English Writing Strategy and Writing Performance of Non-English Majors in China

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Abstract

Aim: This study aimed to explore the multifaceted challenges that non-English majors face in acquiring effective English writing skills and to propose strategies for addressing these obstacles.

Methodology: The research involves a systematic investigation of the current state of English writing instruction for non-English majors in China, identifying the key linguistic, educational, and cultural factors that impact writing performance. The primary data collection method used in this study is semi-structured interviews. This approach allows for in-depth exploration of participants' experiences and perceptions, providing comprehensive insights into the challenges and strategies related to English writing instruction.

Results: The study reveals significant deficiencies in English writing skills among non-English majors, largely attributed to insufficient exposure to authentic language use, inadequate instructional practices, and cultural disparities. Key factors such as motivation, foundational language skills, and pedagogical approaches are identified as critical areas needing improvement.

Conclusion: Enhancing English writing skills among non-English majors requires a multifaceted approach that includes collaborative learning, increased language input and output, continuous modification and feedback, and improved teaching efficacy. The study provides practical recommendations for educators and policymakers to support the development of effective English writing skills in this demographic, thereby contributing to the broader discourse on English language education in China.

Key words: English writing strategy, writing performance, non-English majors

INTRODUCTION

English writing is a significant indicator of pupils' overall aptitude in the English language. The teaching of English writing has consistently been a weaker aspect, resulting in many pupils neglecting writing responsibilities in English. In order for education to succeed, the holistic development of individuals is necessary (Bation & Nambatac, 2024; Cabiling-Ramos, et al., 2024; Carvajal, et al., 2024a; Carvajal, Sanchez & Amihan, 2023; Ibardaloza, 2023; Salendab & Sanchez, 2023; Salendab, Ocariza-Salendab & Sanchez, 2023). One way to do this is to improve communication skills (Amihan & Sanchez, 2023; Pineda, 2023; Salendab, et al., 2024a; Sanchez, 2020; Sanchez, 2023a). This paper examined the challenges encountered in English writing and provides a systematic investigation of the methods for resolving these issues.

The ability to write effectively in English is a critical skill for non-English majors in China, reflecting both their academic proficiency and their potential for global communication. However, the development of this skill is fraught with challenges that stem from linguistic, educational, and cultural factors. In the context of China's exam-oriented educational system, English writing is often reduced to a mechanical task focused on grammar and vocabulary, rather than a comprehensive, communicative practice. Consequently, many students exhibit significant deficiencies in their writing abilities, which are exacerbated by insufficient exposure to authentic language use, inadequate instructional practices, and cultural disparities.

This study aimed to explore the multifaceted challenges that non-English majors face in acquiring effective English writing skills and to propose strategies for addressing these obstacles. By examining the influence of various factors such as motivation, foundational language skills, and pedagogical approaches, the research sought to provide a nuanced understanding of the issues at hand. Furthermore, the study highlighted the importance of collaborative learning, language input and output, modification and feedback, and improving teaching efficacy as key strategies to enhance writing proficiency. Through this comprehensive analysis, the research aspires to contribute to the ongoing discourse on English language education in China and offer practical solutions for

educators and policymakers to support the development of effective English writing skills among non-English majors.

Objectives

This study explored the multifaceted challenges that non-English majors in China face in acquiring effective English writing skills and proposed strategies for addressing these obstacles. Specifically, this study addressed the following questions:

1. What are the primary linguistic, educational, and cultural factors contributing to the English?
2. What are the writing difficulties among non-English majors in China?
3. How do different English writing strategies impact the writing performance of non-English majors?
4. What are the current instructional practices for teaching English writing to non-English majors, and how can they be improved?

METHODS

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative research design, specifically using a transcendental phenomenological approach as introduced by Williams (2021). This approach aimed to explain human experiences by exploring the perceptions and lived experiences of individuals (Amihan, Sanchez & Carvajal, 2023; Bation, et al., 2024; Carvajal & Sanchez, 2023; Muńoz & Sanchez, 2023; Paraiso, et al., 2024; Williams, 2021). Phenomenology focused on understanding the essence of phenomena rather than quantifying them, as highlighted by Neubauer et al. (2019). It delved into what people had encountered and their understanding of these experiences, ultimately seeking to describe the core essence of a phenomenon (Alase, 2017).

