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結案報告

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摘要

　　說明文是容易受文化影響的特殊文體，本研究旨在調查臺灣學生寫作英文說明文時所呈現的特質，並從這些特質中以對比修辭(contrastive rhetoric)的角度，分析有哪些是受到中文的影響。研究所分析的語料是由財團法人語言測驗訓練中心(LTTC)所提供的 360 篇全民英檢(GEPT)中級寫作測驗的寫作範例，其中五分 115 篇、四分 125 篇、三分 120 篇，通過中級寫作測驗分數為四分。研究方法採文本分析，分析結果確認 41 項特徵代碼，其中 18 項是與句中文法正確性相關的錯誤類型、10 項是與字詞選擇相關的錯誤類型、8 項是與文章連貫性凝聚性和一致性有關的錯誤類型、其餘五項則是與英文說明文文體修辭結構有關的特徵。所有的特徵和錯誤一一登錄計數，計有 2734 個錯誤是跟句中文法正確性有關、1837 個錯誤是跟字詞選擇有關、354 個錯誤是跟文章連貫性凝聚性和一致性有關、與英文說明文文體修辭結構有關的特徵計有 468 個。愈高分的作文組別錯誤愈少；進一步跨組別比較錯誤發現，三組的高頻率錯誤類型顯示包含的關係，即五分組的高頻率錯誤類型包含於四分組的高頻率錯誤類型中，四分組的高頻率錯誤類型則包含於三分組的高頻率錯誤類型中，由此推論，臺灣學生在學習英文寫作的過程中，有些錯誤類型會持續呈現在進階的寫作中，例如，與拼字錯誤、字串組合(collocation)、動詞型態、單複數變化、正確字詞選擇等有關的錯誤類型在五分的作文中仍有很高的出現頻率，四分組的作文除了這五項之外，也在介系詞、限定詞(determiners)、連寫句(run-on sentences)和不完整子句(dangling clauses)方面有很高的錯誤率，以上這些錯誤類型在三分組的作文中以更高的頻率出現，此外三分組作文在語意不明確(ambiguity)、語意謬誤(semantic anomaly)、錯誤格式、和主詞-動詞一致(subject-verb agreement)等方面也有很高頻率的錯誤出現。在說明文文體修辭結構方面，分數愈高的組別，呈現的特徵次數愈多，相較於通過中級寫作測驗的四分和五分組，三分組在段落主題句(topic sentence)和結論句(concluding sentence)部分掌握較差。據此，本研究針對英文寫作教學提出三點建議：（1）在英文寫作課程中，文法教學可分階段循序進行；（2）教師必須灌輸學生有關英文說明文結構的相關知識，段落的開始必須有主題句，緊接著有提供細節說明的支持句，最後以結論句結束段落；（3）文章長度並非文章好壞的指標，與其要求學生作文長度必須達某個數字以上，不如要求學生確認作文內容包含三部份：前言(introduction)、主文(body)、與結論(conclusion)，方能使文章符合英文說明文結構，有助讀者理解文章。

Abstract

Expository is a distinct type of text genre with its own particular textual dimensions which are culturally shaped. The present study investigated critical features of expository writings by Taiwanese EFL learners. It analyzed these features through a contrastive rhetoric perspective to identify the influence from L1. Three hundred and sixty expository writing samples of four different topics from the GEPT writing corpus provided by LTTC at the intermediate level were gathered and analyzed, 115 of them scoring five, 125 with a score of four, and the other 120 scoring three. Passing grades are four or above. Text analysis was applied as the research method. Analysis of the writing samples yielded a code list of 41 codes. Among these, 18 are error types related to within-sentence grammaticality, ten are error types related to word choice, eight of them are error types related to text coherence, cohesion and unity category, and the other five are features of rhetorical structure of expository writing. All the errors and features were counted, with 2734 error counts related to within-sentence grammaticality, 1837 error counts related to word choice, 354 error counts related to text coherence, cohesion and unity, and 468 feature counts related to rhetorical structure. The higher the writing score was, the fewer errors were identified. A comparison of error counts across score groups revealed that there is a subsumable relation between error types of the three score groups, which suggests that some types of errors are more persistent in the process of learning EFL writing. Errors related typos, collocations, verb forms, singular/plural, and correct word choice tend to persist into advanced EFL learners' writings with a score of five. In addition to these types of errors, the four-point writings also demonstrate errors related to the use of prepositions, determiners, run-on sentences, and dangling clauses. Writings that fail (with a score of three), beside the aforesaid error types, also contain errors related to ambiguity, semantic anomaly, incorrect format and breach of subject-verb agreement. As for features of rhetorical structure, the higher score the group has, the more features are exhibited. The three-point writings did not handle topic sentences and concluding sentences well, the latter in particular. The study also proposes three pedagogical implications. First, the teaching of grammar in EFL writing class can be made stage-wise. Second, in teaching English expository paragraph, it is important to instill in students knowledge of the rhetorical structure with a topic sentence at the beginning of the paragraph, supporting details coming next and concluding sentences to end the writing. Third, as length is not an indicator of writing performance, instead of asking students to develop composition of a certain number of words, it is advisable to ask students to check if there are three parts in their writing—introduction, body and conclusion, so as to produce an expository conforming to the structure of English expository, which may help readers better understand the writing.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background of the Study

For many EFL learners, writing has been considered the most challenging among the four language skills. Besides involving a different linguistic system, EFL writing also requires genre knowledge and context knowledge; these two kinds of knowledge are under great influence from the culture (Hyland, 2003). It takes instruction and a lot of practice to integrate the knowledge to write properly. As a result, many GEPT test[1] takers regard the writing task a great challenge; so great the challenge is that some of them give it up even before they try it. Another factor that adds to the difficulty of GEPT writing tasks is that it is difficult for writers to monitor their own writings as they do to improve listening, speaking and reading. It will be of great help to EFL writers if they can have an evaluation checklist to serve both as guidelines for proper writing and a benchmark for qualified writings to pass GEPT writing tests[2].

Expository writing is a type of genre frequently used in writing tests in Taiwan, including college entrance exams and GEPT writing tasks. Kaplan's (1966) pioneering study of comparing expository paragraphs by EFL learners of different L1 backgrounds launched what was known as contrastive rhetoric, which maintains that language and writing are cultural phenomena and that different cultures prefer different thinking patterns, which then manifest themselves in writing. Expository is a distinct type of text genre with its own particular textual dimensions which are culturally shaped. Accordingly, it is expected that Taiwanese EFL learners are under influence from their L1, Chinese, when writing expository in English.

However, little research was done to explore how Taiwanese learners' L1 influence their writing performance of English expository and what the features are which are under L1 influence. This is an area worth exploring. Knowledge of Taiwanese learners' features of English expository will provide insights for EFL writing instructions. Besides, a comparison of writings that pass GEPT writing tests and those which fail will serve as guidelines for EFL writers who aim to compose English expository in a proper way to pass GEPT writing tests.

