

# Research on Teaching College English Writing Based on Length Approach Learning Strategy

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**Abstract.** The aim of this research is to see whether Long Approach can improve non English majors' writing proficiency. The effect of the Length Approach, a method, encourages students to write as long as possible and on the effect of Strategies Based Instruction on language learning. The findings of the research shows that writing as a form of output can really improve accuracy as well as fluency. From the findings, we can see that writing long compositions provides students more opportunities to try to output new language forms and structures as L2 learners stretch their language to meet communicative needs. What's more, the findings suggests that with SBI used as an auxiliary part of the teaching method, the Length Approach, can actually improve the students' writing ability and English proficiency, and enhance the students' interests in writing as well.

## Introduction

College English textbooks indicate that writing is one part of intensive reading, or more accurately, subordinate to vocabulary practice and grammar drill. Many students report it is difficult to write compositions. [1]Students always complain that the Chinese English classroom is teacher-centered and they have few chances to speak English in a Chinese English class. They always complain that they do not know how to write and what to write. [2] They make many mistakes in their compositions, or they just cannot express themselves properly. Many students lack confidence in their writing and they are not sure whether they can make any progress even though they do some writing exercises. [3] Some of them even are frustrated to give up writing. Fang Lingling & Zhou Rong (2004), Fang Li (2005), researches Chu Hongxia (2009), etc, have proved that Length Approach can also benefit for non English majors' writing proficiency. [4]Based on the above analysis, it can be found that the researcher want to help improving non English majors' English proficiency by Writing. [5] In fact, English teaching to non English majors should be focused on cultivating the competence to acquire and apply knowledge. we can find that researches to non English majors are not only rare in number, but also lack of experimental researches to verify the effect in English writing and to find students, mental and psychological changes after the training of Length Approach.

## Methodology

### A. Research Questions

- a. Can the Length Approach help the students with the writing apprehension?
- b. Are there some correlations between SBI (Strategies Based Instruction) & LA (Length Approach), SBI & Writing Ability, SBI & Holistic English Proficiency, LA & Writing Ability, LA & Holistic English Proficiency?

### B. Participants

Students, the subjects of this experiment belong to two classes at Jiangnan University: 40 students in one class and 40 in the other. There were altogether 80 freshmen participating in the whole experiment.

### C. Questionnaire

The questionnaire was used to get information about the learner strategies and their attitudes

toward English writing. The contents of the two questionnaires make reference to several questionnaires on strategy survey, such as that in Wen Qiufang's book (Wen Qiufang & Wang Lifei, 2003), in the essay of Kasper, L.F. 1997. Questions on Length Approach were mostly adopted from Wang's (Wang Churning, 2000). Some questions were quoted directly, some were modified a bit and others were designed according to the characteristics of my students and the information that is necessary.

#### D. Data Collection and Data Analysis

Data analyses can be divided into two stages: the first being quantitative, the second being qualitative. The students' answers to the questionnaires were analyzed by quantitative method. The scores of each part were put into the SPSS and then I used the pair-sampled test to see if there was significant difference between the control group and the experimental group.

## Results and Discussion

### A. Results on Their Writing ability and English Proficiency

Table 1 Statistics of CG & EG's Band 4 Writing Scores

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
CG	55.65	9.760	1.543
EG	58.68	11.984	1.895

According to Table 1, the means of CG & EG's Band4 writing scores are 55.65 and 58.68.

Table2 Paired-Sample Test of CG & EG's Band 4 Writing Scores (t=1.286, p=0.206)

Group	Mean	Std. Deviation
CG-EG	-3.02	14.871

From Table 2, we can see that  $t=-1.286$  and  $p=0.206$ . As  $p>0.05$ , there is no significant difference between these two groups. As a result, the training of this term does not have evident influence on the scores of writing.

Table3 EG's Scores after Training

	Score of Band4	Writing Score of Band4	Score of Test	Writing Score of Test
Mean	528.3500	62.2000	78.04300	10.6750
Std. Deviation	517.00(a)	66.00	77.00(a)	10.00

Table 4 CG's Scores after Training

	Score of Band4	Writing Score of Band4	Score of Test	Writing Score of Test
Mean	499.2000	58.9750	76.9286	10.2250
Std. Deviation	52.85355	10.33909	7.36788	1.22971

In Table 3 and Table 4, as the original marks show, after strategies training in this term, there is no clear difference between both groups in school final exam, while corresponding to their writing score, the whole marks of the EG in CET4 are apparently higher than those of CG.

