

AN INVESTIGATION OF UNIVERSITY EFL STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TOWARDS WRITING-TO-READ TASKS[†]

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Abstract

Research indicates that using writing as a learning tool may lead to better reading achievement. Based on the strong reading-writing connections, the authors examined EFL students' attitudes towards two types of writing-to-read tasks, namely reading with summary writing and reading with journal writing. Fifty four Chinese EFL learners participated in the eighteen-week study. Data were collected using students' self-report questionnaires, students' written feedback and face-to-face semi-structured interviews. Results show that the students had a positive tendency towards the two tasks, while they still had some problems and suggestions. It is recommended that writing-to-read activities be introduced into TEFL classrooms to enhance reading teaching and learning.

Keywords: Writing-to-read tasks, summary writing, journal writing, EFL students' attitudes

Introduction

In this age of globalization the acquisition of reading skills in a L2 is a priority for millions of learners around the world. As Eskey (2005) points out, many students of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) rarely need to speak the language in their day-to-day lives but may need to read it in order to 'access the wealth of information' (p. 563) recorded exclusively in English. However, due to the complexity inherent in the reading process, reading is also a skill that is one of the most difficult to develop to a high level of proficiency (Grabe, 2002). Whilst research has been able to shed light on the reading-

writing connections, little is known about the attitudes of EFL learners at the advanced level. The aim of this paper is to present the results from a study of language attitudes and to ascertain which reading tasks EFL learners think are effective.

Reading-writing Connections

In academia, the strong connections between reading and writing are held undeniable. As Nuttach (1996) points out, reading and writing are so closely associated as two sides of the same coin that it is natural for work on either

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to support work on the other. To date, a number of researchers have been exploring the ways that reading and writing are integrated. Studies conducted on the reading-writing connections can be divided into three major categories: studies that examine the impact of reading on writing (e.g. Tsang, 1996; Hirvela, 2004); studies that examine correlations between reading and writing (Tierney and Pearson, 1983; Carson, *et al.*, 1990; Eisterhold, 1990; Kennedy, 1994; Many, *et al.*, 1996; Olson, 2003); and studies that examine different perspectives on the reading-writing relationship or explain its theoretical bases (Kuczer, 1987; McCarthy, 2001; Esmaeili, 2002; Carson, 2004; Grabe, 2004; Jabbour, 2004; Smagorinsky, *et al.*, 2005; Parkinson, *et al.*, 2007). The research on reading-writing connections from the early 1980s till 2000s shows that when taught together, reading and writing engage students in a greater use and variety of cognitive strategies than when they are taught separately. Using writing as a learning tool may lead to better reading achievement, and using reading as a vehicle for elaborating on ideas may lead to better writing performance.

Writing-to-read Approach

Reading-writing connections may be implemented in various ways. Writing-to-read is one of them. In using this method, writers are also regarded as readers while transforming source texts to create new texts (Spivey, 1990). As Hirvela (2004) notes, written texts leave readers with gaps that may be filled by active, meaning-making reading, which is often guided most effectively by writing. Furthermore, writing provides a unique opportunity for the reader to dialogue with a text and find a particular way into it (Hirvela, 2005), and thus provides the learners with an opportunity to generate and explore meaning. Finally, writing responses to literature provides opportunities for the teacher to observe the students' reading comprehension.

Langer and Applebee (1987) indicate two kinds of writing tasks that develop and shape the readers' ideas. The first kind of writing tasks includes note-taking, short-answer

comprehension questions, and summary writing, etc. These writing tasks prompt students to focus on specific items of information and lead the students to presenting their ideas carefully. In contrast, when students are writing expressively to learn, perceiving their writing as part of an ongoing instructional dialogue that is not subject to assessment by the teacher, such as journal writing, their thinking and writing is more exploratory and they are more apt to take risks from the content. In a writing-to-read activity, the writer has two kinds of knowledge sources: one is available in the immediate source texts and the other is what can be generated from previously acquired knowledge in long-term memory.

