and Group D. She had positive feedback on this pedagogical design which she believes English teachers in mainland China could benefit from. Her opinions partially confirmed the conclusions made by the previous studies regarding the lack of training and knowledge of Chinese English teachers in certain areas (e.g., Mohan & Lo, 1985; Xu & Fan, 2017). It would be interesting to receive feedback from more Chinese English teachers from a variety of backgrounds.

Appendix I Consent form

Consent Form

Research: Teaching intervention regarding explicit teaching of discourse coherence

Dear student,

I am currently carrying out a research project to raise students' awareness of the impact of cultural and language differences on the construction of discourse coherence in Chinese students' academic writing. The research findings may be used to enhance the current teaching and learning systems. I am writing to ask if you are able to take part in this study.

This programme will involve you in in-class tutorials over a three-month period, with out-of-class homework, two written essays, augmented by a questionnaire and an interview if necessary. By the end of the programme, you will have been equipped with writing skills and strategies that will help you to improve your academic writing presentation, and have a better understanding of the requirements for academic essays in British universities. You may also keep any teaching materials and exercises that you think will be useful to your own continuing study.

All of the information collected will be confidential and will only be used for research purposes. Data will be stored on my password protected computer in an anonymity format, and kept until the completion of my doctoral study, after which time it will be destroyed.

You are free to withdraw from the study at any time during data collection and the teaching programme. If you are interested in your own performance in this study, you are welcome to contact me by email

Researcher's statement

I have fully explained this study to the student. I have answered all of the questions that the student asked.

Name _____

Signature _____

Student's statement

I have read the information provided in this Informed Consent form. All my questions were answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily agree to participate in this study.

Name _____

Signature _____

Data _____

Appendix II Coding Guidelines for Topical Structure Analysis (adapted from Schneider and Connor, 1990, p. 427; and Simpson, 2000, p. 301)

T-Units

- i. Any independent clause and all its required modifiers.
- ii. Any non-independent clause punctuated as a sentence.
- iii. Any imperative.

Parallel Progression (PP)

- i. Any sentence topic that exactly repeats, is a pronominal form, or is a synonym of the immediately preceding sentence topic.
- ii. Any sentence topic that is singular or plural form of the immediately preceding sentence topic.
- iii. Any sentence topic that is an affirmative or negative form of the immediately preceding sentence topic (e.g., artists, no artists).
- iv. Any sentence topic that has the same head noun as the immediately preceding sentence topic (e.g., the ideas of scientists, the ideas of artists, the contributions made by scientists, the contributions made by artists).

Sequential Progression (SP)

- i. Any sentence topic that is different from the immediately preceding sentence topic, that is, not (1) - (4) in PP.
- ii. Any sentence topic in which there is a qualifier that so limits or further specifies an NO that it refers to a different referent
- iii. Any sentence topic that is a derivation of an immediately preceding sentence topic (science, scientist).
- iv. Any sentence topic that is related to the immediately preceding topic by a part-whole relationship (e.g., these groups, housewives, children, old people).
- v. Any sentence topic that repeats a part but not all of an immediately preceding sentence topic (a whole-part relationship) (science and art, science, art)

Extended Parallel Progression (EPP)

Any sentence topic that is interrupted by at least one sequential topic before it returns to a previous sentence topic.

Extended Sequential Progression (ESP)

The rheme element of a clause being taken up as the theme of a non-consecutive clause.

Appendix III ESL Writers' Inappropriate Second Sentence Strategies (Reid, 1996, p. 161)

1. Repetition/restatement of the topic sentence.

Going to the movies is a nice way to spend leisure time. *After work, the movies is a good place to go.*

The burial ceremony in Indonesia has three rituals. *The rituals are part of the ceremony.*

2. Sentence is only tangentially related to the topic sentence.

Milk is one of the most important sources for nutrition for humans. *Many countries subsidize companies who associate with milk production.*

My most embarrassing moment happened in an airport. *We can't see a nice view when we are waiting someone at an airport.*

3. Selection of an inappropriate word in the topic sentence as the main idea for the second sentence.

In Saudi Arabia, parents have separate responsibilities for raising their children. *And its good because you cannot learn everything from your mother or father.*

Spelling is one of the most frustrating skills to learn in English. *It's not just English; French, German, and Japanese and most languages also need correct spelling.*

