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THE IMPACT OF A “POST-PROCESS” APPROACH ON HONG KONG JUNIOR SECONDARY SCHOOL STUDENTS’ ATTITUDES AND ENGAGEMENT WITH L2 WRITING

by

IP, Tsz Man Carmen

A Research Dissertation
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Bachelor of Education in Language Education

Faculty of Education
University of Hong Kong
May 2010
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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation represents my own work and that it has not been previously submitted to this University or other institution in application for admission to a degree, diploma or other qualifications.

Signature: _______________________

Name: IP, Tsz Man Carmen

HKU Student No.: 2006149262

Date: 22 May 2010
The process approach has been one of the most influencing forces in the field of L2 writing over the last part of the 20th century. During recently, however, a group of scholars suggested that this cognitivist way of viewing L2 writing has its own limitations. Therefore they proposed that we should move forward to the socio-cultural aspect of L2 writing – the “post-process” era. This study investigates the impact of a “post-process” approach on Hong Kong junior secondary school students’ attitudes and engagement with L2 writing. A “post-process” writing program was implemented in a secondary one English writing classroom and the impact of the writing program was investigated through the comparison of a pre- and post-questionnaire, and the analysis of the follow up interviews. It is found that the program brought about positive results in general, and “post-process” writing approach seems to be an effective way to enhance students’ positive attitudes and engagement with L2 writing, especially the low-achieving writing students.
Acknowledgement

I am heartily thankful to my supervisor, Dr. Fiona Hyland, for her enthusiasm, understanding, encouragement, and most importantly, for sharing her time and incredible knowledge, to enable me to develop a deeper understanding of the subject.

I would also like to thank the participants, who gave me permission to interview them. Without their support, this study would not have been undertaken. Thanks also go to the principal of Canossa College, Ms. Cornelia Chan, who gave me permission to conduct this study at her school.

Lastly, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to my family, who has devoted themselves to my education. It was under their love and endless support that I could finish my study and gain so much. This work is dedicated to them.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Statement of problem

The process approach to writing first appeared in the early 1980s. Flower & Hayes (1981) reported that writers actually go through a number of cognitive processes during writing and this view has provided groundwork for the development of teaching L1 and L2 writing. Zamel (1983) agreed on this view and further suggested that when students treat writing as a process, they can explore and discover their thoughts, construct meaning and assess the writing product. Attention is thus paid to the meaning more than to the form.

Scholars, in general, proposed that the process approach is beneficial to writing learners (Raimes, 1983; Stewart & Cheung, 1989; White & Arndt, 1991). This was confirmed by various research studies which showed that process writing approach can effectively improve students’ writing skills and attitude towards writing (Cheung, 1999; Goldstein & Carr, 1996; Pennington & Cheung, 1993). Therefore over the 20th century, as suggested by Atkinson (2003), this approach has become the strongest guiding force in the field of teaching and learning of writing.

During recently, however, a group of scholars (Atkinson, 2003; Hyland, 2003a; Matsuda, 2003) suggested that this cognitivist way of viewing L2 writing has its own limitations. Therefore they proposed that we should move forward to the socio-cultural aspect of L2 writing – the “post-process” era.

1.2 Purpose of study

This research study aims to explore how the “post-process” writing approach affects Hong Kong junior secondary students’ attitudes and engagement towards L2 writing. Therefore in this study, a “post-process” writing program is implemented in a secondary one classroom, the impacts of the writing program on the students’ attitude
and engagement towards L2 writing are examined, and the impacts across individuals are compared. Based on the results, implications for research and pedagogy will be discussed.
Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter reviews the current teaching and learning of L2 writing in the Hong Kong context and the research conducted on this area, followed by an overview of the theory and literature on the “post-process” writing approach.

2.1 Teaching and learning L2 writing in Hong Kong context

Process writing approach has recently enjoyed a high status in the Hong Kong education field. As proposed by the Hong Kong Education Bureau (1999), this cognitivist approach to writing is recommended in the English language curriculum. That is to say, teachers are encouraged to teach writing in different stages (i.e. pre-writing, multi-drafting and revising). At the same time they are encouraged to integrate their teaching with group work, peer correction and content-related feedback from teacher.

Apart from the fact that process writing helps students to adopt advanced writers’ thought processes while they write, the Education Bureau (2007) promotes this approach also because it enhances students’ awareness of what they do during writing. Hence under the Education Bureau’s (2002) English Language curriculum guiding principles, where the active role of students is emphasized, the process writing approach is also suggested to be used as a form of formative assessment in the English language curriculum.

2.2 Research on L2 process writing approach in Hong Kong context

With the Hong Kong Education Bureau’s recommendation of integrating of process writing approach in English writing classrooms (Education Bureau, 1999), local scholars have been studying the impact of this approach on Hong Kong students’ learning of L2 writing.
Research in early stage

In early 1990s, research suggested that the process writing approach had a mix of positive and negative impacts on students’ L2 writing. Tsang and Wong (1992) studied 6 local students, who wrote English with the process approach, and they showed substantial improvement at discourse level, content and organization. However, little changes were indicated in the use of vocabulary, sentence-level features and syntactic complexity.

Writing skills and attitudes towards L2 writing

More recent research, however suggests that the process writing approach has a more positive influence on improving students’ writing skills and attitudes towards L2 writing, at all primary, secondary and tertiary levels (Cheung, 1999; Cheung and Chan, 1994; Cheung et al., 1992). For instance in Ho’s (2006) study, 200 students from 6 primary schools, who participated in a process writing program, showed positive results in improving their writing skills and attitudes towards L2 writing. Yeung’s (2008) study also found a similar result. She investigated 2 classes of Secondary One girls in a Band 2 CMI (Chinese as the Medium of Instruction) school. Both classes increased their use of L2 writing strategies such as the use of dictionary, after the implementation of the process writing program.

Autonomy and confidence in L2 writing

Apart from writing skills and attitudes, research also showed that process writing approach had positive impact on the development of students’ autonomy in writing. In Yeung’s (2008) study, students were found less dependent on teacher while writing and more motivated when writing in L2. Self-confidence was also enhanced and as described by Ho (2006), this was more obvious for students whose English proficiency is higher and who are at the upper level.
In general, research has showed that process writing approach has had a positive impact on students’ learning of L2 writing in the Hong Kong context.

2.3 Limitations of process writing approach

Although research showed that Hong Kong students generally benefited from the process writing approach, limited evidence can be found to prove that this approach can lead to better writing in L2 contexts (Hyland, 2003a).

Multi-perspectives of writing

One of the possible reasons is that, process approach to writing ignores the social aspect of language – language works in human interaction. It focuses solely on the cognitive processes which an advanced writer goes through, but it does not take what writing is for into consideration. This view was echoed by Matsuda (2003). He suggested that “process (writing) movement oversimplifies the multiplicity of perspectives (of writing)” (p.67). Or as described by Hyland (2003a), process writing approach “represents writing as a decontextualized skill by foregrounding the writer as an isolated individual struggling to express personal feelings” (p.18), yet neglects the fact that writers also write to accomplish different purposes such as book reports, news, stories and travel guides.