Most of the research on L2 reading has considered participants at the beginning and intermediate levels of language instruction (e.g. Carrell, 1988a, 1988b; Brantmeier, 2003). However, little empirical research has been done to investigate readers at the advanced levels of language instruction, and it is at this stage of acquisition where more L2 reading research is needed (Brantmeier, 2001). In addition, little attention has been given to the students' attitudes towards reading-writing connections. Many discussions of reading-writing connections focus mainly on writing proficiency (e.g. Tsang, 1996), regarding reading as a springboard to writing tasks and learning for writing. One of the latest studies is by Al-Ghonaim (2005) about students' attitudes towards reading-to-write tasks. No empirical study has been identified about the students' attitudes toward writing-to-read tasks. On the basis of the literature reviewed, this study aimed to examine the advanced EFL students' attitudes towards writing-to-read tasks. It may provide insights into how reading and writing should be integrated and how the procedures of teaching reading can be drawn up.

Research Methods

Participants

The natural setting for the study was Guizhou University, which is a comprehensive

university in southwest China. The present study was based on the responses provided by 54 third-year English major students from two intact classes, 27 in each class. Among all the students, there were 37 (68%) females and 17 (32%) males. Their age ranged from 19 to 23 with 21 as the average. The participants' answers to the background survey indicate that most of the students considered their reading ability in English as fair (75%). Just 13% of the participants considered their reading ability as poor and 15% considered their reading ability as excellent.

All the students were high school graduates and were pursuing a university degree. In China, English is compulsory for all the middle school students, which means all of the participants had learned English for at least 8 years (6 years in middle school and 2 years in university). The students were defined as advanced EFL learners. Two reasons may determine the students' advanced level placement. First, the National Curriculum for College English Majors of Higher Education in P.R.C. (2000) indicates that third-year undergraduate students are at the advanced level. Second, according to Bamford *et al.* (2004), advanced language learners are those who "already have a basic knowledge of, and are literate in, the foreign language". Through two years intensive English learning at university, the subjects in the present study were able to read and write in English. Therefore, the participants of this current study were classified as advanced.

Materials

In order to address the research objective, which concerns the students' attitudes towards the reading tasks, this study employed such triangulated elicitation procedures as students' self-report questionnaire, students' written feedback and individual semi-structured interview.

The purpose of the students' self-report written questionnaire was to find out each individual student's attitudes towards the reading task assigned. The questionnaire was composed of two parts: five-point Likert-Scale questions

and open-ended questions. In order to elicit information about how the students felt about the tasks and how their attitudes developed, students' written feedback was required three times during the 18-week study: at the very beginning, in the middle, and at the end of the study. The in-depth semi-structured interview served as a data source to tap respondents' attitudes about the reading tasks. The seven interview guide questions were based on the respondents' answers to the questionnaires and on their actual performance in the course.

Procedure

This study was conducted in the first semester of academic years 2007 and 2008. It lasted eighteen weeks, two 50-minute periods each week, which made thirty-six 50-minute periods in the intervention (72 periods as the total). During the 18-week semester, 54 participants enrolled in the Advanced English Course read 11 texts required in *A New English Course*, book 5 (Li, 2004), a textbook for third-year English major students at Guizhou University.

Two treatment conditions were randomly allocated to the two groups of students. That is, one group wrote summaries after reading, and the other group wrote journals. The teaching procedures in the two groups were all composed of three steps: pre-reading, while-reading, and post-reading, as proposed by Yigiter *et al.* (2005). Based on the elements suggested by Brown (1994), which include five sections of teaching procedures, namely goals, objectives, materials and equipment, procedures and evaluation, the researcher created the lesson plan for each class session. The pre-reading and during-reading stages were the same between the two groups, except that one group wrote summaries at the post-reading stage while the other one wrote journals. It should be noted that in the journal writing group, the students were to write their reactions, comments, questions and feelings about the text read. They could follow the suggested format of journals or write without referring to it.

In response to the research objective regarding students' attitudes, data were elicited

through the written questionnaire, the students' written feedback, and the interview. The questionnaire was administered at the end of the treatment. As the first half of the questionnaire, 5-point Likert-scale questions that ranged from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" were utilized. The students' responses to the questionnaires were coded and keyed into the SPSS program, 15.0 for statistical analysis. The students' responses to the five open-ended questions were the qualitative data. Of the 54 questionnaires distributed, all were returned. The researcher checked carefully whenever each respondent submitted their questionnaires, thus making sure no blank sheet was submitted. As a result, only two questionnaires were discarded for the reason of non-completed information.