4. A sentence that is even more general than the topic sentence.

Milk is one of the most important sources for nutrition for humans. *Humans need a variety of nutrition to perform all the physical and chemical reactions.*

In Saudi Arabia, parents have separate responsibilities for raising their children. *But then again, this happens in most countries.*

5. A sentence that contradicts the topic sentence.

Burning fields for shift cultivation is a simple process. *But it can make the land more fertile.*

Milk is one of the most important sources of nutrition for humans. *But it is high in calories and make me thirsty.*

6. The use of a concluding sentence as a second sentence.

Acapulco is known as the best city in Mexico for vacations. *And that? why we spent almost all our time in Acapulco.*

Burning fields for shift cultivation is a simple process. *Simplicity of that process can cause very often the use of it in agriculture.*

Appendix IV Awareness questionnaires

Please tick the boxes as indicated and add comments for the last question. Your responses will be treated in confidence. If you have any questions regarding the questionnaire, please raise your hand. Please return your completed questionnaires to me before leaving this class.

1 much worse

2 a little worse

3 about the same

4 a little better

5 much better

1. How good are you at developing topical progression in a discourse, compared with before this course?

1 2 3 4 5

2. How good is your ability to develop the topic sentence in a paragraphs, compared to before the teaching programme?

1 2 3 4 5

3. How good is your ability to use logical connectors in discourses, compared to before the teaching programme?

1 2 3 4 5

4. How good are you at organising a text now as compared to before?

1 2 3 4 5

5. How well have you realised the importance of text coherence as compared to before?

1 2 3 4 5

6. How well have you realised the impact of Chinese culture and your own L1 Chinese on the writing process as compared to before?

1 2 3 4 5

7.How well have you understood that the reader is an important factor in the construction of text coherence as compared to before?

1 2 3 4 5

8.Please let me know what you think of this teaching programme. (Anything related to the content, procedure, instructions, etc. are welcome, including suggestions and complaints)

Appendix V Semi-structured interview questions

These four questions were used as guidance during the interview process:

- i. How would you describe the teaching programme in relation to your understanding of academic writing?
- ii. Do you still use the tools taught in class in your academic study? If so, which tool or tools and how do you use it? If not, why not?
- iii. Which one is the least helpful part for your essay and dissertation writing, in your opinions? Why?
- iv. Do you think it is necessary to gain some knowledge regarding the similarities and differences of English and Chinese culture and language on academic writing? If so, why? If not, why not?
- v. Any suggestions as to the structure and content of the teaching programme?

Appendix VI The syllabus design

The syllabus contains awareness-raising class, modelling, controlled practice, and free practice with the supplied topics.

Stages	Focus in each class	Interaction	Aims
Stage 1: Topical development	Awareness-raising	T-ss ss-ss	Introduce the concepts of subject and topic and the differences in English and Chinese languages, raise the participants' awareness.
	Modelling	T-ss ss-ss	Demonstrate the structure of topical development in the genre of English expository prose in terms of topical development. Require students to identify the four types of topical development (PP, SP, EPP and ESP).
	Controlled practice	T-ss ss-ss	Practice at the sentence and then discourse levels to establish the development of topics in the four types.
	Free practice	T-ss ss-ss	Compose short paragraphs with a mixture of various types of topical development.
	Self-reflection (homework – a report)	T-ss ss-ss (online discussion)	Produce a short report with reflective thinking regarding why this aspect has been taught, what have not been taught and how to comprehend and integrate this into their existing knowledge.

Stages	Focus in each class	Interaction	Aims
Stage 2: The development of topic sentence	Awareness-raising	T-ss ss-ss	Introduce the structure of a paragraph and the coherent relationship between topic sentence and its immediate sentence; raise the participants' awareness of the differences in developing a text and a paragraph.
	Modelling	T-ss ss-ss	Show the development of paragraphs in the English expository prose. Introduce Reid's categories of the mis-developed second sentence.
	Controlled practice	T-ss ss-ss	Ask students to identify the possible developmental types of the second sentence in the provided materials, and then move to the next practice of continuing to develop a topic sentence into the next sentence coherently.
	Free practice	T-ss ss-ss	Produce first two sentences of a paragraph and predict the development of the whole paragraph.
	Self-reflection (homework – a report)	T-ss ss-ss (online discussion)	Ask students to conduct reflective thinking on the content taught at this stage and link it with the topical development content of the first stage. Try to raise their attention to the coherent development from the discourse level to the paragraph level.