Cultural mismatch

Process writing approach displays a cultural mismatch between the writing and the life experiences of L2 students. L2 process writing approach assumes linguistic and rhetorical forms of western social contexts, as well as cultural practices like peer review, writer’s own voice and critical thinking (Delpit, 1988; Inghilleri, 1989; Hyland, 2003a). These cultures are heavily promoted in western countries, yet not in Asia. Therefore for L2 learners in places like Hong Kong, who have limited experience neither in their home nor in their classrooms, they may have serious
problems in acquiring such cultural knowledge, which is essential for good L2 writing.

Considering the two mentioned limitations, education scholars have suggested a new approach to writing – the “post-process” approach.

2.4 Definition of “post-process” writing approach

Owing to the above mentioned limitations of process writing approach, writing is increasingly viewed not only from the linguistic perspective, but is a product which is culturally and socially situated (Kress, 1993). Therefore in the early 1990s, the term “post-process” was used among scholars in the writing field and it was referred to as the “social turn” in composition studies (Matsuda, 2003; Trimbur, 1994).

As proposed by Trimbur (1994), the “post-process” scholars see writing as a cultural activity, by which “writers position and reposition themselves in relation to their own and others’ subjectivities, discourses, practices, and institutions” (p.109). Hence with respect to this belief, the usage and teaching of writing can no longer be separated from the social and cultural purposes that language serves (Benesch, 2001; Kubota, 1999; Norton, 2000). In other words, the social and cultural aspects of writing must be stressed in all writing classrooms. Yet, McComiskey (2000) suggested that the “post-process” approach is not defined as the rejection of the process approach, but rather as its extension to create a more comprehensive view of writing.

Therefore in order to integrate the social and cultural aspects of writing in composition lessons, in particular L2 classrooms, scholars suggested that elements such as personal-related topic, real audience and real purpose for writing can be introduced to students when teaching writing.
2.4.1 Personal-related topic

As mentioned, one of the limitations of process writing approach is the mismatch of culture between L1 writing contexts and L2 writers’ experiences. Hence with the consideration of writing as a cultural activity, a personal-related topic, which emphasizes on writers’ personal experience, can foster L2 writing. As supported by Buckingham and Pech (1976), “learning must be rooted in the experience of the learner in order for it to be effective” (p.55).

In addition to that, this emphasis on personal experience allows students to learn writing according to their own interests, which in turn can develop students’ individuality and autonomy in L2 writing (Kalantzis & Cope, 1993).

2.4.2 Real audience

In viewing writing as a cultural activity, besides taking into account of the writer’s personal experience, writing is also viewed as a piece of text which is produced for a specific audience (Elbow, 1998; Raimes, 1983). Hence Hyland (2003a) suggested that in order to produce a piece of “successful” writing, the writer has to display his awareness of his audience.

In another publication, Hyland (2003b) further explained this view by suggesting that the structure of writing is often built to meet the expectation of the target audience, L2 writing teacher hence need to encourage students to consider their writing from their target reader’s perspective. And one of the ways is to incorporate a real audience into the L2 writing classroom.

2.4.3 Real purpose

When viewing writing through the “post-process” lens, Casanave (2003) claimed that all written products will have their meaning only in relation to their purpose. Therefore, the teaching of L2 writing should not simply emphasize on linguistic
aspects such as grammar, but should be situated in meaningful contexts with authentic purposes (Hyland, 2003a) in order to make the learning of L2 writing meaningful.

To further promote the learning of L2 writing, Hyland (2003a) proposed that only teaching learners the writing skills which “good” writers used (i.e. process writing) is not enough as “good” writers use different writing skills to meet their writing purpose. Because of this reason, L2 writing teacher should also support students to how language creates meanings with specific writing purpose.

To sum up, personal-related topic, real audience and real purpose for writing can highlight the social and culture aspects of writing, which are emphasized in the “post-process” movement. For this reason, following an earlier research design by Lo and Hyland (2007), these three elements were integrated into the “post-process” writing program for this research.

2.5 Research on “post-process” writing approach

The “post-process” writing approach has opened up a new dimension in the composition field. Scholars have then conducted research to examine its effectiveness in the teaching and learning of writing. For example, some studies showed the cultural complexities of the student-writers’ lives could influence their writing processes (Spack, 1997; Sternglass, 1997; Leki, 2001).

Some “post-process” researches were also conducted in the Hong Kong context. Mak and Coniam (2008) had introduced a “post-process” writing program in a Hong Kong EMI (English as the Medium of Instruction) Secondary One L2 writing classroom. The class size was 24 students. In this writing program, students wrote about their secondary school life as a freshman in school (personal-related topic), shared it on Wikipedia and read by their parents (real audience and purpose). After the program, it was reported that students were more confident as being a L2 writer, at
the same time their creativity in L2 writing was promoted because the target audience (i.e. their parents) looked at the content of their writing, instead of purely the grammar.

This drew on an earlier research study conducted by Lo and Hyland (2007). This research had spanned for 3 months and was conducted in a Hong Kong EMI primary girls’ school. 40 students participated in this research, which a traditional writing program and a “new” writing program (i.e. with a personal-related topic, a real writing purpose and a real audience) were conducted to compare students’ motivation and engagement in L2 writing. After the writing program, students’ motivation and engagement were generally enhanced and the “new” writing program was found more beneficial for the low-achieving students. It was found that the low-achieving students had become more confident as L2 writers because they had more ideas for their writing. On the other hand, the high-achieving students were challenged to rethink their previous “successful” writing strategies, which merely focus on accuracy and grammar. Yet, students in general showed a weaker performance in their organization and accuracy.

In general, these research studies strengthened the scholars’ belief that the socio-cultural aspect of writing affects the writing process. Research conducted, however, showed that adopting a “post-process” writing approach has both positive and negative impacts on L2 writers and their writing. Hence there is a need to conduct more “post-process” researches, to show whether this writing approach is suitable for L2 writing learners, especially learners in Hong Kong.

2.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, the use of process writing approach is currently recommended in Hong Kong L2 writing classrooms. Research on this approach in Hong Kong
education context has been quite widely conducted and generally has showed positive outcomes. Yet, some scholars suggested that this approach to writing has its own limitation. Hence the “post-process” writing approach, which emphasizes on the use of personal-related topic, real audience and real purpose for writing, has been adopted by some researchers instead and a number of research studies in this area have been conducted with both positive and negative results. Thus it is difficult to be sure whether the benefits outweigh the disadvantages of this method and there is a need to more research to investigate this area. This is what this small-scale intervention aims to do within the Hong Kong context.

2.7 Research questions

This study aims to investigate the impact of a “post-process” approach on Hong Kong junior secondary school students’ attitude and engagement with L2 writing, and it guided by the following research questions:

1. What are the students’ attitudes to L2 writing and how do these change after the implementation of a “post-process” approach?
2. Are there any individual differences in the way that students respond to the “post-process” approach and if so, what might account for these?
3. How do students engage in L2 writing during the implementation of “post-process” approach?
Chapter 3: Methodology

In this chapter, the research design, the setting, the participants, the program design, the data collection and data analysis are presented.

3.1 Procedures

This study aimed to investigate Hong Kong junior secondary student attitudes and engagement towards L2 writing and how these changed after the implementation of a “post-process” approach. To accomplish these goals, a small scale intervention was utilized.

In this study, a “post-process” writing program, which lasted for a sequence of lessons, was implemented into a junior secondary classroom. To collect the data needed for analysis, a pre-questionnaire, post-questionnaire and follow-up interviews were administered.