1.2. Purposes and Significance of the Study

The present project is to employ expository writing samples from GEPT writing tasks at the intermediate level to reach the following aims: (1) to investigate critical features of performance of expository writing at the intermediate level of GEPT; (2) to further analyze these features via a contrastive rhetoric perspective to identify the influence from L1; (3) to compare features of writings receiving passing grades and those which failed to pass; (4) to develop an evaluation

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[1] GEPT writing tests come in four levels, including basic, intermediate, high-intermediate, and advanced, corresponding to CEFR A2, B1, B2 and C1 respectively. Writing tasks of different levels have different requirement on the length of the writing. Take the intermediate-level writing task for example. It requires a composition of about 120 words in one or more paragraphs. The writing samples of the present study came from the writing pool of the intermediate level. (https://www.gept.org.tw/Exam_Intro/t02_introduction.asp)

[2] Writings at the intermediate level of GEPT test are scored from 0 to 5, with 5 indicating "good writing ability", 4 "fair writing ability", 3 "limited writing ability", 2 "scarce writing ability", 1 "no writing ability", and 0 "unanswered or equal to unanswered". (https://www.gept.org.tw/Exam_Intro/t02_introduction.asp)

checklist of features demonstrated by writings receiving passing grades.

Significance of the study is threefold: (1) An investigation of features of expository writing will demonstrate how Taiwanese EFL learners organize English expository and in what ways their L1 influence EFL writing performance. (2) The evaluation checklist can work as a bench mark against which both EFL writing teachers and EFL students can evaluate writings so as to make improvement in writing practice and to pass GEPT writing tests. (3) The results of the study will provide pedagogical insights and suggestions for both teaching and learning EFL writing.

1.3. Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following questions:
(1) What are the features of expository writings written by Taiwanese EFL writers?
(2) In what ways are these features influenced by writers' L1?
(3) How do writings receiving a passing grade differ from writings that fail in GEPT tests?

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. L2/FL Writing vs. L1 Writing

Hyland (2003) summarizes five kinds of knowledge that L2 writers (including FL writers) need to possess to create effective texts, including content knowledge, system knowledge, process knowledge, genre knowledge and context knowledge (p. 27). Among the above five kinds of knowledge, system knowledge and context knowledge are the areas where L2/FL writers demonstrate most differences from their L1 counterparts. In pointing out differences between L1 and L2 writers, Hyland (2003) states that among the most important factors that distinguish L2 writers from L1 writers are "the prior language and cultural experiences they bring with them to the classroom" (p. 34). Hence, Hyland considers linguistic and cultural differences between L1 and L2 account for a large part of the differences between L1 and L2 texts.

Linguistic differences are the most obvious difference learners are confronted with when writing in L2, including differences in syntax, vocabulary, morphology, formal conventions, etc. As a result, L2 writers usually have difficulty in adequately expressing themselves in the target language. Research frequently finds that texts produced by L2 students tend to be less effective than those of their L1 counterparts (Silva, 1997). L2 texts are generally shorter, less cohesive, less fluent and contain more errors (Crossley, and McNamara, 2011). L2 writers also do not have "an intuitive ability to handle grammar of the language" that L1 writers have (Hyland, 2003, p. 34) and consequently they L2 writers either resort to their L1 knowledge and experience to compose or reduce the amount of information to be covered, downgrading their use of L2 syntax and vocabulary (Uzawa & Cumming, 1989).

Another important dimension of difference in L2 writing is culture. As language and learning are inextricably bound with culture (Kramsch, 1993), and "writing is a consciously learned skill through schooling" (Uysal, 2008, p. 183), cultural factors are thus believed to have a considerable impact on how students write and how they respond to classroom contexts. Research has proved the

influence of L1 culture on L2 writing. Kaplan's (1966) pioneering study of comparing expository paragraphs by EFL learners of different L1 backgrounds, though criticized for over-generalizing the thinking pattern of a culture and overlooking complex factors involved in L2 writing, launched what was known as *contrastive rhetoric*, which maintains that language and writing are cultural phenomena and that different cultures prefer different thinking patterns, which then manifest themselves in writing.

2.2. Contrastive Rhetoric and Expository

Kaplan's (1966) investigation of 600 expository paragraphs by ESL students of different backgrounds showed that there exist "cultural patterns" in writing among different cultures, which he later defines as "preferential tendencies" (Kaplan, 1982, 1988). Kaplan's research launched what was known as contrastive rhetoric. "Contrastive rhetoric maintains that language and writing are cultural phenomena. As a result, each language has rhetorical conventions unique to it. Furthermore, the linguistic and rhetorical conventions of the first language interfere with the writing of the second language" (Connor, 1996, p. 5). A large number of researches on contrastive rhetoric and L2 writing has focused on types of expository prose texts (Grabe, 1987; Hinds, 1987; Kaplan, 1966, 1982, 1988; Kobayashi, 1992; McCool, 2009; Yoshimura, 2001). Expository is a distinct type of text genre with its own particular textual dimensions which are culturally shaped. McCool (2009) also maintains that argument and persuasion, which belong to one type of expository, is "culturally based activity" (p. 59). Hinds (1987) studied the difference between English and Japanese expository and found that the two languages employ transition statements in very different ways. In English expository, it is the writer's task to provide appropriate transition statements to help the reader "piece together the thread of the writer's logic which binds the composition together" (p. 146). In Japanese expository, however, "it is the reader's responsibility to determine the relationship between any one part of an essay and the essay as a whole" (p. 146). As a result, transition devices in Japanese expository are either absent or attenuated and a more active role is thus required on the part of the reader. If a Japanese EFL writer composes English expository by following his Japanese reader-responsible logic, he will leave his English readers totally confused.

2.3. Error Analysis

Error Analysis (EA) is a paradigm which involves objectively describing L2 learners' language production and the target language, and then compares the two systems to locate mismatches (Corder, 1967). With its cognitivist orientation of psychology, EA looks at learner deviations as "clues to inner processes, as widow into the mind" (Kroll & Schafer, 1978, p. 243). Learners' errors are not "pathologies to be eradicated or diseases to be healed"; instead, they are "necessary stages in all language-learning, as the product of intelligent cognitive strategies and therefore as potentially useful indicators of what processes the student is using" (Kroll & Schafer, 1978, p. 244).

When it comes to error analysis, one thing that needs to be clarified is the distinction between mistakes and errors. Mistakes are "errors of performance" (Corder, 1967), unsystematic

"adventitious artefacts of linguistic performance", while errors are "errors of competence" and learners' systematic "transitional competence". Mistakes can be corrected by learners once they become aware of them (Brown, 2000; Ellis, 1997; James, 1998). Norrish (1983), on the other hand, distinguished errors from mistakes by singling out the feature of *"consistency"*—errors are a systematic deviation of the target language and the learner consistently gets it wrong, while mistakes are inconsistent deviation.

As errors reveal learners' hypotheses about the target language, they are informative both theoretically and pedagogically. A learner's errors hold threefold significance. They inform the teacher of how far the learner has progressed, what difficulties are faced by the learner, and what remains to learn; they provide the researcher evidence of how language is learned and what strategies the learner is using to progress toward the system of the target language; to the learner, the making of errors is a way he tests his hypotheses about the target language (Candling, 2001; Corder, 1967; Kroll & Schafer, 1978; Mitchell & Myles, 2004; Stark, 2001).