Stages	Focus in each class	Interaction	Aims
Stage 3: The use of particular logical connectors	Awareness-raising	T-ss ss-ss	Introduce the concepts of logical connectors in both Chinese and English; raise their awareness of the contribution of logical connectors to the discourse coherence, focusing on the impact of L1 transfer and the cultural impact on the misuse of particular logical connectors.
	Modelling	T-ss ss-ss	Using the models in expository prose to explain the proper use of particular logical connectors and their positive impacts on readability.
	Controlled practice	T-ss ss-ss	Provide some excerpts in expository prose with the logical connectors excluded/deleted, ask students to fill in proper logical connectors and discuss why one or several are more appropriate than others in the domain of discourse development.
	Free practice	T-ss ss-ss	Ask students to conduct free writing with the particular logical connectors.
	Self-reflection (homework – a report)	T-ss ss-ss (online discussion)	Guide students to a self-reflective thinking process, help them enhance their comprehension and internalisation. Raise their awareness of the cross-cultural and cross-language impacts on the construction of a coherent discourse both globally and locally.

Appendix VII An example of teaching plan

Date	Time 180mins with two 10-minute breaks	Venue Library seminar room	Unit	
<p>Lesson Teaching Aim:</p> <p>By the end of the lesson, all students must</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. have raised their awareness regarding the differences between Chinese and English languages in the domain of the subject and topic relationship 2. be able to identify the subject and topic in English sentences 3. be able to identify the types of topical development in paragraphs <p>some students may be able to:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 4. have a better understanding of discourse coherence 				
Time	Teacher activity	learner activity	interaction	transferability

5mins	Register Share lesson objectives	Review and answer questions such as: What is a subject/topic in a sentence in Chinese /English language? What is the subject/topic for?	<i>t-ss</i> <i>(plenary answer)</i>	The skills of integrating their existing knowledge into new content
20mins	T introduces information about <i>subject</i> and <i>topic</i> , and highlights the differences between Chinese and English.	Ss in small groups (3-4ss per group) discuss their understanding of the teaching content, and do exercise 1. T asks ss to compare their answers within groups and report back from one group, ensure all groups reach the correct conclusion.	<i>t-ss</i> <i>ss-ss (small groups)</i>	Awareness-raising of the cross-language impact at the sentence level
15mins	T distributes two paragraphs (see Appendix VIII, paragraph 1&2), T does paragraph 1 together with ss. Ask and answer questions during the class.		<i>t-ss,</i> <i>ss-t</i>	
15mins	Ask ss in pairs to identify topics and	Ss do paragraph 2 in pairs first and then	<i>t-ss</i> <i>ss-ss</i>	

10mins break	the topical development of paragraphs 2. T mingles and answer questions.	compare and discuss with their neighbouring groups, in order to ensure all of ss get involved and have a chance to express their opinions of this task.		
15mins	Introduces exercise 2 paragraph 3 (see Appendix VIII), T mingles and answer questions, monitors and facilitates ss during the exercise.	Ss do the task in small groups (3-4 people), then T asks ss to report back in a plenary way, to make sure all of the ss reach the same answer.	<i>ss-ss,</i> <i>t-ss</i>	Awareness-raising of regarding a section of paragraph or text as a coherent discourse
15mins	T moves ss to form into different small groups, and ask them to do paragraph 4. T mingles and answers questions.	Ss do the task with different partners in small groups.	<i>ss-ss</i> <i>ss-t</i>	
15mins	T gives feedback of the activities done and ensures that the concept of topic in	Ss ask questions and clarify any misunderstandings.	<i>t-ss</i> <i>ss-t</i>	

	English is clear.			
5mins	T summarises the content taught in the last two classes.			
10mins break				
15mins	T introduces the four types of topical development. Asks ss to work in pairs to identify the types, by taking the paragraph 1 as an example and discuss why. T mingles and prompts in order to help ss think independently.	Ss work in pairs to work out the types of topic progression and discuss why and how the information flows with the development of topic.	<i>t-ss</i> <i>ss-ss</i>	
30mins	T asks ss to work in small groups to continue to identify the topic developmental types with paragraph 2, 3 and 4, and ask them to	Ss work in small groups to identify the types of topical development, discuss and ask questions.	<i>t-ss</i> <i>ss-ss</i> <i>ss-t</i>	

5mins	<p>think whether an alternative type can be used; if so, will this change the way of information flows in the discourse. T mingles and help ss with any questions.</p> <p>T summarises the content taught and highlights the relationship between topic development and discourse coherence. T issues homework.</p>			
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Appendix VIII Teaching materials

Exercise 1

Please identify the subject and/or topic of the sentences below.