3.2 Setting

This study took place in a Band 1 Hong Kong girls’ school where I taught during my teaching practicum at my final year. It used English as the medium of instruction for most of the subjects, yet English was a second language for the majority of the students.

3.3 Participants

With the permission from the school principal (see Appendix A), one class of secondary one students participated in this research. This was a mixed ability class with the size of 38 students. The students were passive learners and particularly not motivated in English writing classes. Their English standards were in general fair, yet they were not confident and fluent when they were writing in English. And the writing approach of “process writing” was used in their previous English writing classes.
Before the conductions of pre-questionnaire, post-questionnaire and interviews, the research objectives and the use of data collected were explained to the participants. And in order to protect the confidentiality of the participants and the information provided, pseudonyms were used to refer to them.

3.4 Program design

The objective of the writing program was to enable the participants to write a restaurant review individually on completion of the writing program. To help the participants with their writing using the “post-process” approach, a topic which they had personal experience in, a real purpose and a real audience for their writing were included in the writing program (Lo & Hyland, 2007):

- Topic: The writing topic of the program was “Restaurant Review”. Although I could not decide the topic as it was in the school’s scheme of work, all participants have the personal experience of eating at a restaurant. However, they did not have the background knowledge of the genre, so lesson time was used to discuss its structure and features.

- Purpose: The purpose for the participants’ writing was to post on a Hong Kong local website, Openrice.com. This is the most popular local online dining guide, where visitors can find out more about the restaurants based on the review written by real people.

- Audience: As their writing would be posted up on the Openrice.com, the participants were writing their restaurant review to the visitors of the website. Their writing will not be read only for a few days, but whenever the website visitors search for the restaurant which they wrote about.
The writing program lasted for 4 lessons. Lesson 1 and 4 were single lessons which lasted for 40 minutes, while lesson 2 and 3 were double lessons (i.e. 80 minutes) as lesson time was given to the participants for in-class writing. The program details were described in Appendix B.

3.5 Data collection

Qualitative and quantitative methods were applied to collect data for analysis. Pre- and post-questionnaires were given in class before and after the writing program respectively, hence to investigate the general opinions from all participants (Nunan, 1992). To provide more detailed and in-depth information, follow-up interviews were conducted to gather more in-depth thoughts from selective participants.

3.5.1 Pre-questionnaire

The pre-questionnaire (see Appendix C) was designed to collect attitudinal information from the participants. Ten Likert-scale statements about their opinions on L2 writing were on the questionnaire and they ranked them according to their agreement with them. The questionnaire was written in both English and Chinese (L1 of the participants), so all participants could understand each statement.

Before giving out the questionnaire, a pilot test was carried out. I randomly chose a few S1 students from another class of mine to do the questionnaire. If they could not understand or confused by anything, I told them to circle it using another color pen. After completing the questionnaire, all of them showed no difficulties so the questionnaire was proved to be doable.

The pre-questionnaire was anonymous. The participants spent about ten minutes to complete it. 37 students completed the questionnaire as there was one absentee that day.
3.5.2 Post-questionnaire

The post-questionnaire (see Appendix D) was given out to the participants after the writing program. Ten of the statements were the same as the pre-questionnaire to compare any changes on their attitude towards L2 writing after the program, and there were seven other Likert-scale statements about their opinions on the writing program. The post-questionnaire was administered in the same way as the pre-questionnaire.

The participants spent about fifteen minutes to complete it. Nearly participants (i.e. 36 students) completed the questionnaire as there were two absentees that day.

3.5.3 Interview

Questionnaires alone cannot fully represent the participants’ opinions on the writing program. Therefore as suggested by Bogdan and Biklen (1998), interview can be employed together with questionnaires to gather descriptive data from the participants, hence to help the researcher to develop a deeper insight.

Follow-up interviews were conducted after the writing program to collect additional information about the participants’ opinions on L2 writing and the writing program. As the participants’ class was a mixed ability class, to study their attitude from a range of ability, focus groups were used to maximize variation in sampling (Merriam, 1998). Eight participants were selected to participate in the focus group to represent the various language levels. They were chosen by my mentor based on their daily performance. Three, three and two participants were placed respectively in each of the high-, medium- and low-achieving groups.

The interviews were conducted in the format of semi-structured interview (see Appendix E for the interview question prompts). As suggested by Flick (2009), this format allows the interviewer to focus on a specific topic, while giving the interviewees as much scope as possible to express their views. Furthermore, they
were conducted in the participants’ first language, Cantonese, to ensure all interviewees could understand the questions and express themselves freely. The interviews were also recorded.

3.6 Data analysis

The data from the pre- and post-questionnaire was analyzed by calculating percentages for each statement. The changes in percentage were also calculated. And help judging whether participants felt positive or negative about the writing program, “strongly agree” and “agree” considered together as a positive response, while “strongly disagree” and “disagree” were considered as a negative response. In other words, for analysis the data was considered under three categories – positive response, neutral response and negative response. Follow-up interviews were transcribed and reviewed to study the participants’ thoughts about L2 writing and the writing program.

All data, i.e. pre- and post-questionnaire and interviews, was then examined together for a more comprehensive and complete analysis to investigate the research questions.
Chapter 4: Findings and Discussion

The findings of the study show that in general, the “post-process” writing program had brought about positive changes in participants’ attitudes and engagement towards L2 writing. In this chapter, the study findings will be described, together with the discussion of several issues raised with reference to the research questions.

4.1 Increased positive attitude towards writing in L2

Table 1: Participants’ enjoyment of writing in English (pre-intervention)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N = 37 responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree/ Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoy writing in English.</td>
<td>49%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Before the implementation of the “post-process” writing program, participants did not show a very positive attitude towards writing in English. As Table 1 shows, less than half of the participants (49%) enjoyed writing in English.

Table 2: Participants’ enjoyment of writing in English (post-intervention)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N = 36 responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree/ Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I enjoyed writing in English more.</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

However, as can be seen from Table 2, 61% of the participants thought that they enjoyed more in L2 writing after the “post-process” writing program. More
importantly, there is a decrease in the percentage of participants who did not enjoy writing in English, i.e. only 3% still showed a negative attitude.

Interview

The interview findings provided more insights into the reasons why the participants became more positive towards L2 writing after the writing program. As told by the interviewees, they generally liked writing, especially writing blog and letter to friends. However when they were writing in English, they were often demotivated because they had to take great care of the English grammar. One of the high-achieving interviewees, Bianca, suggested:

“For English, I always have to look at grammatical issues and whether we have spelled vocabulary right. This might be a little bit troublesome.”

After the writing program, the participants had an increase in their positive attitude towards L2 writing. Heidi, another low-achiever, explained that the writing program was more interesting compared to the kind of writing lessons that they usually had, because it required them to write about personal experience and used tools such as the Internet, which they often used in their daily lives:

“Putting the materials (writing) onto the Internet makes it (L2 writing) more interesting, in contrast to handing in our hand-written homework which sounds a bit old-fashioned.”

4.2 Increased positive attitude towards the importance of L2 writing

As Table 3 shows, participants in general did not have strong feelings towards the significance of L2 writing before the writing program. The majority of the participants (43%) showed no preference towards the statement “The things that I write about in my English classes are important”. Moreover, up to 43% did not think
that English writing is important in life. Yet, more than half of the class (54%) agreed that L2 writing can be used both inside and outside classrooms.