Learner errors come in various types involving different levels of the target language. Dulay, Burt and Krashen (1982) suggested four categories, called Target Modification Taxonomy to classify learner errors, to which Corder (1998) added one more category, including *omission, addition (*or *redundancy), misformation*, *misordering*, and *blends*. Learner errors can also be approached by modality (i.e., receptive or productive), by medium (i.e., spoken or written), or by level (Corder, 1998, p. 129). Corder pointed out three levels of language, where learner errors may emerge: the levels of *substance, text* and *discourse*. Taxonomy or classification of errors enables researchers to describe errors in a systematic way. What's more, it makes possible to count tokens of each type (Corder, 1998) for further analysis. Figure 1 below illustrates classification of learner errors in terms of Corder's (1998) three levels and the five categories from Dulay et al. (1982) and Corder (1998).

Richards and Sampson (1984) pointed out seven factors that may influence and characterize learner errors, including (1) interlingual transfer, (2) intralingual interference, (3) sociolinguistic situation, (4) modality of exposure and modality of production, (5) learner age, (6) successions of approximative systems, and (7) universal hierarchy of difficulty. Brown (2000) added to one more source of errors—communication strategies (p. 227). Dulay and Burt (1974) studied syntactic errors of five- to eight-year-olds in learning L2 and found that only 4.7% of the children's errors could be attributed to L1 interference and that developmental strategies accounted for 87.1% of the errors. George (1972) noted that only one-third of learner errors could be traced to L1 structure. Bailey, Madden and Krashen (1974) investigated accuracy of usage for eight English functors of adult ESL learners and found a highly consistent order of relative difficulty in the use of the functors across different L1 backgrounds. They also concluded that a major source of errors was intra- rather than inter-lingual. Scott and Tucker (1974) examined written and oral samples of 22 EFL learners with Arabic L1 background at the beginning and end of a school term. They found the students to have made more progress sorting out intralingual errors than interlingual errors.

3. METHOD

3.1. Content Analysis

Content analysis was applied as the research method in this study, including both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the former also termed "frequency analysis" (George, 2008: 224) and the latter "interpretive analysis" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 17). Krippendorff (2004) defines content analysis as "a research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from texts (or other meaningful) to the contexts of their use" (p. 18). Therefore, by analyzing a body of texts and through inferences drawn from the analyses, research questions can thus be answered.

3.2. Data Collection

Three hundred and sixty writing samples of expository from the GEPT writing corpus will be analyzed, 115 writings graded five, 125 writings graded four, and 120 writings graded Three. The passing grade is four. All the 360 writing samples cover four topics, 90 samples for each topic. Of the 90 samples, 30 samples are graded five, another 30 graded four, and the other 30 are failed samples.

3.3. Data Analysis

Content analysis (or text analysis) was applied as the research method, including both quantitative and qualitative approaches, the former also termed "frequency analysis" (George, 2008: 224) and the latter "interpretive analysis" (Krippendorff, 2004, p. 17). Text analysis is one kind of content analysis when the analyzed content is written texts. Four main categories were selected to check how EFL writers perform concerning composing English expository texts, including (1) *within-sentence grammaticality*; (2) *word choice*; (3) *text coherence, cohesion and unity*, and (4) *rhetorical structure*. I re-organized Corder's (1998) three levels of errors by categorizing errors depending on whether the deviations involve word level, sentence level or intersentence level, which yielded the categories of word choice, within-sentence grammaticality, and text coherence, cohesion and unity respectively. The category of rhetorical structure was designed to examine how well Taiwanese learners' EFL writings conform to the rhetorical structure of English expository. Meanwhile, length of each writing sample was counted in words.

Features or errors of these categories were counted. Such a quantitative analysis of the data would help us get to know the common features of expository texts composed by Taiwanese EFL writers and the most common errors they made. Errors and features of the four categories were counted manually. The coder perused each writing sample, marked errors she identified and labeled them with codes that stood for the errors in question. Each writing sample was read twice to make sure there was no error being overlooked or misjudged. Then the codes with their corresponding frequency counts were written down on the margin of the writing paper for later recording. ANOVA was conducted to verify inter-group differences.

3.4. Inter-Coder Reliability

To reach reliability, two experienced high school English teachers with more than 15 years of teaching experience in high school were invited to evaluate 12 writing samples from the pool, three samples from each topic and four samples for each score group. The writing samples were typewritten, instead of being presented in their original photo-copied PDF format, so that the evaluators would not know the source and the purpose of the writing. Both evaluators were informed that their job was to help increase objectivity of my evaluation of more writing samples. They first identified mistakes in the 12 writing samples without knowing the score and the topic of each writing sample; then they crosschecked the mistakes identified by the other evaluator. They had to reach an agreement on the mistakes identified in the writing samples to move on to the next step of labeling, in which the two evaluators described the features of the mistakes and labeled them. The finished labels were then crosschecked against my own labels of the mistakes from the 12 writing samples. Wherever a labeling clash arose, the two evaluators and I would have a discussion about the label in question until an agreement was reached. The finalized labels as shown in Table 2 were used as a coding system for later analysis of all the writing samples.

4. RESULTS

4.1. Writing Length

Words of each writing sample were counted. The average number of words and the range of writing length for each topic and each score group are shown in Table 1. Overall speaking, the higher the score is, the longer the writing is, and the intergroup difference reaches level of significance. However, there is no casual relationship between score and writing length. Seventeen samples out of the 115 5-point writings and 38 samples out of the 125 4-point writings contain less than 147 words, which is the average length of the failed writings; on the other hand, 44 samples out of the 120 failed writings contain more than 167 words, the average length of all the 4-point writing samples and 23 of them even reach a length longer than 182 words. In other words, though better writings in our pool have a longer average length, length of writing is not a predictor of its overall performance.

Table 1. Summary of number of words of writing samples

Score	Average	Range	ANOVA	
			F	***p***
5	182.1	101~318	27.363**	.000
4	165.8	96~279		
3	146.6	45~236		

**p<.01

4.2. The Code List

There are totally 41 features finalized in the process of evaluating the writing samples; they also work as the coding system in analyzing the whole writing pool. Table 2 shows the codes and feature description of each code.