By using the method of written feedback, the researcher surveyed the students' attitudes towards the reading tasks regularly in the whole process of treatment. Three times after finishing the tasks assigned, all the students were asked to spend 5 minutes writing their feedback to the tasks they had taken. Due to three absentees, 159 entries of the students' feedback emerged for qualitative analysis. It should be noted that even though some students missed one or two entries of the feedback, their answers were still included in the data analysis as long as they submitted their feedback entries for the other texts.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 12 students. Two students with positive attitudes, two with medium attitudes, and two with negative attitudes were randomly selected from each group, which made six interviewees per group and twelve in total. All the semi-structured face-to-face interviews were conducted in January, 2008. The interviewees were asked to orally respond to seven open-ended questions eliciting their attitudes toward the reading tasks. Each interview lasted from 10 to 15 minutes. All the 12 interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and translated into English by the researcher. The interviews were submitted to qualitative analysis.

It is noteworthy to mention that the respondents were allowed to use either English

or their L1 language Chinese in the data collection process, thus to elicit more information about their attitudes. Additionally, the participants' real names were replaced with codes in all the examples used to illustrate the patterns found in the data. Students' coding followed the same format. First, the researcher gave a number to each student randomly and this number was always used for the specific student in the data analysis of the study. Second, the researcher coded each student according to his/her group followed by the specific number. For example, student number one from the summary writing group was coded RJ1, and her counterpart from journal writing group was RJ1.

Results and Discussion

The results elicited through the questionnaire, the students' written feedback, and the interviews were analyzed either quantitatively or qualitatively. Two questionnaires were discarded for the reason of non-completed information. The remaining 52 questionnaires were analyzed either quantitatively or qualitatively. Significant variations in frequency of students' reported attitudes and perceptions of the reading tasks were not taken into consideration. Instead, the average scores of the students' response on the written questionnaire were conducted to establish the baseline information on each group.

Table 1 shows the results of the five-point Likert-scale questions ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree". It was found that the students had the highest average score (Mean = 4.68, SD = 0.933) on item two, which means many students thought the reading tasks assigned to them could help improve their reading comprehension. Additionally, the students in the reading with journal writing group had a higher average score (Mean = 3.98) than those in the reading with summary writing group (Mean = 3.85). That means the students liked the task of reading with journal writing more than the task of reading with summary writing.

The quantitative analysis of data elicited through the Likert-scale questionnaire revealed that the students had a positive tendency towards

agreeing with the statements concerning the reading tasks. It was found that more than half of the students were satisfied with the reading tasks assigned to them. The number of the students who chose the answers ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree shows that 29 (55.7%) of the total 52 students reported liking the writing-to-read tasks. Furthermore, the students seemed to have a more positive response to items one, two and five, which were mainly about their general attitudes towards the tasks assigned. Nonetheless, students' responses to items three and four, which were about their attitudes towards the specific text types, tended to be more negative. One explanation for the findings could be that the students were clearer about the general questions than the ones about details. Another possibility may be that the students did not have very clear ideas about the narrative and expository texts.

Close examination of the questionnaire revealed that only a few respondents tended to choose either "strongly agree" or "strongly disagree" as their response. The reluctance on the part of the participants to take a strong stand on agreement and disagreement indicates that some participants may have some ambiguous

understanding of the tasks. Equally important, the data demonstrated that the higher the students perceived their reading ability, the more positive attitudes they seemed to have. This could be explained by the fact that the high-ability students may have more involvement in the tasks, which may have resulted in their positive attitudes towards the tasks assigned.

The qualitative analysis of data elicited through the open-ended questionnaire, the students' written feedback, and the interview with the students confirmed the Likert-scale questionnaire results. A close examination of the data sheds more lights on the patterns of the students' attitudes.

Positive, Medium, and Negative Attitudes Appeared in this Study

The students' attitudes towards the reading tasks could be basically classified into three categories: positive, medium, and negative attitudes. The qualitative data supported the information elicited through the quantitative data that the students in the journal writing group tended to have more positive attitudes than those in the reading with summary group.