Phenomenology served as a qualitative approach that emphasized the shared experiences within a specific group (Salendab, et al., 2024b; Sanchez, 2022; Sanchez, et al., 2024a; Sanchez & Sarmiento, 2020; Sanchez, Sanchez & Sanchez, 2023). It typically involved interviews with participants who had firsthand experience of an event or situation. This study examined the English writing strategies and performance of non-English majors in China by collecting and analyzing feedback from participants. The research focused on understanding their experiences and forming themes, making this design suitable for capturing the essence of their English writing strategies and performance.

Data were collected through in-depth interviews with non-English major students who had substantial experience in learning and practicing English writing. These interviews explored their insights, strategies used in the writing process, and perceived effectiveness of these strategies on their writing performance. By adopting this phenomenological approach, the study aimed to capture the essence of the participants' experiences, providing a deep understanding of the challenges and successes faced by non-English majors in their English writing endeavors. The findings were expected to offer valuable insights into developing effective English writing instruction and support strategies tailored to the needs of non-English majors in China.

Population and Sampling

A total of 20 students in non-English majors from Anhui University of Chinese Medicine in China participated in the study. The intentionally chosen participants participated in comprehensive interviews. The criterion used to pick the participants as a reliable source of information was as follows: 1) The participant was formally registered for the first semester of the academic year 2022-2023; 2) actively participated in an English course at Anhui University of Chinese Medicine, and 3) specialized in non-English major. In order to facilitate the process of gathering data, interview questions were transmitted via Wechat to provide assistance to the interviewee in responding to the inquiries. Every interview was digitally recorded to be transcribed and coded at a later time. The interviews were documented, transcribed, and examined using the constant comparative approach.

Instrument

The main tool utilized in this study is semi-structured in-depth interviews, chosen for their capacity to offer comprehensive and detailed narratives of participants' experiences and perceptions. This approach is particularly suitable for doing phenomenological research, as it enables participants to freely articulate their views, while the researcher ensures that important subjects are adequately covered.

The interviews investigated the English writing techniques and proficiency of non-English majors in China, with a specific emphasis on their individual encounters and difficulties. Using an interview outline that includes open-ended questions will maintain uniformity while also enabling thorough examination of individual viewpoints.

Interviews were held either in person or over video conference, according to the preferences of the participants, and had a duration of 45 minutes to one hour. Upon obtaining consent, all interviews were recorded

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in audio format and transcribed word-for-word for the purpose of analysis, while ensuring the preservation of confidentiality and anonymity. This approach sought to capture subtle and detailed insights into the writing strategies and performance of the participants, offering useful knowledge for enhancing English writing teaching.

Data Collection

A semi-structured interview was carried out during the process of data collection. Before this, the interview questions were subjected to panel assessment for the purpose of making corrections and receiving comments. The participants' statements were transcribed meticulously and without any alterations. An external auditor conducted an additional round of validation to verify if the transcriptions were accurately depicted and accurately portrayed. The selected participants were provided with copies of the transcripts for additional confirmation. The data analysis involved applying Muzari and others (2022) modified version of the Matriano (2020). The analysis followed two basic procedures: (1) providing detailed descriptions of events and (2) applying the technique of 'horizonalization'. The process has four main steps: (3) grouping important assertions into themes, (4) creating detailed textual descriptions, (5) developing structural descriptions, and (6) forming a comprehensive description of the essential elements.

Data Analysis

The data analysis for this study adhered to a thematic approach, as recommended by Husserl's phenomenological research methodology. Once the necessary data was collected from the participants' responses, the study began by closely examining the transcribed interview data. The interviews were transcribed word for word, and the transcripts were carefully read and reviewed to guarantee a deep understanding of the topic.