In Chinese

1. Zhege wenti hen zhongyao.
2. Guanyu zhege wenti, wo juede hen zhongyao.
3. Women laoshi shuo ta yiqian de yige xuesheng gang fabiaole yipian lunwen.
4. Dui ernianji xuesheng laishuo, zhege wenti tai jiandan le.
5. Zhongguo xuesheng yiban wenwei yingwen xiezuo bijiao nan.

In English

1. This question is very important.
2. I believe this question it is very important.
3. Our teacher said one student she taught in the past just published an essay.
4. People should maintain a healthy balance between work and personal life.
This actually will keep them away from the unhealthy lifestyle.
5. A lot of Chinese students try to avoid English writing class as they think it is too difficult. Actually, with proper training and practice, it can be enjoyable.

Exercise 2

Please identify the topics in paragraphs.

Paragraph 1 (Adopted from Simpson (2000, p. 301). Words in bold are topics.)

(1) For example, **one project** I set involved the class devising a board game based on a nursery rhyme or folk tale for younger children. (2) **The class** were reasonably enthusiastic about this until they realised that the younger children were fictional; (3) i.e., **they** would not be playing these games with real children apart from each other. (4) I felt a certain amount of shame here, for I realised that the reason there would be no audience was because I had already decided that **those games** would not be ‘good enough’ for public consumption. (5) I have frequently arranged **real audiences** for other classes, but only when I have been confident that the finished product would show the class, the school, and, most shamefully of all, myself, in a good light. (6) **My other error** was not to impose a structure to the work or a deadline by which to finish. (7) Because these were **low-ability students**, my reasoning ran, they would need more time to complete the activity, (8) and in the way of these things, **the children** simply filled the available time with low-level busy time – colouring in the board, and making the dice and counters, rather than the more challenging activities such as negotiating group responsibilities, discussing the game or devising the rules.

Paragraph 2 (Adopted from Almaden (2006, p. 135). Words in bold are topics.)

(1) All **human beings**, despite being unique compared to everyone around them, have addictions. (2) The Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines ‘**addiction**’ as “the quality of state of being addicted, the compulsive need for and use of habit-forming substance characterized by well-defined psychological symptoms upon withdrawal and the persistent compulsive use of a substance known by the user to be harmful”. (3) However, in the Random House Roget’s Thesaurus, **its synonyms** are “obsession, fixation, enthrallment, quirk, fetish, compulsion, mania, preoccupation” and such. (4) In this essay, **addiction** will be closely related to the words found in the thesaurus rather than the meanings given in the dictionary because three kinds of addiction will be present. (5) **Those who are older and more exposed to the world and its inhabitants** may have encountered one or two individuals whose cravings aren’t

what they may call normal. (6) **These cravings or addictions** may be a result of the genetic structure of the person or even the environment.

Paragraph 3 (Adopted from Almaden (2006, p. 140). Words in bold are topics.)

(1) Though as simple as the word relaxation may seem, there are still **misconceptions** about the word today. (2) Oftentimes, people would think of **the word relaxation** as when a person is sleeping in his beds. (3) **It** is not entirely true based on the fact that not all people who sleep are relaxed. (4) **People** can sleep but not really feel relaxed or comfortable while lying on their beds. (5) **Some**, even while asleep, still have chaotic and distorted dreams hindering them to experience a stress-free slumber. (6) Some would even think that **relaxation** can be obtained by isolating one-self in a certain space wherein he could mediate and clear his mind. (7) It is true that **person** can mediate in absolute silence, but how can a person actually achieve mental nothingness? (8) It only goes to show that **this kind of relaxation** is impossible to obtain. (9) **Other people** consider themselves relaxed when they are basically doing nothing at all - which is also not entirely true. (10) It is because **doing nothing at all** is generally extremely boring for others. (11) **Activities** such as watching television, listening to the radio, or staring at the clouds are considered boring by others individuals.