Table 2. Coding system applied in the evaluation of the writing pool

Category	Code	Feature Description
Within-Sentence Grammaticality	Fmt	Format errors, including (1) no indentation, (2) wrong punctuation, (3) lower-case and upper-case errors, (4) improper paragraphing
	Det	Determiner errors—incorrect use of determiners and articles (a, an, the, this, that, these, those)
	Num	Number errors—incorrect use of plural or singular forms of nouns or verbs
	S-V Agm	Violation of subject-verb agreement
	S-V Mis	Mismatch of subject and verb, including (1) incongruence between subject and verb, (2) lack of subject, (3) more than one subject
	MulV	Multiple verbs—more than one verb in one sentence
	VbFm	Incorrect use of verb form, including wrong use of (1) tense, (2) aspect, (3) voice, (4) mood, (5) gerund or infinitive
	ModE	Incorrect use of modals or auxiliaries
	ProE	Incorrect use of pronouns, including (1) pronoun inconstancy, (2) improper use/omission of pronouns
	RProE	Incorrect use of relative pronouns—(1) using wrong relative pronouns, (2) lack of relative pronouns
	PE	Incorrect use of prepositions
	Frag	Sentence fragments, including (1) incomplete clauses, (2) phrases with no verb
	Clau	Dangling clauses that start with (1) a coordinating conjunction, or (2) a subordinating conjunction
	Run-on	Run-on sentences—using commas between sentences
	WConj	Incorrect use of conjunctions, including using wrong conjunctions or lacking conjunctions
	WOE	Word order errors—incorrect word orders
	ChiEng	Chinese English—incorrect expressions resembling Chinese syntax
	NonEng	Non-English—expressions that are not canonical English nor resemble Chinese
Word Choice	Typ	Typos, including (1) misspelling, (2) right spelling but incorrect part of speech, (3) mixing present participle (Ving) with past participle (pp)
	WW	Wrong word—incorrect use of words
	WP	Wrong phrase—incorrect use of phrases (correct in form but semantically incongruous in context)

	Col	Collocation errors, including (1) violation of collocations, (2) incomplete phrasal verbs with no preposition or adverb
	Collq	Colloquial use—use of colloquial expressions
	Redn	Redundancy—redundant words or phrases
	Ambg	Ambiguity—words/phrases that are ambiguous in meaning and cause incomprehensibility of the sentence
	GenW	Generic words—words that are too general, not specific in meaning
	WQ	Wrong quotation—incorrect quotations of idioms
	SmAn	Semantic anomaly—incorrect combination of words that leads to semantically anomalous or incomprehensible strings
Text Coherence,	OGL	Overgeneralization—sentences that involve overgeneralization
Cohesion and	IRL	Irrelevance—sentences irrelevant to the development of the topic
Unity	NoCohen	No coherence—no coherence between sentences
	NoCohes	No cohesion—no cohesion between sentences
	NoUnity	No unity—no unity between sentences
	NoConet	No connector—lack of connectors to combine sentences
	WConet	Wrong Connector— incorrect use of connectors between sentences
	LogFal	Logical Fallacy—(1) violation of logic (2) incorrect cause-effect relation
Rhetorical	Hook	Hook—attention getter at the very beginning of the writing
Structure	BkInfo	Background information
	TS	Topic sentence—a sentence that introduces the topic
	SS	Supporting sentence—sentences that support a point
	ConS	Conclusion sentence—sentences used to conclude the writing

4.3. Features of the Four Variables

Analysis of all the writing samples are presented in terms of the four categories, *within-sentence grammaticality*, *word choice*, *text coherence, cohesion and unity*, and *rhetorical structure*. Features belonging to the first three categories are errors, while features that belong to the category of rhetorical structure are elements of English expository.

In identifying errors in the writing samples, I labeled all the deviations without distinguishing errors from mistakes. For one thing, the criteria of consistency and self-correctedness were not applicable in the present study; one composition alone by each test-taker does not provide enough information to judge if certain deviations are consistently repeated or if the learners can self-correct the deviations they produce. For another, in evaluating these writings, evaluators did not take into consideration whether certain deviations were mistakes or errors. They received the same penalty as long as communication was hindered regardless of the deviations being mistakes or errors. Moreover, an investigation of frequently occurring deviations including mistakes and errors provides important information for teachers to raise students' awareness in EFL writing.

It is expected that the lower score the writing gets, the more errors are identified and that writings with a higher score contain more expository elements than lower-score writings. Appendix

A shows the result of ANOVA F-test of the data. Numbers in parentheses are percentages derived by dividing frequency counts by number of the writing samples of the group and then multiplied by 100. Error types with a percentage larger than 50 suggest prevalence of the types of errors in the pool, and a percentage over 100 means on average, each writer of the very score group commits more than one error of that particular type. The results yielded 2,734 error counts related to within-sentence grammaticality, 1,837 error counts related to word choice, 354 error counts related to text coherence, cohesion and unity, and 468 frequency counts of features related to rhetorical structure. Table 3 summarizes the statistical analysis of the results.

Table 3. Summary of frequency counts and ANOVA

Error type	Group			ANOVA	
	3	4	5	F	p
Fmt	63(53)[a]	34(27)	26(23)	5.181**	.006
Det	135(104)	96(77)	53(46)	11.654**	.000
Num	232(193)	138(110)	79(69)	18.668**	.000
S-VAgm	62(52)	38(30)	24(21)	7.533**	.001
S-VMis	26(22)	16(13)	8(7)	4.140*	.017
MulV	26(22)	18(14)	3(3)	5.801**	.003
VbFm	248(207)	154(123)	66(57)	17.344**	.000
ModE	10(8)	5(4)	2(2)	2.973	.052
ProE	58(48)	52(42)	41(36)	.834	.435
RProE	9(8)	7(6)	3(3)	1.281	.279
PE	145(121)	101(81)	53(46)	15.885**	.000
Frag	87(73)	24(19)	6(5)	36.894**	.000
Clau	89(74)	62(50)	24(21)	11.771**	.000
Run-on	110(92)	69(55)	30(26)	10.592**	.000
WConj	21(18)	22(18)	2(2)	4.891**	.008
WOE	32(27)	15(12)	9(8)	6.596**	.002
ChiEng	42(35)	29(23)	7(6)	9.597**	.000
NonEng	14(12)	6(5)	3(3)	3.785*	.024
Subtotal	1409	886	439		
Typ	292(243)	194(155)	73(63)	40.703**	.000
WW	149(124)	92(74)	65(57)	14.536**	.000
WP	39(33)	41(33)	24(21)	1.554	.213
Col	262(218)	189(151)	70(61)	33.394**	.000
Collq	6(5)	9(7)	10(9)	.438	.646
Redn	22(18)	19(15)	19(17)	.174	.840
Ambg	72(60)	54(43)	25(22)	9.562**	.000
GenW	3(3)	3(2)	1(1)	.551	.600

WQ	2(2)	0(0)	1(1)	1.028	.359
SmAn	72(60)	25(20)	4(3)	24.682**	.000
Subtotal	919	626	292		
OGL	7(6)	18(14)	10(9)	2.373	.095
IRL	28(23)	40(32)	14(12)	1.810	.165
NoCohen	11(9)	4(3)	1(1)	5.214**	.006
NoCohes	24(20)	18(14)	7(6)	4.006*	.019
NoUnity	2(2)	2(2)	1(1)	.166	.847
NoConet	3(3)	0(0)	2(2)	1.045	.353
WConet	30(25)	32(26)	20(17)	.908	.404
LogFal	33(28)	35(28)	12(10)	4.467*	.012
Subtotal	138	149	67		
Hook	0(0)	1(1)	2(2)	1.073	.343
BkInfo	52(43)	69(55)	64(56)	2.300	.102
TS	25(21)	40(32)	44(38)	4.430*	.013
SS	0(0)	0(0)	4(3)	4.378*	.013
Cons	20(17)	62(50)	85(74)	49.514**	.000
Subtotal	97	172	199		

a. The number in parentheses means percentage (=frequency÷number of writing samples×100).
*$p<.05$; **$p<.01$