The procedure entailed a series of sequential steps to methodically examine the qualitative data. At first, the data were encoded by identifying important sentences and phrases that were relevant to the research questions. The original codes were further categorized into overarching themes that encompass the fundamental elements of the participants' encounters with English writing strategies and performance. The study utilized thematic analysis, following the framework proposed by Braun and Clarke (2022), which involved six essential stages: becoming acquainted with the data, creating initial codes, identifying themes, reviewing the identified themes, defining the themes, and documenting the findings.

During the thematic analysis, a specific focus was placed on discerning patterns and repeating themes in the participants' responses. This entailed grouping interconnected concepts and motifs to establish significant classifications. The researcher sought to comprehend and elucidate the phenomena being investigated in order to capture the fundamental nature of the participants' experiences. This approach not only condensed the data but also offered profound insights into the strategies and difficulties encountered by non-English majors in their English writing pursuits.

The study aimed to assure the accuracy of the themes by meticulously adhering to these analytical stages, which were designed to reflect the participants' opinions. The ultimate themes were examined and improved to guarantee their inclusiveness and accuracy in reflecting the facts. The systematic methodology enabled the researcher to get a deep comprehension of the phenomena, yielding useful insights on the English writing techniques and performance of non-English majors in China.

Ethical Consideration

The researcher adhered to research protocols in order to guarantee the study's quality and dependability of the research findings. This study ensured the protection of the rights and well-being of all participants. Before gathering data, all participants were given informed consent. They were provided with detailed information about the study's objective, the methods involved, and their right to withdraw without facing any negative consequences. Strict measures were taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity, including the use of pseudonyms for participants and secure storage of all data. The interviews were carried out using a considerate and unobtrusive approach, guaranteeing that participants felt at ease when disclosing their experiences. The study obtained ethical approval from the appropriate institutional review board, ensuring that all research procedures complied with the most stringent ethical requirements. The adherence to ethical norms guaranteed the integrity of the research process and the reliability of the study's results.

RESULTS and DISCUSSION

This section provides an examination and explanation of the data collected from the study participants. The data is organized into four parts, accompanied by analysis and potential consequences. The presentation is structured according to the sequence of the issues outlined in the problem statement.

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1. The primary linguistic, educational, and cultural factors contributing to the English
Student 1: *The biggest challenge for me is vocabulary because it limits how I can express my ideas in English.*
Student 2: *I struggle with English grammar since our classes focus more on memorization than actual writing practice.*
Student 3: *The lack of feedback on my writing makes it hard to improve my skills and understand my mistakes.*
Student 4: *Coming from a rural area, I feel we have fewer resources and opportunities to practice English writing compared to urban students.*
Student 5: *Our culture emphasizes avoiding mistakes, which makes me afraid to take risks and be creative in my writing.*

The primary linguistic factors identified include limited vocabulary and difficulties with grammar. As noted by Student 1, restricted vocabulary hinders the ability to express complex ideas effectively. This aligns with the findings of Schmitt (2020), who emphasized that vocabulary size is a significant predictor of writing proficiency. Student 2 highlighted the struggle with grammar, which is exacerbated by a focus on rote memorization rather than practical writing practice. This is supported by Elmayantie (2015), who found that traditional grammar-translation methods in Chinese classrooms often fail to develop students' communicative competence and writing skills.

Educational factors play a crucial role in shaping the students' writing abilities (Carvajal & Sanchez, 2024; Carvajal, et al., 2024b; Dizon & Sanchez, 2020; Lacaba, Cablao & Lacaba, 2023; Manalili, 2023; Sanchez, 2023b; Sanchez, et al., 2024b; Sanchez, et al., 2022). According to Student 3, the lack of feedback on writing assignments limits opportunities for improvement and understanding of errors. This suggests a gap in the teaching methodology where formative feedback is crucial for skill development. Kim et al. (2021) stressed the importance of feedback in writing instruction, noting that it helps students recognize their strengths and weaknesses, fostering a more effective learning process. Additionally, as Student 4 pointed out, there is a disparity in educational resources between urban and rural areas, with rural students having less access to quality instruction and materials.