Table 3: Participants’ attitudes towards the importance of writing in English (pre-intervention)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N = 37 responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree/Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The things that I write about in my English classes are important.</td>
<td>41% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think English writing is important in life.</td>
<td>30% (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I think English writing can be used inside and outside classrooms.</td>
<td>54% (20)</td>
</tr>
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Table 4: Participants’ attitudes towards the importance of writing in English (post-intervention)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N = 36 responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree/Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The things that I have written about in the new writing programme were important to me.</td>
<td>70% (25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I thought English writing is important in life.</td>
<td>42% (15)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I thought English writing can be used inside and outside classrooms.</td>
<td>69% (25)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the writing program, there was an increase of positive attitudes towards the importance of L2 writing as shown in Table 4. A high percentage of participants (70%) agreed with the statement “The things that I have written about in the new
writing programme were important to me”, and no participant disagreed. An increase in positive response and a decrease in negative response were also found for the statement “I thought English writing can be used inside and outside classrooms”. However, the majority of the participants (44%) still stayed neutral about the statement “I thought English writing is important in life”.

**Interview**

When the interviewees were interviewed about how they saw the aims of learning L2 writing, they commonly pointed out that it helps them communicate with English-speakers as well as prepares them for the working environment in the future. Only Ada (high-achieving interviewee) suggested that it also helps them prepare for the examination. This explains why the majority agreed that L2 writing can be used both inside and outside classrooms. However, as the writing topics from their previous writing lessons were not related to the two aims mentioned, they in general did not find their writing products important. Furthermore, the participants rarely had the chance to use L2 writing for the two mentioned aims at their age, so it was not surprised that they did not think L2 writing is important in life.

In contrast to the writing lessons which the participants usually had, the “post-process” writing program had aimed to integrate participants’ personal experience and an authentic purpose. This helped the participants realize that there is one more aim for their writings – share personal feelings. Hence there was a high percentage in the positive response to the statements “The things that I have written about in the new writing programme were important to me” and “I thought English writing can be used inside and outside classrooms”. Yet, the chance of using L2 writing in daily situations is still rare for the participants, so they in general had no comment about whether L2 writing is important in life.
4.3 Positive attitudes towards the process writing approach

Table 5 Participants’ attitudes towards process writing approach (post-intervention)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N = 36 responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I liked the preparatory lesson for my writing.</td>
<td>56% (20)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I liked to share my ideas in groups.</td>
<td>47% (17)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I liked to have teacher’s feedback and correct my English writing before submission.</td>
<td>72% (26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In the process writing approach, pre-writing, peer work and teacher feedback are three of the essential elements. Table 5 shows that the majority liked these elements, in particular the teacher feedback before the final submission (72%).

Interview

Apart from teacher feedback, the interviewees highly valued the pre-writing session. The low achievers, Heidi and Gigi, said that the preparatory lesson gave them a direction to start and it made their writing process much easier. This view was shared by a high-achiever, Ada, and she further explained that:

“It helps me think. For example, the mind map that you (the teacher) have provided us enable me to think of something previously not in my mind.”

Regarding peer work, the participants generally did not mind sharing their writing. They also agreed that through sharing, they could learn from each other and looked at their writing from different perspectives. This finding was similar to the finding of another research study. Tsui and Ng (2000) studied the impact of peer work
on L2 writing with 27 Secondary Six and Seven students from a Band 2 school. Their findings suggested that students felt they learned more from reading others’ writing, and peer work even encouraged students’ self-revision of their own writing.

Another possible benefit of peer work was suggested by Bianca (high-achieving interviewee). She said that reading others’ work can also be a kind of proofreading exercises, which in turn can be helpful in examinations.

However, some of the interviewees held negative opinions towards peer work. A low-achieving interviewee, Heidi, was worried that she was not sure whether the corrections which she made for other students were correct or not while the medium-achieving and high-achieving interviewees, Eva and Cathy, worried that other students would misinterpret their meanings. Cathy also added that peer work would not help much because:

“... every student usually has the same errors. Also, every student follows the same structure.”

72% of the participants liked to have teacher’s feedback and corrections of their English writing before submission because maybe, students’ general perception of teacher’s feedback was more positive than of peer feedback (Tsui and Ng, 2000).

4.4 Student attitudes and engagement when writing in L2

As illustrated in Table 6, the majority strongly agreed or agreed with most statements, except for the statements “I have a lot of things deep in my heart that I want to write about in English” and “I try to write the least that I can in English classes” before they had the “post-process” writing program. For the former statement, the majority (38%) showed a neutral response while for the latter one, 67% of the participants showed a negative response.
### Table 6  
Participants’ attitudes and engagement towards writing in English (pre-intervention)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N = 37 responses</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree/</td>
<td>No comment</td>
<td>Strongly</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
<td></td>
<td>disagree/</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I always have ideas for my English writing.</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>14%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(19)</td>
<td>(13)</td>
<td>(5)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can always think of the words to use when I am writing in English.</td>
<td>46%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>17%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(17)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(6)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can always organize my ideas in my English writing.</td>
<td>40%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(15)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have a lot of things deep in my heart that I want to write about in</td>
<td>33%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English.</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td>(14)</td>
<td>(11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I try to write the least that I can in English classes.</td>
<td>6%</td>
<td>27%</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
<td>(10)</td>
<td>(25)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I feel very engaged with the ideas when I am writing in English.</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>19%</td>
<td>32%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18)</td>
<td>(7)</td>
<td>(12)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

After the writing program, the participants in general still had positive responses towards the statements and they showed an increase in their positive responses towards all statements (except “I tried to write the least that I could”), as shown in Table 7. The majority thought that they had more ideas for their writing, felt more engaged with the idea when they were writing and had more things deep in their heart that they wanted to write about. More importantly, up to 81% of the participants would like to do the “post-process” writing program again.
Table 7  Participants’ attitudes and engagement towards writing in English (post-intervention)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N = 36 responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had more ideas for my writing.</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could think of the words to use when I am writing more often.</td>
<td>64%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(23)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I could organize my ideas in writing better.</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(26)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I had a lot of things deep in my heart that I want to write about.</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(28)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I felt more engaged with the ideas when I was writing.</td>
<td>75%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I tried to write the least that I could.</td>
<td>20%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(7)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would like to do this new writing programme again.</td>
<td>81%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(29)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interview

The interview findings corroborated the questionnaire results in that the majority of the students showed an increase of positive attitudes towards the “post-process” writing program. All interviewees pointed out they enjoyed writing in the writing program because it was linked to their own experiences (i.e. things deep in their hearts), so they had more ideas and were encouraged to write more. This echoed the finding in Lo & Hyland’s (2007) research studies that students enjoyed and found it interesting to link their personal experience to their writing. Gigi (low-achieving
interviewees) further explained that the ideas were included in their daily conversation at school, so she did not need to think of the content all over again.

The high-achieving interviewees also agreed that they wrote more in the writing program. As told by Bianca, this was because in their previous writing lessons, the ideas or arguments that they could bring out were quite limited. However, the topic in the “post-process” writing program provides more flexibility, so they could write more for the content.