As for the use of summary writing on their

Table 1. Students' responses on the likert-scale written questionnaire (N = 52)

Items	Frequency/Percentage of respondents				
	Strongly agree	Agree	Undecided	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. I like the task I've done.	2/3.8%	27/51.9%	10/19%	7/13.9%	6/11.4%
2. The task I've done will improve my reading comprehension.	11/20.3%	20/38%	18/35.4%	2/3.8%	1/2.5%
3. The task I've done helps to improve my reading comprehension of narrative texts more than expository texts.	1/2.5%	24/45.6%	6/11.4%	14/27.8%	7/12.7%
4. The task I've done helps to improve my reading comprehension of expository texts more than narrative texts.	3/5.1%	20/39.2%	13/25.3%	14/26.7%	2/3.8%
5. I will continue doing the task.	1/2.5%	27/51.9%	16/30.5%	5/9.5%	3/5.6%

reading ability, fourteen students in the RS group recognized its importance. Cited below are examples of the students' comments on the task of reading with summary writing:

RS13: *"By writing summary, I think my reading ability has been improved, especially my ability to generalize the main idea."*

RS15: *"After writing summaries, my general understanding of the text has been improved."*

The positive comments above show students' appreciation of the degree to which summary writing facilitated their reading comprehension. Nevertheless, seven students reported not liking it because it is more difficult compared with doing comprehension exercises. Participants' comments provided important insights into their attitudes. On the one hand, they recognized the use of summary writing. On the other hand, they still disliked it because it was boring. The tight structure of summarization was the main reason for the students' negative attitudes. Student RS26 shared the negative attitude and mentioned, *"I don't like writing summary every time for every text. It's boring and rigid. I like writing when I have interest."* Data from the students' written feedback showed that initially a few students ($N = 3$) resented having to do this extra work and were frustrated by their inability to distinguish macro-structure from micro-structure. Example (RS2) is representative of these students. *"Even though I tried to understand the text, sometimes I was not certain about the main points that the author discussed."* Similarly, student RS19 worried that her summaries might be biased due to her poor reading comprehension. The number of students who did not enjoy writing summaries increased from three at the beginning of the treatment to seven in the end. Student RS7 represented this category and stated in her third entry of feedback that she could learn the text more actively through writing summaries, but she did not enjoying writing summaries because it was dull for her.

Compared with students from the summary writing group, more students ($N = 17$) in the RJ group were happy with the tasks assigned. RJ8 reported that writing journals improved her understanding of the gist because that's what journal writing needed. RJ17 stated, *"Writing journals helps me understand the text. After writing, I have deeper understanding to the texts."* Meanwhile, some students in the journal writing group seemed to have neutral attitudes toward the tasks assigned. They liked the freedom of journal writing, but they did not like writing regularly. Cited below are examples of medium attitudes found in the open-ended questionnaires.

RJ10: *"I like it because it may remind me to insist on reading, but sometimes I had to write when I didn't want to at all, just to fulfill the task."*

RJ11: *"Through writing journals, I may express my ideas freely and practice writing, but I don't like reading the texts assigned, it's too rigid."* (Translated)

Both the students are female. Student RJ10 rated her reading ability as good and RJ11 fair.

The results of the Likert-scale questionnaire showed that students from the RJ group received higher mean score (Mean = 3.98) in the five-point Likert-scale questionnaire. The explanation may be the different characteristics of summary writing and journal writing. Writing summaries requires the students to not only have correct understanding of the text, identify the main idea, important sentence structure and important information, but also to express correctly in a shorter text than the source text. That is, summarizing has quite a tight requirement on the readers (Nuttach, 1996). On the contrary, journal writing is loose in structure. The students could express themselves freely without just concentrating on the main idea, which the students might enjoy. Consequently, the students in the journal writing group demonstrated the highest mean score in regard to their attitudes.

In this study, the students generally viewed

journal writing as a flexible cognitive tool which helped them construct the meaning of the text. They enjoyed the freedom that writing journals provided them. In fact, when the experiment ended, many students expressed nostalgia about journal writing. The students not only reported it to be worthwhile, but also believed that it helped them in other aspects of English learning.