### B. Results on This Writing Training and Length Approach

Table 5 Means of Students' Attitudes towards the Writing Training of CG&EG

Group	Item1	Item2	Item3	Item4	Item5	Item6	Item7	Item8
CG	3.42	3.46	3.32	4.06	3.54	3.70	3.02	3.18
EG	3.52	3.37	3.23	4.08	3.72	3.73	3.01	2.86
Group	Item9	Item10	Item11	Item12	Item13	Item14	Item15	
CG	2.76	3.38	3.72	3.90	3.42	2.96	3.76	
EG	2.72	3.18	3.88	3.83	3.43	3.34	3.67	

According to Table 5, although we can't notice any obvious difference between the two groups, there is still something changed slightly. We may see that even both groups' students are still not very confident of English writing, however fewer students of EG feel difficult to write after the training than in CG.

### C. Results on SBI

#### a. Metacognitive Strategies Used in the Process of Writing

Table 6 Means of Some Megacognitive Strategies of EG before & after Training

Stage	Item1	Item2	Item3	Item4
Pre-Training	2.72	2.68	2.08	3.12
Post-Training	2.83	2.89	3.87	3.69

According to Table 6, the awareness of metacognition has been enhanced, and we may notice that more students in the EG will self-adjust and self-monitor their performance of writing, and evaluate their own achievements in writing. However it is difficult to raise their awareness of their audience and make them set clear goals for their English study. That may be due to their examination-oriented English study.

Table 7 Correlation between Megacognitive Strategies&Band4 Writing Scores of EG

	Item1	Item2	Item3	Item4
<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	-.482(**)	-.423(**)	.040	.081
<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	.002	.007	.807	.621

\*\*The correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

With the analysis of correlation between metacognitive strategy use and their scores of Band 4 by SPSS 10.0, we may find there is correlation between Item 1 & 2 and EG and data indicate that the audience awareness and setting goals may give side influence to their writing ability.

#### b. Cognitive Strategies Used in the Process of Writing

Table 8 Means of Some Cognitive Strategies of EG before & after Training

Stage	Item1	Item2	Item3	Item4	Item5	Item6
Pre-Training	2.88	3.78	2.13	2.03	2.82	3.54
Post-Training	2.88	4.10	2.16	2.10	3.07	3.42

Table 9 Correlation between Cognitive Strategies & Band4 Writing Scores of EG

	Item1	Item2	Item3	Item4	Item5	Item6
<b>Pearson Correlation</b>	-.521(**)	.153	-.414(**)	-.463(**)	.317(*)	.352(*)
<b>Sig. (2-tailed)</b>	.001	.346	.008	.003	.047	.026

According to Table 9, we may find few students use such strategies, and their writing score the minus correlation between them indicate that the more they use them the higher are their scores.

### D. Results of Qualitative Analysis and Discussion

Table 10 The Length of the Composition and the Writing Speed of Each Group

Group	Mean Length	Writing Time	Writing Speed
EG	181.16	30	6.04
CG	129.34	30	4.13

According to Table 10, we may find there is significant difference between the two groups in writing speed. In other words, it is easier for the experimental group to find ideas and process sentences into an integrative passage than it is for the control group. The minimum requirement of the composition was 120 words, but there are 38.2% students failed to meet the requirement, while in the experimental group, only two students didn't meet the requirement, and there are 112 words in the shortest composition of EG.

Table 11 Samples of the accuracy of students' compositions in both groups

EG	Sample1	Sample 2	Sample3	Sample4	Sample5	Sample6
Error number	2	0	one	6	11	8
Word number	193	175	209	138	211	161
Error rate	1.04%	0	0.48%	4.35%	5.21%	4.97%
CG	Sample 1	Sample 2	Sample3	Sample4	Sample5	Sample6
Error number	5	8	9	5	6	11
Word number	159	148	135	130	117	95
Error rate	3.14%	5.41%	6.67%	3.85%	5.13%	11.58%

The calculating formula tells us how many errors there are in each one hundred words. The higher the percentage is, the less accurate the students' writing is. It is obviously that top students make fewer mistakes, low-efficient students make more mistakes in both group, while there are some significant differences in the two groups. In EG the two top students and one average student almost make no mistakes and another average student and the two inefficient students make more mistakes.

## Conclusion

As the research findings show, SBI could be treated as an auxiliary part of the writing training. Students' autonomy can be promoted in this way and their interests can be boosted by Length Approach. Owing to the limitation of time, the strategies explicitly introduced to students were not enough and the writing practice received by them was still not sufficient. The researches can replicate the research design on larger samples. The participants of this research are all freshmen. There are only 80 samples taking parts in this experiment. Therefore, in the future studies of Length Approach, the samples can be at different proficiency levels, different majors, and different college students in different areas. The teacher should be very cautious in choosing strategies explicitly presented at class, and monitoring the use of these strategies during the experiment according to different subjects when adopting this method.

## References

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