Moreover, all interviewees would like to do the writing program again because they found it more interesting compared to their previous writing lessons. Ada (high-achieving interviewee) pointed that the content of the previous topics was quite repetitive, even primary schools’ textbooks have included those ideas.

Therefore given that fact that in the “post-process” writing program, the participants enjoyed writing more, had more things deep in their heart that they wanted to write about, did not try to write the least that they could and felt more engaged with the ideas which they were writing, it can suggested that their engagement with the writing program was high. Or as explained by Lo & Hyland (2007), it was the personal experiences which gave students a stronger sense of purpose and engagement.

However, there was also a slight negative side of the writing program. Although the participants had plenty to say for their writing, they could not think of the words to express their thoughts and feelings when they were writing. As shared by the high-achieving interviewee Ada:

“It might be a bit challenging because we need to use a lot of vocabularies that we are not familiar with. We might not be able to very accurately describe what we want to deliver.”
Although it was not mentioned by Ada, one of the reasons might be, as the participants were writing about their personal experience which was gained in the L1 context, they were thinking in L1 when they were writing. This was suggested because as observed in class, students constantly asked the teacher for direct translations. So when they write, they had to translate their ideas into English for their final writing product. Therefore given an increase of writing ideas as discussed, it became more challenging for the participants to think of the suitable vocabulary to use for all their ideas, which were originally formulated in their L1. In addition, this may lead to more use of direct translation, which is not a good L2 writing strategy.

4.4.1 Personal involvement increases motivation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N = 36 responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree/ Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I did not enjoy writing about my personal feelings.</td>
<td>14% (5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I preferred to write on general rather than personal topics.</td>
<td>33% (12)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 8 shows that the participants enjoyed writing about their personal feelings in general (72%). However, when they were asked to choose between general topics and personal topics for their writing, the majority (42%) stayed neutral.

Interview

All interviewees pointed out that they enjoyed writing about their personal feelings because what they learned from writing about personal feelings can be applied in their daily lives and so, they found their L2 writing learning more useful.
Another explanation is that, as found in Lo & Hyland’s (2007) research, a chance for personal involvement in L2 writing motivates student to write, especially the underachievers who have little confidence in L2 writing.

On the other hand, for the general topics where they had to give arguments from different perspectives, they generally found it difficult to write. One of the reasons was that, they did not have much personal experience in the topic, so they had to start their writing from the very beginning. This was more noticeable from the low-achieving interviewees because all of the interviewees expressed this concern.

Yet with all the positive responses, participants still did not prefer writing personal topics to general topics. It might be because general topics are used in the examination syllabus most of the time, so the practice of writing personal topics does not meet the needs for examination. Another reason can be that the shy and inhibited learners do not want to be forced to write about personal feelings. As told by Eva and Cathy:

“I was not too comfortable with expressing myself, especially when what I have written about my daily life is exposed to readers.”

“Because there’s nearly nothing about myself that I want to write.”

### 4.4.2 Benefits and challenges of writing to the real audience

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N = 36 responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I liked to write for the real audience.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree/ Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>50%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(18)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
As shown in Table 9, regarding writing for a real audience, half of the class liked it and only 6% of them did not. For the remaining class, they showed a neutral response to this issue.

**Interview**

From the interviews, it was observed that the low-achieving interviewees especially liked to write for the real audience. Heidi said that writing for the real audience gave her motivation to work harder on the writing, and Gigi further elaborated on this idea and shared that:

“It encourages us to write better due to the expectation that many people will read our essays on the Internet. Previously, since there were not as many readers, we might slack off.”

As well as motivating them to write better, writing for the real audience also helped the participants be more careful about the content that they were writing before allowing others to read their work, as told by one of the high-achieving interviewees, Bianca.

However, some of the interviewees, particularly the high-achieving one, did not see a great deal of merit in having a real audience as the target reader. Ada said that it made no difference to her because:

“After all what people care about is the final scores of the essays given by the teacher. Rarely would other people carefully look at your work and give you comments.”

And Cathy even said that:

“I would tend to write less since I would be less comfortable writing in this way.”

Although Cathy did not explained in details why she felt less comfortable writing with a real audience, one of the reasons might be because the content of her writing
was too personal, so she did not want to share with others. Lo & Hyland (2007) provided another reason which may explain this finding as it was mirrored the finding in their research study. They suggested that some students, in particular the high-achievers, were threatened when writing to the real audience because they “were particularly concerned about face and felt more pressured and threatened when asked to write for a wider audience due to the increased potential for criticism brought about by writing for a real audience” (p. 229).

4.4.3 Motivated by the real writing purpose

Table 10  Participants’ attitudes towards writing for real purpose (post-intervention)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>N = 36 responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Strongly agree/ Agree</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I liked to write for a real purpose.</td>
<td>61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 10 suggests that the majority (61%) liked to write a real purpose. Only a few participants (9%) did not like it and all the others (31%) remained neutral.

Interview

Similarly to the findings of the previous section which investigated students’ attitude towards writing for the real audience, the low-achieving interviewees liked writing for an authentic purpose the most. This was explained by Gigi, one of the low-achieving interviewees:

“I would put more effort if the materials we write are put onto the Internet for others to browse.”
“It helps because you have a target to accomplish. It’s not like previously where we hand in our homework for the sake of handing in our homework. This encourages more seriousness and hard work.”

Also as found by Lo and Hyland (2007) in their research study, students will be motivated in L2 writing when writing for an authentic purpose, which concerns more about the content than the form, because they feel that they are able to succeed in such a setting.

4.5 Conclusion

To conclude, it was found that the “post-process” writing program enhanced participants’ attitudes and engagement towards L2 writing in general. The positive responses from the participants suggest that the “post-process” writing approach has a motivating effect on them. In particular, the low-achieving participants benefited the most because the writing program built up their confidence as L2 writers. On the other hand the high-achieving participants were pressured to express their personal feelings and write for the real audience, and did not enjoy the writing program as much as the low-achievers.
Chapter 5: Conclusion

In this final chapter, the limitations of this study and the implications for teaching and further research are presented.

5.1 Limitations of study

As this research study is only a small-scale intervention, it has several limitations. First, the writing program was only implemented once for a sequence of four lessons.

Moreover, the sample size was relatively small as it was limited to one class of secondary one female student. The findings hence cannot be generalized to all junior secondary students at all levels in Hong Kong.

This research study only investigated the impact of “post-process” writing approach on students’ attitudes and engagement towards L2 writing. Whether or not this socio-cultural approach to writing can enhance students’ L2 writing skills and the quality of their writing product is not answered by this research.

5.2 Research Implication

Based on my experience from this study and the limitations mentioned above, I would like to offer a few implications for further research.

Further research studies might be conducted over a longer time span. This allows the researcher to collect more observable changes caused by the writing program, thus deeper discussion will be possible.

Regarding the sample size, in order to expand it, it is suggest that similar research can be carried out with students of both gender of various English proficiency, in more secondary classrooms, at more levels and in more schools. Hence the findings can be richer and generalized to the Hong Kong secondary school context.
To provide a more comprehensive picture of the impacts of “post-process” writing approach on junior secondary L2 writing learners, further studies might focus on its impact on other aspects of L2 writing such as accuracy and organization, to find out if this writing approach can enhance the learning of L2 writing as a whole.