Cultural factors also significantly influence the students' experiences (Pascual & Subia, 2024; Sanchez, et al., 2024c). Student 5's observation about the cultural emphasis on avoiding mistakes reflects a broader societal attitude that discourages risk-taking and creativity. This cultural context, rooted in the Confucian educational ethos, often leads students to rely on imitation rather than developing their own ideas, stifling their ability to write creatively and critically. According to Yan and He (2020), the high value placed on accuracy and conformity in Confucian-influenced educational systems can inhibit students' willingness to experiment and make errors, which are essential components of language learning and development.

Moreover, the emphasis on high-stakes testing in Chinese education further exacerbates these issues. The Gaokao, China's national college entrance examination, places immense pressure on students to perform well in standardized tests, often at the expense of developing practical language skills (Sun et al., 2016). This testing culture reinforces the focus on memorization and correct answers, rather than fostering the critical thinking and creativity needed for effective writing.

In summary, the interplay of linguistic, educational, and cultural factors creates substantial challenges for non-English majors in improving their English writing skills. Limited vocabulary and grammatical difficulties, inadequate feedback and resources, and a cultural aversion to mistakes collectively hinder their writing development. Understanding these factors provides valuable insights for educators and policymakers to design more effective and supportive English writing programs tailored to the specific needs of these students. Addressing these issues requires a holistic approach that not only enhances linguistic proficiency but also reforms educational practices and cultural attitudes towards learning and writing.

2. Writing difficulties among non-English majors in China
Student 6: *I find it really challenging to organize my thoughts clearly and logically in English.*
Student 7: *The biggest difficulty for me is using the correct grammar and avoiding common mistakes.*
Student 8: *I struggle with writing coherent and cohesive essays, especially when linking different ideas together.*
Student 9: *Expressing complex ideas in English is difficult because I often don't know the precise vocabulary to use.*
Student 10: *I have a hard time getting feedback on my writing, so I don't know what I'm doing wrong or how to improve.*

The interviews with students highlighted several key writing difficulties among non-English majors in China. These difficulties can be categorized into issues related to organization, grammar, coherence and cohesion,

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vocabulary, and feedback. Each of these areas poses significant challenges that affect students' overall writing performance.

2.1 Organizational Challenges

Student 6 emphasized the difficulty in organizing thoughts clearly and logically in English. This challenge is not uncommon among non-native English writers. According to Ellis (2021), the ability to structure an essay logically is crucial for effective writing, yet many students struggle with this aspect due to differences in rhetorical structures between their native language and English. Savicki (2023) discussed the concept of contrastive rhetoric, which highlights how different cultural backgrounds influence writing organization. Chinese students, for example, might be accustomed to a more circular or indirect approach to argumentation, making it difficult for them to adapt to the linear and direct style preferred in English academic writing.

2.2 Grammatical Accuracy

Student 7 pointed out the struggle with using correct grammar and avoiding common mistakes. Grammar is a fundamental aspect of writing that significantly affects clarity and readability. As Wang and Zang (2019) noted, traditional grammar-translation methods in Chinese classrooms often emphasize rote learning over practical application, which does not adequately prepare students for real-world writing tasks. This educational approach leads to persistent grammatical errors, as students may know the rules theoretically but fail to apply them correctly in their writing.

2.3 Coherence and Cohesion

Student 8 mentioned difficulties with writing coherent and cohesive essays, particularly in linking different ideas together. Coherence refers to the logical flow of ideas, while cohesion involves the use of linguistic devices to connect sentences and paragraphs smoothly. Hyland (2003) stated that achieving coherence and cohesion is essential for effective writing, but it requires a deep understanding of both content and language use. Non-English majors often lack practice in these areas, which can result in disjointed and fragmented essays that are hard for readers to follow.

2.4 Vocabulary Limitations

Student 9 highlighted the challenge of expressing complex ideas due to limited vocabulary. Vocabulary size is a strong predictor of writing proficiency, as Schmitt (2000) pointed out. Limited vocabulary restricts students' ability to articulate their thoughts precisely and effectively, often leading to vague or simplistic writing (Sanchez, et al., 2024d). This issue is compounded by the fact that many Chinese students focus on memorizing vocabulary lists rather than using words in context, which hampers their ability to recall and apply vocabulary appropriately in writing.