4.3.1. Within-sentence grammaticality

As was expected, the lower the score, the more errors. Figure 1 shows distribution of the error types. Among the 18 error types, nine of them have a percentage higher than 50 and the F value reaching level of significance, including Fmt (format), Det (determiners), Num (number), S-VAgm (subject verb agreement), VbFm (verb forms), PE (preposition error), Frag (fragment), Clau (dangling clause), and Run-on (run-on sentences). The 5-point writers made more errors in terms of Num and VbFm; the 4-point writers made more errors in VbFm, Num, PE, Det, Run-on, and Clau; the 3-point writings made more errors in VbFm, Num, PE, Det, Run-on, Clau, Frag, Fmt and S-VAgm. Accordingly, we may thus assume that EFL writers tend to commit errors involving number, verb forms, prepositions, determiners, run-on sentences and incomplete clauses within a sentence scope; besides, less proficient EFL writers also produce more erroneous expressions that involve fragments, incorrect format (like punctuation, indentation, lower-case/upper-case letters, and paragraphing), and violation of subject-verb agreement.

Three error types are worthy of special note, that is, ModE (modal error), ProE (pronoun error) and RProE (relative pronoun error). There is no significant difference between any two groups in terms of these three error types. Both ModE and RProE have scarce counts ranging from 2 to 10, but ProE have much larger frequency counts than ModE and RProE, with 36%, 42% and 48% for the 5-, 4- and 3-point groups respectively. In fact, for the 5-point group, ProE is the fifth most frequently occurring error types in this category. This may suggest that writers do not improve in

pronoun use as much as they do in other grammar points as their proficiency level heightens.
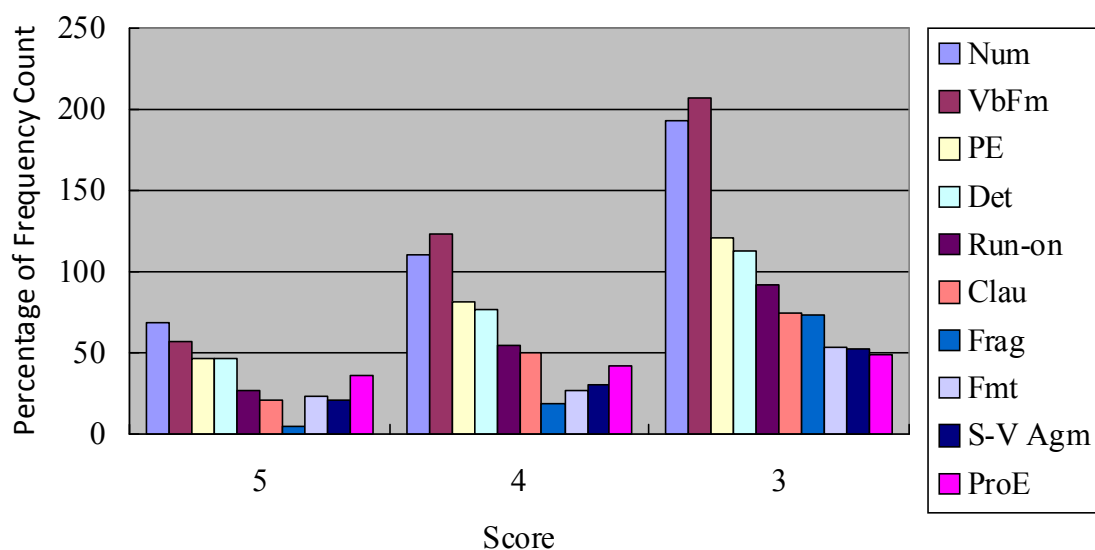

Figure 1. Distribution of errors in the category of within-sentence grammaticality

4.3.2. Word choice

Again, as expected, the higher the score, the fewer errors. The three groups were consistent in terms of the four most frequently occurring errors involving word choice. Five out of the ten error types have a percentage higher than 50 and the F value reaching level of significance, including Typ (typo), WW (Wrong Word), Col (collocation), Ambg (ambiguity), and SmAn (semantic anomaly). Typ has the largest percentage of error occurrence across the three score groups, with 63%, 155%, and 243% for the 5-, 4- and 3-point groups respectively. Typo here includes misspelling of words, use of words with wrong part of speech, and misuse of present participle for past participle or vice versa. Collocation errors come second after Typo, with frequency percentages of 61%, 151%, and 218% for the 5-, 4- and 3-point groups respectively. WW comes next, with frequency percentages of 57%, 74% and 124% for the 5-, 4- and 3-point groups respectively. The 3-point writings also showed a high frequency count in errors involving ambiguity and semantic anomaly, both with a frequency percentage of 60%. There is a great difference of frequency count both in Typo and in Col between score groups, indicating a negative correlation between typos and violation of collocation and overall performance of the writing. Meanwhile, use of wrong words and errors involving ambiguity were much more frequently found in writings with lower scores; the frequency count of WW of the 3-point writings is almost the sum of the counts of the other two groups.
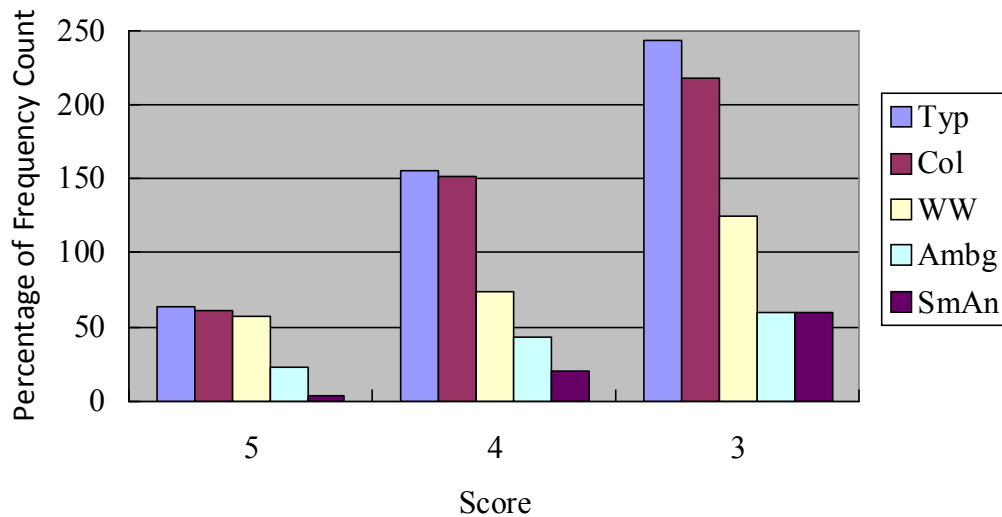
Figure 2. Distribution of errors in the category of word choice