The analyses have shown that writing about learning can be a way of demonstrating what has been learned. Through journals, students can record concrete experiences, reflect on and record their observations about the experiences, integrate the observation into abstract concepts or theories, and use the theories to make decisions or solve problems. Journal writing can be a metacognitive reminder of the learning process and it reveals thought processes and mental habits. It aids memory and provides a context for growth and provides tangible evidence of mental processes. Journals make thoughts visible and concrete, giving a way to interact with, elaborate on, and expand ideas. In this way, the learners could have clearer understanding of their strong and weak points. Thus, journal writing could be a metacognitive tool in understanding texts.

The Students Reported Gaining Writing Skills

As expected, many students reported gaining writing skills. Student RS17's comments represented this:

"I think this task (reading with journal writing) keeps me writing regularly, and it helps me improve my writing ability. At the beginning, I didn't know how to start my writing. But as time goes by, I'm feeling better now."

Similarly, students from the journal writing group reported that as time went by, they requested more specific information, expressed more opinions, and asked more detailed clarification. For example, student RJ27 commented in the interview that *"After writing so many journals, I can write fluently now."* These data revealed that writing journal entries gives

students opportunities to practice writing in a way relevant to their experiences and not merely as an exercise in writing for writing's sake. These current findings are supported by Anderson (1993) and Hirvela (2005), who reported that extended writing improves writing proficiency.

Students Reported Some Use of Reading Strategies

In their responses to the open-ended questionnaire, written feedback and interview, 25 students, regardless of their groups, mentioned the employment of some reading strategies to varying degrees. It was noticed that not every student reported strategy use. One explanation may be that the successful students may have automatized many of their strategic reading processes to the point of lacking awareness of the steps they took to ensure comprehension. Another possibility is that the less successful students did not use strategies much. Table 2 below is a summary of the strategies reported by the students in terms of groups. It is arranged in the order of reported frequency.

From the students' reports, some notable reading strategies emerged. First, the students demonstrated sensitivity to global aspects of text by using the strategies of rereading and thinking about prior knowledge. Students in the summary writing group reported using the strategies of rereading and rethinking to successfully summarize the text. Generalizing is another strategy reported frequently used in this group. Student RS11 stated, *"I try to generalize what I have read and express them in my own words."* Similarly, students in the journal writing group reported rereading as one of the strategies. For example, student RJ9 stated, *"I reread the part that I didn't quite understand and discussed it in my journal"*. These findings are supported by Brown (2002), who noted that at the university level, rereading has been shown to be one of the most effective study aids to comprehension of texts.

However, of all the 54 students, a rather small number of students (N = 7) reported using inferring to make the text more comprehensible. A general underutilization of the inferring strat-

egies reflects the lack of emphasis on inferential comprehension. Without this ability, students are not poised to meet the demands of expository material. These findings reveal to the researcher that the students may have achieved better reading comprehension if they had used the inferring strategies more frequently.

Furthermore, although many students ($N = 22$) reported being able to predict, they could not provide strong reasons for its use. For instance, student number eight from the summary writing group commented in the third entry of written feedback, *"I read and guess what will happen next, but I'm not sure if this helps my understanding or not because I feel my reading speed slows down"* (Translated).

Another notable point about the students' strategy use is the difference identified between successful and unsuccessful students. Compared with the successful students, the unsuccessful students used fewer strategies to gather meaning, orienting themselves to the perceptual and mechanical aspects of the reading task. The students who perceived their reading ability high appeared to have a developed EFL reading schema, which incorporated declarative knowledge about the reading process and procedural knowledge for implementing strategies when reading in English, while the unsuccessful readers appeared to be more concerned with finishing

the task itself. Student RS13 was a successful reader and said in the interview, *"When I read the difficult text which I don't quite understand, I try to analyze the sentence structure and think about what I have known about the topic, for example, from the newspapers, magazines, etc."* That means she knew how to use her prior knowledge connected with the text being read. Unsuccessful students appeared to lack this strategy. Student RJ18 represented this type of students and stated in the written feedback, *"What I concern the most is to finish my reading on time, because I'm slow in reading"*.