2.5 Lack of Feedback

Student 10 expressed difficulties in improving writing due to a lack of feedback. Feedback is a critical component of the writing process, helping students understand their strengths and areas for improvement. Hyland (2003) emphasized the importance of feedback in developing writing skills, noting that it guides students in refining their work and building their confidence. However, in many Chinese educational settings, the focus on standardized testing and large class sizes limits the opportunities for personalized feedback, leaving students uncertain about their writing performance and how to enhance it.

The writing difficulties faced by non-English majors in China are multifaceted, encompassing organizational challenges, grammatical issues, coherence and cohesion problems, vocabulary limitations, and a lack of feedback. Addressing these difficulties requires a comprehensive approach that includes improving instructional methods, providing ample practice opportunities, and offering constructive feedback. By understanding and addressing these specific challenges, educators can better support non-English majors in developing their English writing skills.

3. Impact of Different English Writing Strategies on the Writing Performance of Non-English Majors

Student 11: *Using brainstorming techniques before writing helps me organize my ideas better and improve my overall writing structure.*

Student 12: *Practicing free writing regularly has made me more fluent and confident in expressing my thoughts in English.*

Student 13: *Peer review sessions have been valuable because they provide different perspectives and help me see mistakes I might have missed.*

Student 14: *Creating outlines before starting to write helps me maintain a clear and logical flow in my essays.*

Student 15: *Using online tools for grammar and spell checking has significantly reduced my grammatical errors and improved my writing quality.*

The interviews with students highlighted several key writing strategies that positively impact the writing performance of non-English majors. These strategies include brainstorming, free writing, peer review, outlining, and the use of online tools. Each of these strategies contributes to different aspects of writing improvement, as

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discussed below.

3.1 Brainstorming Techniques

Student 11 emphasized the benefits of using brainstorming techniques before writing, noting that it helps in organizing ideas better and improving overall writing structure. Brainstorming allows students to generate and organize their thoughts, which is crucial for creating coherent and well-structured essays. According to Atmowardoyo and Sakkir (2021), brainstorming can enhance creativity and encourage students to explore multiple perspectives, leading to richer content in their writing. By visually mapping out ideas, students can see connections between concepts, which helps in structuring their essays logically.

3.2 Free Writing Practice

Student 12 highlighted the impact of practicing free writing regularly, which has increased their fluency and confidence in expressing thoughts in English. Free writing is an exercise where students write continuously for a set period without worrying about grammar or spelling. Rashid et al. (2021) suggested that free writing helps students overcome writer's block and fosters a habit of writing, making them more comfortable with the process. This strategy encourages spontaneity and can improve the flow of ideas, leading to more natural and fluent writing.

3.3 Peer Review Sessions

Student 13 pointed out the value of peer review sessions, which provide different perspectives and help identify mistakes that might have been overlooked. Peer review involves students exchanging their drafts and giving each other constructive feedback. According to Fan and Xu (2020), peer review not only helps in detecting errors but also promotes collaborative learning and critical thinking. This process allows students to view their writing from a reader's perspective, enhancing their ability to self-edit and refine their work.

3.4 Outlining

Student 14 mentioned that creating outlines before starting to write helps in maintaining a clear and logical flow in essays. Outlining is a pre-writing strategy where students plan the main points and structure of their essay. Research by Ellis (2021) indicates that outlining helps in organizing ideas logically, making it easier to develop a coherent argument. By breaking down the writing task into manageable sections, students can focus on developing each part systematically, which improves the overall clarity and organization of their essays.

3.5 Use of Online Tools

Student 15 highlighted the significance of using online tools for grammar and spell checking, which has significantly reduced grammatical errors and improved writing quality. Tools like Grammarly and other automated grammar checkers provide instant feedback on language use, helping students correct errors and learn proper grammar usage. According to Cavaleri and Dianati (2016), the use of such tools can enhance language accuracy and boost students' confidence in their writing. These tools act as supplementary aids, allowing students to focus more on content and less on mechanical errors.