4.3.3. Text coherence, cohesion and unity

In this category, none of the error types has a percentage higher than 50, and the error types with F value reaching level of significance only have a highest percentage of 28. Generally speaking, the 5-point writings contain the fewest errors, with a total number of 67 (58%) error counts; the 4-point group, however, made more mistakes in this category than the 3-point group, with 149 (119%) for the former and 138 (115%) for the latter group. The error types that contribute to the 4-point group's larger number of errors are OGL, IRL, WConet and LogFal, indicating that 4-point writings contain more sentences which involve overgeneralization, irrelevant information, wrong use of connectors, and logical fallacy, with even more error counts in OGL and IRL than the 3-point group. In terms of the other four error types of NoCohen, NoCohes, NoUnity, and NoConet, the 4-point group outdid the 3-point group by making fewer errors.
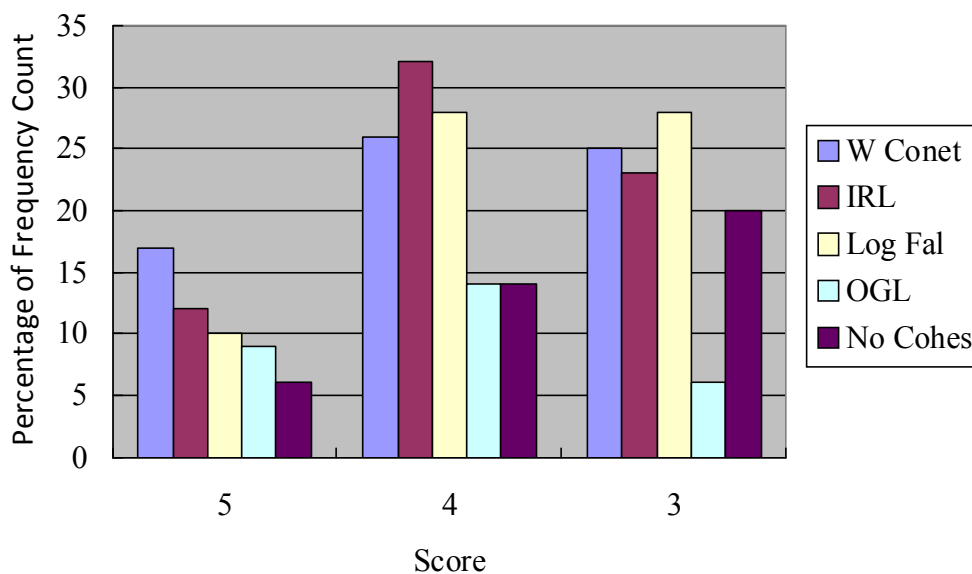

Figure 3. Distribution of errors in the category of text coherence, cohesion, and unity

4.3.4. Rhetorical structure

The fourth category of codes deals with rhetorical structure of English expository. An English expository paragraph includes three parts—a topic sentence, supporting sentences and concluding sentences. An English expository essay expands such structure into introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion; the introduction includes hook, background information and thesis statement and the body paragraphs serve to support the idea in the thesis statement (Savage & Mayer, 2012). The writing pool exhibited features of expository rhetorical structure, including hook (Hook), background information (BkInfo), topic sentence (TS), supporting sentences (SS), and concluding sentence (ConS). As Appendix A shows, the higher the score, the more counts of these features, and within-group differences reach level of significance in TS, SS, and ConS. The 3-point group had a very low percentage of putting a topic sentence in the beginning and a concluding sentence at the end of the writing, with only 25 counts of topic sentence and 20 counts out of 120 writing samples. Lack of a topic sentence and a concluding sentence will definitely undermine well-formedness of the rhetorical structure, which in turn will hinder written communication to a large extent.
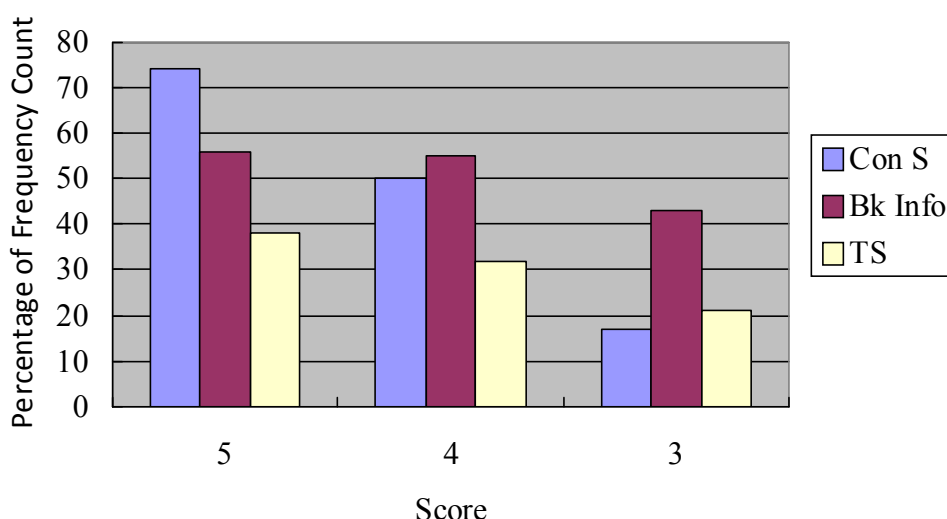

Figure 4. Distribution of frequency counts of rhetorical features

4.4. Relationship between Error Types of the Three Groups

When the most frequently occurring errors of the three score groups were listed and a comparison was made across the group, we found some consistency in the error types. Table 4 summarizes the types of errors that most frequently occur across the groups. Note those error types with a percentage of occurrence frequency over 50%. As Table 4 shows, the higher score the group has, the fewer types of errors are committed. What is more, the error types of the 3-point group contain those of the 4-point group, which in turn contain those of the 5-point group. Figure 2 illustrates such a subsumable relationship among the error types of the three groups in a graphical way. The innermost circle is the subset of the error types of the 5-point group. As the circle expands outward, four more error types are included, which together with the five error types in the innermost circle comprise the subset of the error types of the 4-point group. The outermost circle includes another six error types, which together with the nine error types in the innermost and

middle circles form the subset of the error types of the 3-point group. The 4-point writers outdid the 3-point writers in terms of 14 error types, with Frag, Ambg, SmAn, Fmt, and S-VAgm bearing percentages of occurrence frequency lower than 50%, suggesting the 4-point writers' better ability in handling these grammatical features. Likewise, the 5-point writers outperformed the 4-point writers in handling features like prepositions (PE), determiners (Det), run-on sentences (Run-on), and dangling clauses (Clau). However, 5-point writers still commit errors of certain types with percentage of occurrence frequency higher than 50%, including typo (Typ), collocation (Col), verb forms (VbFm), number (Num), and incorrect word choice (WW), suggesting that these five features could be more persistent than others in the process of learning EFL writing.