5.3 Pedagogic Implication

This study also provided insights into the teaching of L2 writing in Hong Kong junior secondary classrooms, especially classroom whose students are demotivated and less capable in writing. This is because as discussed above, the “post-process” writing program was especially motivating for low-achievers and it enhanced their seriousness in their writing process.

However, a number of students expressed their discomfort when expressing their personal feelings. Therefore when implementing this kind of writing program, teacher might use topics which are less personal, yet students have experienced or background information on them such as “My favorite food at the school tuck-shop”.

In addition, to remove the anxiety caused by writing to the real audience, the audience could be first start with the students’ own class. As students become more comfortable in expressing themselves, the audience could be gradually widened to other classes, the school, then to the public.

In conclusion, this research study shows that the “post-process” writing approach is an effective method to promote Hong Kong junior secondary students’ attitudes and engagement towards L2 writing in general. In particular, the low-achieving students benefited the most from the writing program. Yet, certain aspects of the writing program were identified as requiring modification to accommodate the needs of different students, to further enhance students’ positive attitudes and engagement towards writing in English.
Bibliography


Appendix A  Consent form for school principal
Appendix B  The “post-process” writing program

Lesson 1:  The participants were informed that they were going to write a restaurant review, which would be posted up on the Openrice.com and read by the website visitors. Then a sample restaurant review was given to them, and its structure and features were discussed and analyzed between the participants and the teacher-researcher.

Lesson 2:  The teacher-researcher demonstrated how to brainstorm ideas for the content using mind map. Then the participants were asked to brainstorm ideas using mind map and start drafting the first paragraph individually at home. They handed in their mind map and draft on the next day.

Lesson 3:  The teacher-researcher gave feedback to the participants on their mind map and draft. The participants then revised their handed-in draft and finished writing the draft in class.

Lesson 4:  The participants exchanged their drafts and did peer correction for each other in class. Then they were asked to revise their writing at home individually, post it on the Openrice.com and hand in a printed copy as the final product.
Appendix C  Pre-questionnaire

Questionnaire on English writing

有關英文寫作的問卷

I am doing a research on English writing. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Below are statements about your feelings towards writing in English. Please circle the most suitable number from 1 to 5. (e.g. “1” for strongly agree and “5” for strongly disagree)

我目前正在進行有關英文寫作的研究，請花數分鐘填寫問卷。請圈出最適合形容你的數字，1為極同意，5則為極不同意。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1. I enjoy writing in English.  
我享受用英文寫作。

2. I always have ideas for my English writing.  
用英文寫作時，我經常有靈感。

3. I can always think of the words to use when I am writing in English.  
用英文寫作時，我經常可以運用言詞來表達想法。

4. I can always organize my ideas in my English writing.  
用英文寫作時，我經常可以整理我的意念。

5. I feel very engaged with the ideas when I am writing in English.  
用英文寫作時，我會非常投入。

6. I have a lot of things deep in my heart that I want to write about in English.  
我很多內心的想法，希望用英文表達。
7. I try to write the least that I can in English classes.
    在英文寫作課上，我會盡量寫得愈少愈好。

8. The things that I write about in my English classes are important.
    我認為我在英文寫作課上所寫的是重要的。

9. I think English writing can be used inside and outside classrooms.
    我認為在課堂上或是課堂外，都可以運用英文寫作。

10. I think English writing is important in life.
    我認為英文寫作在我的生活中是重要的。

-- Thank You --

-- 謝謝 --
Appendix D  Post-questionnaire

**Questionnaire on English writing**

有關英文寫作的問卷

I am doing a research on English writing. Please take a few minutes to complete this questionnaire. Below are statements about your feelings towards writing in English. Please circle the most suitable number from 1 to 5. (e.g. “1” for strongly agree and “5” for strongly disagree)

我目前正在進行有關英文寫作的研究，請花數分鐘填寫問卷。請圈出最適合形容你的數字，1為極同意，5則為極不同意。

How do you feel about writing in English when **DOING THE NEW WRITING PROGRAMME**?

在**新的寫作課程**中，我認為......

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly agree</th>
<th></th>
<th>Strongly disagree</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>極同意</td>
<td></td>
<td>極不同意</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1. I enjoyed writing in English more.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>我更享受用英文寫作。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. I had more ideas for my writing.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>我有較多的靈感。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I could think of the words to use when I am writing more often.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>我能更容易想出合適的詞語來表達想法。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I could organize my ideas in writing better.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>我能更容易整理我的意念。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. I felt more engaged with the ideas when I was writing.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>我能更投入在英文寫作之中。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I did not enjoy writing about my personal feelings.</td>
<td>1 2 3 4 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>我不享受表達個人感受。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.</td>
<td>I had a lot of things deep in my heart that I want to write about.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>我希望表达心中很多的想法。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.</td>
<td>I tried to write the least that I could.</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>我會盡量寫得很少，愈少愈好。</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.</td>
<td>I preferred to write on general rather than personal topics.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>相比寫與個人有關的題目，我較喜歡寫非個人的題目。</td>
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<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>I liked the preparatory lesson for my writing.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>我喜歡寫作的前的預備課。</td>
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<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>I liked to share my ideas in groups.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>我喜歡和同學分享我的想法。</td>
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<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>I liked to write for the real audience.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>我喜歡我寫作的對象是真正的讀者。</td>
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<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>I liked to write for a real purpose.</td>
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<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>我喜歡我寫作的目的是真實的。</td>
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<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>I liked to have teacher’s feedback and correct my English writing before submission.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>我喜歡在提交功課之前，老師可以給我回饋和批改我的作品。</td>
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<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>The things that I have written about in the new writing programme were important to me.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>對我來說，我在新寫作課程的寫作是重要的。</td>
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<tr>
<td>16.</td>
<td>I would like to do this new writing</td>
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</tbody>
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programme again.
我希望可以再有這樣的寫作課。

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Id</th>
<th>Statement</th>
<th>1</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>I thought English writing can be used inside and outside classrooms.</td>
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<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>I thought English writing is important in life.</td>
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</table>

我認為在課堂上或是課堂外，都可以運用英文寫作。
我認為英文寫作在我的人生中是重要的。

-- Thank You --
-- 謝謝 --
Appendix E  Follow up interview question prompts

Schedule for interview with students

Warm up questions

1. Do you enjoy writing in general? Why?
2. What differences do you find between writing in English and Chinese?

Specific questions

1. What do you think are the main purposes of learning to write in English?
   Have you changed your view after doing the new writing programme? In what ways?
2. How did you feel about the composition topic used in the new writing programme? Why?
   How did it compare with the previous topics?
   Do you prefer the new topic rather than previous ones? Why?
3. How did you feel about writing about your personal experiences?
   Do you prefer writing general rather than personal topics? Why?
4. In this programme you knew who your audience was. Did that help or hinder you? Why?
   How did you feel when writing for the real audience?
5. In this programme you had a real purpose to write. Did that help or hinder you? Why?
   How did you feel when writing for the real audience?
6. How did you feel about the preparatory lesson?
   Would you like to have this again in your writing classes? Why / Why not?
7. How did you feel about the post-writing lesson?
   Would you like to have this again in your writing classes? Why / Why not?
8. Would you like to use a programme like this again in your writing classes? Why / Why not?
9. Do you have any other comments to share about writing/ writing in English?
10. Do you have any other comments to share about the new writing programme?
Appendix F  Pre-questionnaire results
Appendix G  Post-questionnaire results
Appendix H  Transcription of follow up interview (High-achieving group)

Q1: What do you generally feel about writing (both English and Chinese)? This includes any occasions where you write – at school or at home using email, facebook, xanga etc.? More specifically, do you like writing?
Ada: I prefer blogging. You do not need to care about grammatical accuracy or the need to write in complete sentences.
Bianca: Chinese writing is fine for me. However for English, I always have to look at grammatical issues and whether we have spelled vocabulary right. This might be a little bit troublesome.