Equally important, successful readers reported more flexibility by adjusting their reading speed to match the difficulty of the text and slowing down when encountering dense or difficult texts. They used monitoring strategies include paraphrasing, self-questioning, and paying close attention in their reading. Furthermore, the successful readers discussed specific reading strategies they used more than the unsuccessful ones, such as questioning, rereading, and the use of prior knowledge. Student RS13 reported in her second entry of written feedback that

"B(b)efore reading, I predict what the text may be about according to the title. When I'm reading, I ask myself what the text

Table 2. Frequency of reported strategy use by the students in each group ($N = 25$)

Order	Reported strategy use	RS	RJ	Total
1	rereading	13	10	23
2	thinking about the prior knowledge	12	10	22
3	predicting	11	10	21
4	generalizing	13	7	20
5	rethinking	8	9	17
6	paying attention to the task	11	3	14
7	self-questioning	7	6	13
8	analyzing the sentence structures	5	6	11
9	Reading selectively	4	3	7
10	inferring	3	2	5
11	guessing word meaning	4	No use	4
12	paraphrasing	1	1	2
13	adjusting reading speed	No use	2	2

meant to me. If I have problems understanding the text, I try to use the context and my prior knowledge to clarify what text means to me."

On the contrary, unsuccessful students reported reading selectively in order to find answers to comprehension questions. For example, student RJ26 stated that *"In order to read fast, I only read the parts which I think are important."* In addition, they reported using approximately the same strategies whether reading narrative or expository texts, failing to adjust their use of strategies. However, the successful readers used specific strategies such as use of cognates and paraphrasing when reading texts of different types. And, paying attention to the task appeared to be a strategy that the unsuccessful students lacked. Student RS24 reported having difficulty getting involved in reading and said, *"I can't focus my attention on the reading and the task. Sometimes I just looked at the text, but I didn't read or understand it."*

Students' Problems and Suggestions

In their responses to the questionnaires, feedback, and interviews, the students reported that reading and doing the reading tasks presented a variety of problems for them. The problems were mainly about vocabulary, text content, anxiety, reading strategy, motivation, time and writing content.

It was evident that vocabulary was regarded as a major problem by the students in their reading comprehension. The crucial role of vocabulary knowledge in reading comprehension has been well recognized in L2 settings and the difficulty of vocabulary for EFL learners has been well recognized by linguists. Evans and Green (2007) found that the Hong Kong university students' receptive and productive vocabularies are generally inadequate. Similarly, Gorsuch and Taguchi (2008) suggest that reading in a foreign or second language is often a laborious process, often caused by underdeveloped word recognition skills and that one major component of reading fluency is fast and accurate word recognition.

Of the totality of 54 students, 25 (46.9%) reported having difficulties understanding the content of the text. They reported special problems with specific text type. One instance is student RS7 who stated, *"I don't like reading expository texts. They are too boring for me to have a general idea. I like reading narrative texts because they have clear organization and are closely related to the readers"*. This finding suggests that different contextual and rhetorical schemata may result in ineffective ESL learning. In addition, acquisition of academic literacy at the university level is often a difficult process for EFL learners. The complexity of the text content with regard to rhetorical organization may have lead to the students' difficulty in understanding (Shi and Kubota, 2007).

Additionally, twenty-three students (42.6%) stated that as a result of worrying that they might not have correct understanding of the text, or their dislike of some particular type of texts, they felt nervous. The two comments below are examples:

RS15: *"I don't like reading for some specific tasks, which made me too nervous."*

RJ18: *"I don't like writing journal for every text because I am worried that what I write may be wrong."*

The above results indicate that anxiety about reading at the advanced level may not be a function of reading itself, but rather a function of oral or written reading comprehension tasks. As Brantmeier (2005) points out, students feel less anxious about reading when immediate communication appreciation is not a concern. Therefore, it could be inferred that the students' anxiety was not about reading itself, but about the tasks that followed. The possible solution may be more post-reading activities after class.

In their written feedback and interviews, students noted the problems they had with reading strategies. The data revealed that only 23 students in this sample exhibited a robust use of the strategy of self-questioning. Nearly half of the students reported the lack of the strategy of

paying close attention or concentrating as a means to improve comprehension. Such weak use demonstrates the need for explicit strategy instruction.