Table 4. Comparison of error counts among groups

| Error Type	Group			ANOVA	
	3-point	4-point	5-point	F	p
Typo (Typ)	292 (243)	194 (155)	73 (63)	40.703**	.000
Collocation (Col)	262 (218)	189 (151)	70 (61)	33.394**	.000
Verb form (VbFm)	248 (207)	154 (123)	66 (57)	17.344**	.000
Number (Num)	232 (193)	138 (110)	79 (69)	18.668**	.000
Wrong word (WW)	149 (124)	92 (74)	65 (57)	14.536**	.000
Preposition error (PE)	145 (121)	101 (81)	53 (46)	15.885**	.000
Determiner (Det)	135 (113)	96 (77)	53 (46)	11.654**	.000
Run-on sentence (Run-on)	110 (92)	69 (55)	30 (26)	10.592**	.000
Dangling clause (Clau)	89 (74)	62 (50)	24 (21)	11.771**	.000
Frag (Fragment)	87 (73)	24 (19)	6 (5)	36.894**	.000
Ambiguity (Ambg)	72 (60)	54 (43)	25 (22)	9.562**	.000
Semantic anomaly (SmAn)	72 (60)	25 (20)	4 (3)	24.682**	.000
Format (Fmt)	63 (53)	34 (27)	26 (23)	5.181**	.006
Subject-verb agreement (S-VAgm)	62 (52)	38 (30)	24 (21)	7.533**	.000
Pronoun error (ProE)	58 (48)	52 (42)	41 (36)	.834	.435

*p<.05
**p<.01
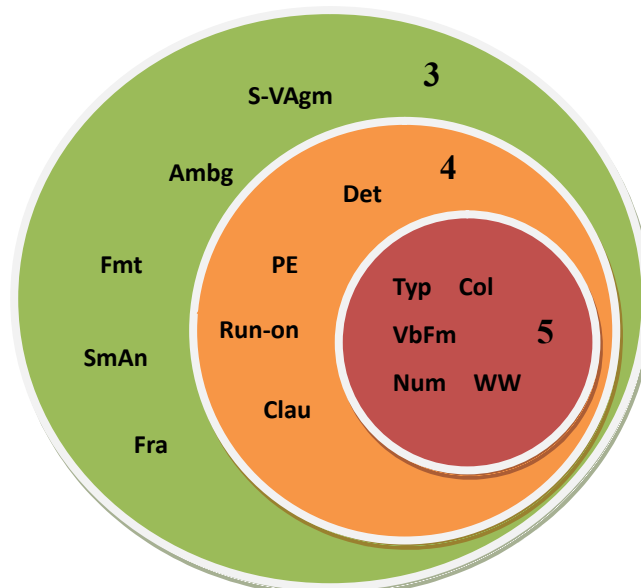
Figure 5. Subsumable Relationship between Error Types Found in the Three Groups

5. DISCUSSION

5.1. Most Frequently Occurring Error Types

It can be expected that the higher score a composition gets, the fewer mistakes are identified in it, but what really helps is to identify the types of errors most frequently by EFL writers. This study identified types of errors frequently committed by EFL writers, there being 13 of them. Better still, a subsumable relation is revealed among the three score groups. As shown in Figure 5, the five types of errors in the innermost circle are those that most problematic areas in learning EFL writing. They persist into a later stage of EFL writing process, with about half of the five-point writing samples demonstrating these five types of errors. On the other hand, errors that involve ambiguity, semantic anomaly, format, and subject-verb agreement, thought appearing with very high frequency counts in our data, are more likely to be corrected as writers improve their writing ability along the way.

A further inspection of these 13 types of error reveals what may contribute to EFL writers' performance. As far as the error types in the innermost circle in Figure 5 are concerned, they are very likely under different sources of influence. Typos include misspelling, wrong part of speech, and mixing present participle with past participle. Misspelling can be caused by slips of the pencil or uncertainty of the spelling, which is due to an attention deficit, while using words with a wrong part of speech and mixing present participles with past participles have more to do with grammar. Violation of collocation can be attributed to not paying attention to collocation but learning words in isolation. Errors related to verb forms and number are very likely a result of L1 influence. As Chinese does not manifest tense, aspect and voice in the verb itself, and number is not manifested in nouns or verbs themselves, without special attention when dealing with these grammatical points, it is very easy to transfer the Chinese way of dealing with nouns and verbs. Using wrong words on the other hand, has much to do with limited vocabulary size of EFL writers, echoing Schoonen et al.'s (2000) conclusion that lexical generation is difficult for L2 learners. Influence from L1 is also shown in errors related to prepositions, determiners, run-on sentences and dangling clauses. Where English requires a preposition or determiner, there may be no corresponding words in the Chinese translation, which as a result will hinder EFL learners' correct use of prepositions and determiners. The frequent appearance of run-on sentences and dangling clauses may be attributed to different sentence units in Chinese and English. Chinese uses message as the unit of a sentence. A period will not be used until a message is expressed completely. English, on the other hand, uses syntactic structure as the unit of a sentence. Meanwhile, when there is enough context, Chinese allows utterances to begin with a coordinating or subordinating conjunction, whose transferring to English causes dangling clauses, an ungrammatical structure in English.

5.2. Rhetorical Structure of EFL Writing

Analysis of the writing pool identified five features of rhetorical structure, including hook, background information, topic sentence, supporting sentences, and concluding sentences. The three groups of writing altogether show frequency counts of 185 on background information, 167 on

concluding sentences, and 109 on topic sentence, very few supporting sentences specifically directed to the topic sentence being identified. For one-paragraph writing, like most of the writing samples collected in this study, the most important features would be a topic sentence, supporting details and concluding sentences (Savage & Mayer, 2012). The overwhelming frequency counts of background information can be interpreted as a result of L1 influence. Chinese, as categorized as a reader-responsible language (McCool, 2009), tends to adopt an "inductive or quasi-inductive line of reasoning" (p. 2) with examples preceding rules. The examples can be background of the topic in question, as is shown in the writing samples in this study. Further examination of the background information in the writing samples reveals that most of the background information describes a general situation in which the phenomena or objects the topics aim to tackle take place or exist, instead of specific information related to the writers themselves. Again, this is a result of influence from L1 writing habit or training. Meanwhile, the inclusion of background information can be related to task requirements. As Table 7 shows, there is a slanted distribution of frequency counts of background information among the four topics, with Topic A including as few as 4 writings (out of 30) with background information. The fact that Topic A addresses a personal plan or preference may make it less easy for EFL writers to relate to something more general which is very often used before the topic is formally introduced. As a result, fewer writers of Topic A gave background information in their writing.

Meanwhile, less than one-third of the writing samples present a topic sentence before elaboration of the whole writing, which we may assume is another result of L1 influence. As Chinese writing tends to delay thesis or leave it absent, when EFL writers transfer such preference of developing ideas, a lack of topic sentence at the beginning of a composition is thus predictable. Along with the inductive chain of reasoning, supporting details to topic sentence would be rare to identify, as is shown in this study. There is another point about topic sentence that is worthy of note. Appearance of topic sentence in the data seems to be related to the nature of the titles. Topic A accounts for most of the frequency counts of topic sentence, with 83 out of 109, and Topic C comes next with 20 frequency counts. A comparison of the four topics reveals that both Topic A and Topic C ask a what question, while Topic B and Topic D ask a why question and that expected answers to Topic A are very specific compared with expected answers to Topic C.