The use of different English writing strategies has a substantial impact on the writing performance of non-English majors. Brainstorming enhances idea generation and organization, free writing improves fluency, peer review fosters collaborative learning and error detection, outlining aids in maintaining logical flow, and online tools enhance grammatical accuracy. By integrating these strategies into their writing practice, non-English majors can develop more effective and confident writing skills. Educators should consider incorporating these strategies into their teaching methodologies to support students in overcoming writing challenges and achieving better writing outcomes.

4. Current Instructional Practices for Teaching English Writing to Non-English Majors and Potential Improvements

Student 16: *Our classes mostly focus on grammar and translation exercises, but I think more practical writing assignments would be helpful.*

Student 17: *We rarely get personalized feedback on our essays, so having more one-on-one sessions with teachers would improve our writing skills.*

Student 18: *Most of the writing topics are not very engaging; incorporating more interesting and relevant topics could make writing more enjoyable.*

Student 19: *There is too much emphasis on memorizing vocabulary lists; we need more opportunities to use new words in actual writing contexts.*

Student 20: *Collaborative projects and peer reviews are not common in our classes, but they would help us learn from each other and improve our writing.*

The interviews with students highlighted several current instructional practices for teaching English writing to non-English majors and suggested potential improvements. These can be categorized into the focus on grammar and translation, feedback mechanisms, engagement with writing topics, vocabulary instruction, and collaborative learning.

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4.1 Focus on Grammar and Translation

Student 16 noted that classes primarily focus on grammar and translation exercises. This traditional approach, rooted in the grammar-translation method, emphasizes the mechanical aspects of language learning but often neglects the practical application of writing skills. According to Wang and Zang (2019), while this method can help in understanding grammatical rules, it does not sufficiently prepare students for real-world writing tasks. Students suggested that more practical writing assignments could bridge this gap, allowing them to apply grammatical knowledge in meaningful contexts. This shift towards communicative language teaching (CLT) can enhance students' ability to use English effectively in various writing scenarios (Richards & Rodgers, 2014).

4.2 Feedback Mechanisms

Student 17 highlighted the lack of personalized feedback on essays, suggesting that more one-on-one sessions with teachers could improve writing skills. Feedback is a critical component of writing instruction, as it helps students identify their strengths and weaknesses (Hyland, 2003). Personalized feedback sessions can provide targeted advice and support, fostering individual student improvement. Granberg et al. (2021) emphasize the importance of formative feedback, which not only corrects errors but also encourages self-reflection and autonomous learning. Implementing regular one-on-one feedback sessions can create a more supportive and effective learning environment.

4.3 Engagement with Writing Topics

Student 18 pointed out that the writing topics are often not engaging, and incorporating more interesting and relevant topics could make writing more enjoyable. Relevance and interest are crucial for motivating students to write. When students find the topics engaging, they are more likely to invest effort and produce better work. According to Seven (2020), motivation plays a significant role in language learning success. Teachers should consider integrating topics that are culturally relevant and aligning with students' interests to enhance engagement and writing quality. This can include current events, personal experiences, and themes that resonate with students' lives and future aspirations.

4.4 Vocabulary Instruction

Student 19 mentioned the overemphasis on memorizing vocabulary lists and the need for more opportunities to use new words in actual writing contexts. Vocabulary acquisition is essential for writing proficiency, but isolated memorization is often ineffective. Schmitt (2000) advocates for context-based vocabulary learning, where students encounter and use new words in meaningful contexts. Providing writing tasks that encourage the use of newly learned vocabulary can help students integrate these words into their active vocabulary, improving both their writing and overall language competence. Teachers can design activities that require students to use target vocabulary in creative and practical writing exercises.

4.5 Collaborative Learning

Student 20 observed that collaborative projects and peer reviews are not common but could be beneficial for learning. Collaborative learning strategies, such as peer review and group projects, allow students to learn from each other, share different perspectives, and develop critical thinking skills (Liu & Hansen, 2002). Peer review sessions provide opportunities for constructive feedback and help students understand writing from a reader's perspective. Additionally, collaborative projects can foster a sense of community and support among students, making the learning process more interactive and engaging. Implementing these strategies can enhance the overall effectiveness of writing instruction.