Paragraph 4 (Adopted from Almaden (2006, p. 147). Words in bold are topics.)

(1) It is a well-known fact that a large number of **people** have acrophobia or the great fear of heights. (2) **This state of mind** could be considered one of the most shared fears in the entire world. (3) **Acrophobia** should not be taken lightly because people tend to take this matter very seriously. (4) **They** feel very “harmed” when they are faced with the fear. (5) Basing from experience, **one** should not try to meddle with someone who is acrophobia because not only will the person tend to develop the fear but also the person might develop a grudge against you for doping such act.

Appendix IX Students writing samples

Two students' written practice before and after the teaching intervention have been taken from Group A and Group B respectively. Grammatical and vocabulary mistakes that may damage the topical development analysis have been corrected by me. The body paragraphs that are not closely related to the discourse topic have not been demonstrated below. Topics were put in **bold**. The in-text citations in these samples are not listed.

A Group A student pre-intervention essay

Paper 1

Analyse the concept of organisational culture and climate. Evaluate how leadership and motivation can influence culture and impact on organisational performance.

Every organisation has its culture and climate; no matter if **they** are big or small. A famous **Chinese company Alibaba** has a culture, which it means to share with every employee. **Its leader** Ma Yun always encourages the managers to share their ideas with staff, which pushes them to sell more.

Organisational culture is very important for business. **A good organizational culture** can influence the efficiency of its employees. According to Huczynski and Buchanan (2007), **organisational culture** consists of many different parts, including values, beliefs and norms which impact the way staff think, feel and behave towards others inside and outside the organisation. Then, **organisational culture** does not only affect work. **Culture** can influence personality of an organisation and corporate culture. **It** will influence staff performance, customer and managers.

Organisational climate means the characteristics of an organisation that influences people's behaviour. If companies have a good climate, **their staff** will sell more goods. If companies don't have a good climate, maybe **no one** wants to work. A big electronic **company, Haier, in China**, has a very good organisational climate, so their staff are happy to work there.

With social and economic development, **leadership** is necessary. For example, in Alibaba, **Ma Yun** is the leader. **He** is very powerful and he is a good

leader. **He** asks his managers to treat workers in a better way. So all the **workers** like him and work hard. So **Their company** becomes a very big company. **Haier's leader** is very good as well. **He** provides free houses for workers, so they sell a lot of fridges and air conditioners.

On the one hand, **leadership and motivation** influence the organisational culture and climate. On the other hand, **good organisational culture and climate** can influence leadership and motivation. **Good leaders** always motivate workers and employees. **Good motivation** can help workers work hard, sell more things. Therefore, **the companies** have good organisational culture and climate. For example, **Haier** has a good leader, then **workers** are motivated to work hard, so they have a good company culture and climate.

In conclusion, **good leadership and motivation** can help companies get good culture and climate.

The same student's post-intervention essay

With social and economic development, **organisational culture and climate** has become more important. **Leadership and motivation** have an impact on the company culture and their performance.

Organisational culture and climate consists of many different parts, including values, beliefs and norms which impact the way staff think, feel and behave towards others inside and outside the organisation (Huczynski & Buchanan, 2007). **Different companies** have various cultures. For example, **some companies** have the culture of donating money to charities and **some** prefer to pay more pensions for their employees. **These cultures** attract different employees. **A famous Chinese company, Haier**, donates millions of yuan to help to build a lot of schools in the village areas in China. **This culture** has been praised by the government and **it** makes it easy for Haier to hire workers.

Leadership and motivation can influence the organisational culture. **An effective leadership** involves establishing a clear version of company and policies, and then share this with others. **A good leader** can share his idea with his assistants and other managers. **These managers** can share this and motivate the other employees. When they do their jobs, **leaders and managers** provide useful information and methods to support their employees. When the employees have problems, **they** can go to ask their employers. **This** shows a harmonic

organisational culture between leaders and staff. In addition, **a good leader** always balances all parties if they have conflicts. For example, if a member of staff has a conflict with the head of this department, **a leader** will talk to both sides to understanding the background first and then solve the problem.

An effective leadership advances the organisational performance. **A good leader** always has effective performance management skills.