Over half of the passing writing samples include a concluding sentence (147 out of 239), while only one-sixth of the failed writing (20 out of 120) has one. The low frequency count of the failed group can be explained partly as a result of low EFL proficiency. There could be not enough time for these writers to come to the part of conclusion, so they ended the writing just like that. The lack of a concluding sentence can also be partly due to EFL writers' not knowing how to compose a concluding sentence. This may explain whey even for writings with a passing score, there are still 92 of them not including a concluding sentence.

One more thing about the rhetorical structure is about the length of a writing and distribution of sentences. As mentioned previously, length of a piece of writing is not a predictor of overall performance of it, although higher-scored groups tend to produce longer writings. Of the 120 3-point writings, 92 of them (76.7%) contain more than 120 words, and 8 out of the other 240

writings scored 4 or 5 contain less than 120 words[3]. This very fact suggests that to complete an effective expository writing in English, the writer needs to include enough information in his sentences, and that it is desirable his writing include the topic sentence, supporting details and concluding sentences. On the other hand, a composition with more than 120 words is not necessarily effective expository writing in that the sentences do not serve the purposes of introducing the topic, giving supportive details and concluding the writing. Therefore, a better way to help less advanced EFL writers to write an effective expository composition is to specify how to arrange eight to twelve sentences into the three parts of an expository paragraph—one sentence as the topic sentence, six to nine sentences to provide supporting details, and one to two sentences to conclude the writing. Such a specification would give EFL writers a focus and direction to develop their writing and prevent them from leading readers astray.

5.3. Features of Writings with a Passing Score

Based on the error types and features of expository writing shown in the three score groups, we may see a set of features looming that distinguish compositions that can receive a passing score from those that fail. Figure 6 shows a list of features in expository writing. When all these features are put in affirmative statements, they serve as a checklist for writing up an effective expository paragraph, a bonus of which is to pass GEPT intermediate writing test. A checklist of writing features can be modified according to students' proficiency level and teaching points focused in a writing class. It is not necessary to include all the 18 checkpoints in one checklist, depending on what the teacher wants to focus on.

6. CONCLUSION

The study investigated 360 writing samples of four different topics from the GEPT intermediate writing test pool. Text analysis of the writing samples revealed the following. First, although writing samples with a higher score tend to contain more words than writings with a lower score, length is not a predictor of the score of a composition. Second, the lower the score, the more types of errors are identified in a composition. Besides, the error types manifested in three score groups are in a subsumable relation, suggesting some error types are more persistent in the process of learning EFL writing. Third, the higher the score, the more features of rhetorical structure of English expository are identified. Background information is very often seen in EFL writing, which can be a result of L1 influence. The appearance of topic sentence is assumed to be related to proficiency level of the writer and the nature of the title.

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[3]The instruction for the intermediate level of GEPT writing task specifies that the test-taker is to write a composition of about 120 words in about eight to twelve sentences in one or more paragraphs addressing the topic as suggested.

<table>
<tr><td colspan="1" align="center">Editor's Checklist</td></tr>
</table>

Editor's Checklist

Put a check if the writing fulfills the statement.

☐ 1. The writing has a topic sentence.

☐ 2. The writing has supporting details following the topic sentences.

☐ 3. The writing has concluding sentences at the end.

☐ 4. The writing follows the appropriate format (indentation at the beginning of a paragraph, capitalized letters when necessary, right punctuation).

☐ 5. No ambiguity is expected in the writing.

☐ 6. No semantic anomaly is found in the writing.

☐ 7. All the subjects and verbs that follow are in agreement with number.

☐ 8. All the prepositions used in the writing are appropriate and correct.

☐ 9. All the determiners used in the writing are appropriate and correct.

☐ 10. There is a period after every sentence. (No run-on sentences)

☐ 11. All the conjunctions used in the writing connect two clauses. (No dangling clauses)

☐ 12. All the verbs used in the writing are in the correct form.

☐ 13. All the nouns and verbs are in the appropriate in terms of number.

☐ 14. All the words are spelled correctly in the correct part of speech.

☐ 15. There is no mix-up of Ving (present participle) and pp (past participle).

☐ 16. No inappropriate combination of words that violates collocation.

☐ 17. All the words are appropriately used in the context they appear.

Figure 6. Checklist for an Effective Expository Writing

Based on the features of the three score groups, a checklist is made with features demonstrated by writings that pass intermediate GEPT writing test. Such a checklist helps teachers to set definite and specific teaching aims in EFL writing instruction or giving instruction on how to pass GEPT writing tests; it also helps students monitor their own writing, which in turn reinforces their knowledge about what makes an effective piece of English expository writing.

Pedagogical implications from this study are manifold. First, the teaching of grammar in EFL writing class can be made stage-wise. In the beginning, attention is advisably directed to areas that are easy to handle, such as areas in the outer circle in Figure 5, including ambiguity, semantic anomaly, format and subject-verb agreement. Then moving on to the next stage, more attention is directed to prepositions, determiners, run-on sentences and dangling clauses. For learners with a higher proficiency level, it is suggested that EFL teachers raise learners' awareness of the five types of errors in the inner circle so that their writing may keep improving, instead of committing the same mistakes repeatedly. Such stage-wise progression of grammar teaching in EFL writing may make error awareness and error correction more manageable to learners, especially for those with a lower proficiency level.

Second, in teaching English expository, it is important to instill in students knowledge of the

rhetorical structure, with a topic sentence at the beginning of the writing, supporting details coming next and concluding sentences to end the writing. To help students better deal with topic sentences, teachers may start with topics that ask a what question with a specific answer. Topics like "My favorite something/someone", "My ambition for the future", "The person I am grateful to" all lead to one specific answer, and thus elicit topic sentence more effectively. Once students accumulate enough practice and can handle topic sentence better, the teacher may move on to topics that ask why questions, such as "Why do students choose to go to bu-xi-ban after school?", "Why is learning English important?". As for concluding sentences, it is suggested that teachers teach strategies of concluding writing in an explicit way. Strategies to conclude writing include summarizing the main ideas, restating the thesis statement, making suggestions, giving recommendation, making predictions, asking a rhetorical question, etc.

Third, instead of asking students to include a certain number of words in their writing, teachers are advised to ask students to check if there are three parts—introduction, body, and conclusion in their writing. Since length of a composition is not a predictor of the performance, the number of words in a composition should not become a concern of students'. Instead, a structure of three parts may serve as a better guideline for students. It is very important that students know how to dissect their own writing into introduction, body and conclusion whether it is a paragraph or an essay they are writing.

Finally, based on the error types and features of expository writing shown in the three score groups, we may make a set of features that distinguish compositions that can receive a passing score from those that fail. The list can be further made into an editor's checklist as shown in Appendix B, which may serve as a checklist for writing up an effective expository paragraph, a bonus of which is to pass GEPT intermediate writing test. Teachers may adopt the whole checklist or part of it to serve the purpose, depending on students' proficiency level and the focused grammar points.

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