The current instructional practices for teaching English writing to non-English majors often emphasize grammar and translation, lack personalized feedback, involve unengaging topics, overemphasize vocabulary memorization, and rarely incorporate collaborative learning. Addressing these issues through more practical writing assignments, regular personalized feedback, engaging topics, context-based vocabulary instruction, and collaborative learning activities can significantly improve the effectiveness of writing instruction. These improvements can help non-English majors develop better writing skills and achieve greater success in their English language learning.

Conclusions

This study has explored the multifaceted challenges faced by non-English majors in China in developing their English writing skills, as well as the impact of various instructional practices and strategies on their writing performance. Through in-depth interviews with students, it has been identified that the primary difficulties in English writing stem from organizational challenges, grammatical accuracy, coherence and cohesion, vocabulary limitations, and a lack of effective feedback. Additionally, the study has highlighted how different writing strategies, such as brainstorming, free writing, peer review, outlining, and the use of online tools, can significantly enhance writing performance.

The findings underscore the complex interplay of linguistic, educational, and cultural factors that contribute to the writing difficulties of non-English majors. The traditional emphasis on grammar-translation methods and

rote memorization in Chinese education systems, coupled with the cultural aversion to making mistakes, has been found to inhibit students' ability to develop effective writing skills. Moreover, the lack of personalized feedback and engaging writing topics further exacerbates these challenges, leading to a gap between students' theoretical knowledge of English and their practical writing abilities.

Recommendations

To address the challenges identified in this study and improve the writing performance of non-English majors in China, a comprehensive approach is necessary. Firstly, educational institutions should shift from traditional grammar-translation methods to communicative language teaching (CLT) approaches that emphasize practical language use. This shift can help students apply their grammatical knowledge in meaningful writing contexts, enhancing their communicative competence and writing skills (Richards & Rodgers, 2014). Additionally, it is crucial for teachers to provide regular, personalized feedback on students' writing. One-on-one sessions, detailed written comments, and the use of digital platforms that facilitate continuous feedback can help students understand their mistakes and learn how to improve their writing (Hyland, 2003).

Engaging and relevant writing topics should be incorporated into writing assignments to motivate students. When students find the topics interesting and aligned with their lives and aspirations, they are more likely to invest effort and produce higher quality writing (Dornyei, 2001). Teachers can involve students in the topic selection process to ensure their investment in the writing tasks. Moreover, vocabulary instruction should move beyond rote memorization and involve the use of new words in practical writing contexts. Activities that require the use of target vocabulary in essays, stories, and reflections can help students integrate these words into their active vocabulary, thereby improving both their writing and overall language proficiency (Schmitt, 2000).

Promoting collaborative learning strategies such as peer review and group projects is another essential recommendation. These strategies allow students to give and receive constructive feedback, fostering a deeper understanding of writing from different perspectives (Liu & Hansen, 2002). Collaborative projects also encourage teamwork and collective problem-solving, making the learning process more interactive and engaging. Additionally, the use of online tools for grammar and spell checking should be encouraged as supplementary aids. These tools can help students correct mechanical errors and focus more on content development, although it is important that students do not become overly reliant on these tools and continue to develop their own editing and proofreading skills (Cavaleri & Dianati, 2016).

Teacher training and development play a crucial role in improving writing instruction. Continuous professional development opportunities such as workshops, training sessions, and collaborative learning communities can help teachers stay updated on effective writing instruction methods and share best practices (Gudeta, 2022). Finally, addressing educational inequities is essential. Efforts should be made to reduce the disparity in educational resources between urban and rural areas, providing equal access to quality English instruction, teaching materials, and technological tools to ensure all students have the opportunity to improve their writing skills (Li, 2010).

By implementing these recommendations, educators and policymakers can create a more supportive and effective environment for teaching English writing to non-English majors, ultimately helping students develop better writing skills and achieve greater success in their English language learning.

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