Q2: So you usually use Chinese instead of English when writing at home or in diaries?
Bianca: Yes
Cathy: I personally prefer writing in English over Chinese. It is because I find it more difficult to type in Chinese. I also think there are more restrictions on the structures of an essay in Chinese writing.

Q3: So what are the main differences between English and Chinese writing?
Ada: It’s about the grammatical issues. For example, you always have to mind adding or leaving a “s” at the end of a word depending on whether it’s single or plural. You also need to use past tense to describe past events.
Bianca: It’s more about the tenses that troubles me in English writing. Where you may only need to use a word or two to describe the time setting in Chinese writing, you need to use past, present, continuous tenses in English writing. This makes it more difficult.
Cathy: It’s quicker for me to write in English. You need to think a lot about the structures as you write in Chinese. You don’t have such kinds of problems in English.

Q4: What do you think are the main purposes of writing English essays at school?
Ada: It benefits our future. We might need to use English to communicate or process documents.
Bianca: We might need to use it to communicate with foreigners.
Cathy: Hong Kong was a former British colony. Also, English is an international language.

Q5: After the writing program, have your feelings about English writing changed? Specifically, you have to put your writings onto the Internet for others to observe and read.
Ada: Nothing really different.
Bianca: Not really different since nobody can identify the writer (us).
Cathy: I prefer not to put my essays onto the Internet.

Q6: So learning English writing is about working and communicating better with foreigners in the future?
Ada: The need to take care of examination is also a factor.

Q7: For our writing “Restaurant Review”, do you think there are any differences as compared to previous topics like “Hong Kong Pollution”, where you need to cite arguments, for example, the pros and cons of implementing a solution? Which would you prefer writing?
Bianca: I prefer Restaurant Review. I love eating. I can introduce what I like to eat with my friends. I have also learnt a lot of adjectives on food. They are quite useful.
Cathy: [Hong Kong Pollution.] We need to do some research before working on this essay, hence it’s more challenging.
Ada: [Hong Kong Pollution.] It might be a bit challenging because we need to use a lot of vocabularies that we are not familiar with. We might not be able to very accurately describe what we want to deliver.

Q8: For the writing you are asked to write on something that relates to your personal experience. Do you like this kind of topics?
Ada: I like it. Since you have more content to write about as compared to a hypothetical situation.
Bianca: It’s more difficult to write about our own experiences.
Cathy: I agree. Because there’s nearly nothing about myself that I want to write.

Q9: This time you have got an audience in the Openrice.com to read your writing. Does this help?
Bianca: It helps. Readers would get feedback to what you have written. People would point out issues/problems regarding your essay. You could learn in this process.
Ada: Not much difference. After all what people care about is the final scores of the essays given by the teacher. Rarely would other people carefully look at your work and give you comments.
Cathy: Not much differences.

Q10: This assignment is not only handed in to the teacher. Others can also get access and read your work - there is a real objective of putting your essays on Openrice.com. Does this help?
Bianca: I think it helps. Since you would be more careful about what you write before allowing others to read.
Ada: Not much differences. People would immediately know the things you wrote were written by junior students.

Cathy: I would tend to write less since I would be less comfortable writing in this way.

Q11: We had some brainstorming sessions before actually asking you to write on the topic. Do you like to have such kind of sessions going forward?

Ada: Yes. It helps me think. For example, the mind map that you have provided us enable me to think of something previously not in my mind. I also learnt a lot of adjectives in that session.

Bianca: Yes. It helps us write a better essay.

Cathy: I agree.

Q12: We had a session which allowed students to mark/correct other students’ work. Do you like to have this session going forward?

Bianca: Yes. It is because you can learn how others approach the essay. The practice of proofreading also helps in examinations.

Ada: Yes. Different students look at my essay from different perspectives. They together might even be more able to locate issues/problems than a teacher might have missed out.

Cathy: It does not help much. Because every student usually has the same errors. Also, every student follows the same structure.

Q13: Do you mind allowing other students to correct/mark your essays?

Ada: English writing is fine, but not Chinese writing.

Bianca: I don’t mind.

Cathy: I am afraid other students cannot understand what I mean to deliver in my essays.

Q14: We used a combination of a real audience, a real purpose for writing and a topic which you have personal experience in the writing program. Do you prefer this kind of teaching?

Ada: Yes. The previous ones, which we are asked to write on some general topics, are quite boring. Sometimes the content is quite repetitive and even textbooks for primary schools include those contents for our reference.

Bianca: For general topics, the points/arguments that we can bring out are quite limited. This type of writing, however, provides more flexibility.

Cathy: Each type of writing has their pros and cons. They are both fine for me.
Q15: Do you have any other feelings about English writing?

Ada: I prefer writing one or two sentences instead of getting a long essay done, such as a couple lines of poems and lyrics. It is because you can express your feelings in just one or two lines.

Bianca: I like to work on compositions where I am asked to create an ending for a sequence of pictures describing a story as the topic. I think this is more interesting. I am also able to manifest my creativity in this way.

Cathy: I prefer writing on things that we are not required to follow specific formats/structures/contents.
Appendix I  Transcription of follow up interview (Medium-achieving group)

Q1.  Do you like writing in general? Do you prefer writing in English or Chinese?

Denise:  It’s troublesome to write.

Eva:  I like writing. I have also attended other classes on writing during weekends. I have also written letters to my friends and classmates. Nothing really different between Chinese and English though.

Flora:  I like writing in both English and Chinese. I like writing in Chinese slightly more than in English. Yet I believe I write better in English. In English, you can use more than one word to express a meaning, which is not the case in Chinese.

Q2.  Why do you think you need to learn English writing?

Denise:  To learn more about English grammar.

Eva:  You need to constantly use English to communicate during work in the future.

Flora:  English in an international language so you would be able to communicate with people from around the world.

Q3.  After the writing program, have anyone of you changed your perspective towards learning English?

Eva & Denise:  Nothing special.

Flora:  Previous lessons might not be as interesting.

Q4.  What do you think of writing on topics related to your own personal experiences?

Denise:  We get more interested as we can share about the topics in our daily conversation.

Eva:  Nothing really different. It might be easier though to write on such kinds of topics.

Flora:  It would be easier. You would also write about things about related to such topics in your daily life. Practicing these topics would therefore help.

Q5:  Compared to previous topics such as “Hong Kong Pollution” which you might not have previously experienced, which one do you prefer?

Flora & Denise:  Topics on daily experiences.
Eva: General topics such as HK Pollution. I am not too comfortable with expressing myself, especially when what I have written about my daily life is exposed to readers.

Flora: It would be quite difficult for me to write on general topics which I have to come up with argument out of nothing (lack of own experience).

**Q6:** What do you feel about writing something related to your own experiences?

Flora: I can express my feelings. I don’t mind sharing my experiences with others.