Furthermore, motivation has been commonly considered as one of the most important factors affecting L2 learning (e.g. Shia, 1998). Hwang (2001) suggests that strong motivation to learn English could be the key contribution to increase in reading skills. Nearly one-third of the students expressed their lack of motivation in reading or/and doing the reading tasks. Student RJ16 said, *"I don't like it (journal writing) because it's a little time-wasting. I wrote not because I wanted, but just for fulfilling assignments."* Student RJ21 not only stated her lack of motivation but also supplied the reason, *"I don't like reading books. Whenever I see the thick book, I don't like. I prefer read on Internet."*

As Yamada (2002) indicates, even though experienced English academic writers are capable of writing with multiple sources, EFL/ESL writers have a difficult time with it. Fifteen students in this study reported having problems with the content of their summaries or journals, which suggests that the students needed to get more training in writing from sources, thus to write more efficiently in the target language.

Additionally, students made some suggestions concerning the reading tasks assigned to them. Generally, the students' suggestions were mainly as follows: there should be more exercises to improve their vocabulary, the types of the reading materials should be more varied, and there should be more explanation on the writing style of the source texts. For example, student RS15 suggested: *"We should read much more texts which suit our reading ability, both with time limit and without."* Student RJ1 suggested enlarging vocabulary size, broadening knowledge, and reading a lot of authentic English materials.

Pedagogical Implications

The findings of this study demonstrate that reading and writing are two modes of language and are inextricably related. Some significant

implications for the teaching and learning of English as a foreign language for Chinese university students may be drawn as follows:

Teachers must be Careful in Employing Summary Writing in Class

As evident in this study, summary writing can be an effective way to improve learners' reading ability. However, teachers need to be careful in their classroom employment. The reason is that students may dislike its tight format.

Writing Journals Increases Students' Motivation for Learning

One pedagogical implication concerning journal writing is that the understanding about oneself as a learner may increase motivation for writing, which in turn affects reading. Journal writing could be a good way to arouse students' motivation in learning. As Marsh (1998) notes, journal writing reveals issues that matter to students in the process of learning. Also, Padgett (2000) suggests engaging students in writing could be a way to increase the students' interest in the task. And, due to the increase in interest, a student with a written expression deficit would benefit from this opportunity. Huang (2006) suggests that learners are most willing to read under three circumstances: (1) when teachers are available to answer questions, (2) when key points are highlighted clearly in textbooks, and (3) when reading skills are taught. Also, background schema was found to be an important factor influencing reading motivation. Such applications point out the crucial role that learners' motivation have for reading comprehension.

Teacher Feedback should be Given to the Students' Journal

Another finding of this study reveals that students preferred to write journals if they were sure the teacher would read their journal and that feedback would be given. Teachers who want to capitalize on the potential of journal writing must be willing to spend the time and energy to offer students thorough and detailed feedback on the substance of their journal entries. In addition, the focus of the feedback should not be on the

errors made unless the same errors appear over and over again. The purpose is to avoid embarrassing the students, which may hinder their reading comprehension. In addition to providing time for journal writing, teachers should model good journal writing behaviors for the learners to follow. Finally, the students' privacy should be guarded. In this regard, teachers should make confidentiality and boundary setting essential, provide equitable feedback and guard privacy.

Reading Strategies should be Taught Explicitly

As suggested in the research findings of this study, some students had problems with reading strategies. In this respect, teachers should help students identify effective reading strategies and students can be encouraged to implement them in their L2 reading. Those strategies should be explicitly taught through simple exercises developed to elicit information via targeted strategies. Such specific teaching methods as collaborative instruction, active learning, strategic modeling and repeated, increasingly independent practice by students (Beers, 2003; Collins *et al.*, 2005) should be employed to raise student awareness of the reading strategies.

Other Writing-to-read Tasks could be Examined

Baker and Boonkit (2004) indicate that writing-to-read may generate ideas and thus improve understanding. The current study only examined the students' attitudes towards two types of writing-to-read tasks: reading with summary writing and reading with journal writing. Other forms of writing-to-read tasks could be examined.

Conclusions

This study set out to investigate what attitudes the students had towards the tasks in which reading and writing were integrated. The instruments used in this study were students' written questionnaires, students' written feedback, and face-to-face semi-structured interviews with the students. The results indicated that more than

half of the participants had positive attitudes towards reading with summary writing and reading with journal writing. We may conclude that these two writing-to-read activities can be introduced into advanced TFL classrooms. Hopefully, this study will stimulate further investigation into other writing activities to improve EFL reading instruction.

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