‘**Performance management** reflects and shapes the values and norms of work groups and organisations and employees’ attitudes and behaviours’ (London & Mone, 2014). **A good leader with management skills** can motivate workers in different ways. For example, **Haier** encourages competition between the sales groups in the different areas; **this** makes the sales rise. **Another company Alibaba Ma Yun** gives the power to the bosses of departments; **these bosses** are good in their areas. **They** may have excellent performance at the end of the year.

In Conclusion, **effective leadership** can have a positive impact on the organisation performance and reflects the organisational culture and climate.

A Group B pre-intervention essay

Paper 2

Analyse and evaluate the impact of online businesses and high street businesses in the current financial climate.

With the passing of time, **online businesses** become more and more popular. **High street businesses** have become more difficult to run but they have some advantages. **People** now like to buy things online.

Online businesses are convenient for customers. **People** don’t need to go shopping in winter anymore. In China, **young people** buy everything in Taobao. **It** is cheaper than buying from the department stores. **The department stores** sell expensive things and luxurious clothes. When people want to buy expensive things, **they** still go to stores. So **they** can try them on and taste before buying.

Some people think it is not **safe to buy online**. There are a lot of **bad people** online trying to cheat money from people. **Some people** have bought bad

quality things online and **they** can't get their money back. **Some people** have paid online but **they** never get the thing they buy. Besides, a lot of people **lose their bank password online** without knowing the people they are dealing with are not bank staff. So, **some people** only shop in the high street shops, so they can see the things before they pay for them. **They** feel safer.

Comparing with no renting and hiring salesperson costs in the high street business companies, **the online companies** who just focus on e-business can save a great deal of money. **Companies** can save lots of money using emails and social media to do advertisements. **The email** has become a popular role of advertising. **The low cost of email** makes it used frequently by companies. **It** allows to edit, copy and forward message with attaching files (Chevalier and Gutsatz, 2012). Therefore, **online companies** save cost on advertising via email and social media instead of printing numerous copies of magazines and paper.

On the other hand, **high street businesses** are unavoidable. Some **old people** don't know how to buy things online. **High street businesses** contributes to the local economy. **They** sell expensive things, which will bring great benefits to the local development.

In conclusion, **both online and high street businesses** are important for people's life. So **they** should exist at the same time.

The same student's post-intervention essay

Before the **online businesses** were introduced in the market, people normally went shopping in the high street. However, **online shopping** is more popular than the traditional way.

Online businesses provide people with convenience. **People** do not need to go outdoors to purchase, instead, **they** can stay at home to buy food and things they need. If they buy big and heavy goods, **online companies** can deliver to their home. In addition, **online companies** also help people save time. **They** do not need to drive to the shops to buy one thing here and then to another shop to buy other things. **This** also saves their petrol cost.

Online businesses help the owners save money from the cost of renting a place in the high street. **Online businesses** also can help them hire fewer staff compared to the shops in the high street. In addition, **online businesses** can sell more types of commodity than the stores as they do not need to put everything

on the shelves. **Every commodity** can be displayed online and delivered to all over the world. The **sales volume of business** in the Internet, such as in Taobao (the biggest Chinese online shopping similar to eBay), has reached the number that no traditional shops can catch up with. **This better performance** online has been proven in many cases.

Nonetheless, **traditional high street businesses** still have some advantages. **People** tend to buy expensive things in the shop rather than online. For example, when people buy jewellery, **they** want to try it on; and **they** are afraid it will be lost during the delivery if they buy them online. In addition, **people** do not need to worry about the online security if they buy in the stores. **Cybercrime** is a serious problem, which may never diminish. **Customers' identity and passwords** are easily to be hacked even if they are very careful. However, **shopping in the stores** can avoid these problems.

To conclude, although online businesses are the trend in current society, **the high street businesses** still have some merits and cannot be completely replaced.

List of Abbreviations

CET College English Test

EAP English as academic purpose

EFL English as a foreign language

EPP extended parallel progression

ESL English as a second language

ESP extended sequential progression

HE higher education

IELTS International English Language Test

ISE initial sentence element

ISP initial sentence position

L1 first language

L2 second language

NES Native English-speaking

NNES non-native English-speaking

PP parallel progression

SP sequential progression

TEM Test for English Majors

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