Eva: I am quite conservative on this. I might selectively choose a portion of what I have written about myself for others to see/read.

Denise: Nothing special.

**Q7:** For our writing, there is a real audience from the website Openrice.com. Do you think this makes it easier or more difficult for you to finish the writing?

Denise: It would be more difficult. I am afraid of the errors I would make.

Eva: It would be more difficult. I would be embarrassed if people find out the errors I have committed in my assignment.

Flora: Nothing really special.

**Q8:** What do you feel about having a target audience for your assignment?

Eva: I would be more conservative about the content.

Flora &

Denise: Nothing really special.

**Q9:** Do you think it helps to put your writing up onto Openrice.com, in contrast to simply handing your work to the teacher?

Flora: If comments are not given by the readers of Openrice.com, it would be worse off than just giving the assignments to the teacher.

Eva &

Denise: Same.

**Q10:** There were brainstorm sessions before writing. Do you prefer having such kind of sessions going forward?

Denise: Yes. It would be easier for us to think through the topic. We can also think together as a group.

Eva: There would be more ideas flowing.
Denise: It would be more interesting. I like tools such as the Mind map.

Q11: Students were asked to correct fellow classmates’ writings. Do you prefer having such kind of sessions going forward?

Denise: Yes. Because we can extract some ideas from others’ work.

Eva: No. Others might misunderstand your meaning and would also wrongly mark your essays.

Flora: Yes I like to read others’ essays. I also don’t mind having my essays read by others.

Q12: In the writing program, we have a real audience, a real purpose for writing and a topic which you have personal experience in. Do you prefer having this combination going forward?

Denise: Yes. It’s more interesting.

Eva: Yes.

Flora: Yes.
Appendix J  Transcription of follow up interview (Low-achieving group)

Q1:  Do you like writing, no matter if it's in English or Chinese?
Gigi:  I would like to write in Chinese. In this way I can better express my feelings – which makes myself happy.
Heidi:  It's easier to write in Chinese.
Gigi:  Moreover, without a language barrier, I can writer whatever comes into my mind.
Q:  So am I right that both of you like writing, and prefer Chinese over English?
Heidi &
Gigi:  Right.

Q2:  What are the main differences between writing in English and Chinese?
Gigi:  It's easier to write in Chinese. I can write whatever that comes to my mind. It's like putting pen to paper our daily conversations. In contrast, I need to think twice before putting down a word in English. I need to make sure whether what I am going to write is grammatically correct before I actually write it.
Heidi:  Sometimes when you read through what you’ve just written in English, you couldn’t even understand it yourself.
Q:  Okay so these are the main differences?
Heidi &
Gigi:  Right.

Q3:  Why do you think we need to learn to write in English?
Gigi:  To communicate with foreigners.
Heidi:  To help with job-seeking/working in the future.

Q4:  After the writing program, does anyone of you hold a different view towards the subject matter?
Heidi:  Better. Putting the materials onto the Internet makes it more interesting, in contrast to handing in our hand-written homework which sounds a bit old-fashioned. Moreover, we surf the Internet very frequently so it might be a good way to put our learning materials onto the Internet.
Gigi:  I would put more effort if the materials we write are put onto the Internet for others to browse. I would also tend to write true stories.
Q5: What do you think about our writing topic (Restaurant Review), which you were given the chance to write something that you’ve personally experienced?

Heidi: I like the topic because I love eating. In addition, I am better encouraged to write since this topic involves more of our daily-life experiences.

Q6: Compared to the previous topics you’ve written on, including “Hong Kong Pollution” where you have to point out a lot of arguments in your essay, which topics do you like more?

Gigi: [Restaurant review.] It sounds more difficult to write on those topics. You can’t write something that comes straight out of your mind. They are not down-to-earth and are more of our own imaginations.

Heidi: [Restaurant review.] Agreed. It’s more interesting. Also you can more casually write what you like. You can also add more of your own feelings/own descriptions.

Q: So both of you prefer this topic over the previous ones?

Heidi & Gigi: Right.

Q7: What do you feel writing on these kinds of topics?

Gigi: You don’t need to purposefully think about what you write. It’s more about your own feelings. There are also more ideas coming out of my mind, since these are what that are included in our daily conversations at school.

Q8: Which kind of topic between the two, one relating to self-experience and the other relating to more general phenomena (such as Pollution in HK), would you prefer?

Heidi: Topics that are related to self-experience. For general topics, it’s difficult for us to deliver a good essay, especially on the arguments and points that we have to include in our essays.

Gigi: Self-experience. For general topics, you have to think about the issue in a number of perspectives in order to make a good essay. Topics such as “Green Power” etc. forces us to brainstorm a number of ways to suit the situation which we are actually unfamiliar with.

Q9: For this writing which you would have your own readers, do you think it’s more or less difficult for you to complete an essay as compared to previous writings?

Heidi: It helps. It gives you motivation to work hard on it. People on the forum would also give you feedback.

Gigi: It encourages us to write better due to the expectation that many people will read our essays on the Internet. Previously, since there were not as many readers, we might slack off.
Q10: This time our writing has an “objective”: putting your assignments on Openrice.com. Do you think this kind of objective-oriented assignments would help you write better?

Heidi: It helps.

Gigi: It helps because you have a target to accomplish. It’s not like previously where we hand in our homework for the sake of handing in our homework. This encourages more seriousness and hard work.

Q11: For this writing, we had a brainstorming session before students actually start writing their essays. Do you like the idea of having a brainstorming session?

Heidi: It helps. If there was not a brainstorming session, it would be quite difficult for us to know what to write, what to include in different paragraphs etc.

Gigi: Brainstorming sessions definitely help because it gives you directions at the start. Things get much more easier after you know how to start.

Q12: There was a session where you we distributed students’ assignments and asked the class to check for errors and grammatical mistakes. Do you like the idea?

Gigi: Yes. You would learn something from looking at other students’ essays. Sometimes you can get some ideas from them.

Heidi: It might be a bit confusing – since I do not know whether the corrections that I have made for other students’ assignments are right or wrong.

Q: But would you mind your work is being corrected/marked by someone else in class?

Heidi &

Gigi: Not really.

Gigi: Sometimes it’s even less embarrassing when students mark/correct their own work among themselves, compared to the typical situations where the teacher would show a particular student’s work to the whole class, showing whatever errors (or decent points) that this student has made in the essay. This is not welcomed by us students.

Q13: The past few lessons, as mentioned, were conducted with an objective, a reader audience etc. Do you like having such kind of lessons going forward?

Gigi: It’s more funny. It’s less boring. It encourages you to work more seriously.

Heidi: It’s more enjoyable - these kinds of assignments are usually targeted to upper secondary students or university students. Such a new style of learning interests us.

Q14: What other topics/issues about English writing would you like to bring in/discuss?

Gigi: I think there should be less limitations on the writing topics. For example, we are given several pictures and asked to describe what’s happening and also give an ending to the story. This limits what we can write and the final product would be less interesting. For Chinese
writing, there are less of these kinds of limitations. It would be better if we are not told to write something in a particular format etc.

Q: But do you think this kind of topics would provide you with limited directions?

Gigi: You can also write a relatively plain story even if you lack directions in the first hand.

Heidi: We like to think. This suits us more.