Scaffolding Chinese as a second language writing through a Systemic Functional Linguistics approach

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Since current research on Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language (CSL/CFL) instruction has paid scant attention to writing at the discourse level, the purpose of this study is to explore and address this gap by investigating the effect of a writing pedagogy, based on Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), on the development of Chinese writing ability. The present study derives from a research project in which an SFL-based multimedia writing program was designed for CSL/CFL learners. The effectiveness of this project was examined through the assessment of two CSL course, consisting of a total of 16 pre-intermediate level participants, at a university in Taiwan. To provide an in-depth account of the instructional potential of an SFL-based writing approach, this paper reports a case study focusing on the progress made by two of the participants during a lesson unit on descriptive writing. Pre- and post-instruction texts written by the two students were collected and analyzed in detail to illustrate the potential affordances that an SFL-based writing approach can offer to CSL/CFL learning. The results of this qualitative study indicate that the two pre-intermediate level writers demonstrated increased control in their use of the ideational, interpersonal, and textual resources associated with the descriptive genre. These findings suggest that SFL-informed educational practices may prove effective for CSL novice writers, and thus have further pedagogical implications for second/foreign language education.

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1. Introduction

Over the past decades, little attention has been paid to CSL/CFL (Chinese as a Second/Foreign Language) writing for communicative purposes, either theoretically or pedagogically (Zhang, 2009). Given the complexity of the Chinese writing system, CSL/CFL imposes enormous challenges on beginning learners with an alphabetic first language (Allen, 2008; Chen et al., 2013; Ye, 2013). As such, a great deal of CSL/CFL research has focused on the issue of learning Chinese characters, such as through Pinyin (e.g., Lee & Kalyuga, 2011; Shen & Xu, 2015; Xu, Chang, Zhang, & Perfetti, 2013) or radical awareness (e.g., Chen et al., 2013; Shen & Ke, 2007). Despite the fact that some studies have offered pedagogical suggestions on CSL/CFL writing (see Shum & Zhang, 2005; Everson & Xiao, 2011), the instructional designs of these studies have been presented in an anecdotal manner and have not been subject to adequate systematic investigation necessary to inform educators regarding effective pedagogies for teaching CSL/CFL composition. While a few studies have empirically investigated CSL writing by

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exploring the instrumental role of writing as a language learning activity in CSL/CFL classrooms (Mou, 2003; Zhang, 2009), their findings fail to address the issue of instructional approaches to CSL/CFL writing. As a consequence, CSL/CFL writing instruction at the discourse level remains comparatively underdeveloped, with few theoretically sound educational approaches applicable for Chinese language classrooms.

The overarching goal of language education is to foster students’ ability to use language appropriately for effective communication in a wide array of social contexts (Bachman, 1990; Hymes, 1966; Savignon, 1997). Likewise, composing a text as a meaning-making activity is demonstrated to facilitate second language acquisition (Byrnes, 2013; Manchón, 2011). Most importantly, a growing population will require Chinese literacy as a communicative tool to achieve academic goals, as indicated by a recent statistical report on foreign students in China (Ministry of Education, 2016). This report reveals that, in 2016, China recruited 442,773 foreign students, representing an 11.4% increase over 2015. It further highlights that almost half (47%) of all international students in China are pursuing undergraduate studies at Chinese universities and nearly 30% study in Chinese primary and secondary schools. Above all, technological advancement has eased the burden involved in learning to write Chinese words by hand, as learners can now use word processors to input Chinese characters through Pinyin transcription systems (Stickler & Shi, 2013). Based on the above theoretical and practical considerations, it is clear that more scholarly attention is warranted in the area of developing and evaluating pedagogy for learners’ acquisition of Chinese writing skills. The present study seeks to address this research gap by applying an SFL-based genre approach to CSL writing instruction, described in detail in following sections, and investigating the learning potential of such an approach for improving pre-intermediate Chinese learners writing proficiency.

2. Literature review

2.1. Theoretical background

In the past decades, the concept of ‘genre’ and the pedagogical value of genre-based writing pedagogy have attracted growing interest among second language (L2) writing scholars and educators (e.g., Cheng, 2006; Hyland, 2004; Hyon, 1996; Swales, 2011; Tardy, 2009). One major advantage of genre approaches over other pedagogical options is the emphasis on enhancing students’ awareness of discourse (Hyland, 2004, p.13). In the SFL tradition, discourse is considered as a complex system of language resources distributed across ideational, interpersonal, and textual dimensions (Martin, 2009, p.11). Language choices in genre construction are made according to a set of functions (e.g., expressing experiences, interacting with others, or organizing logical sequences) and are tailored to the communicative purpose (Swales, 2004). Therefore, the SFL model of language as a set of systems from which users make choices to create meanings in a social context to achieve specific communicative functions (i.e., expressing experiences, interacting with others, or organizing coherent and logical messages) (Hyland, 2004). That is, the SFL model of language is comprised of three dimensions: ideational, interpersonal, and textual resources. Ideational resources are used to construct the content of the text and represent our experiences as we engage in various social events and professional activities. Interpersonal resources relate to the maintenance or negotiation of social relationships and are primarily expressed through emotional responses and subjective evaluations. Textual resources are utilized to manage the logical flow of ideational and interpersonal meanings, obtaining the goals of cohesiveness and coherence, and are tailored to different modalities (such as speech, writing, or multimodalities).

This model of language is considered as “an indispensable foundation” for genre-based instruction (Martin, 2009, p.11). Martin (2009, p.13) has elaborated on the concept of genre in the SFL tradition and defines it as “a staged, goal-oriented social process, consisting of unfolding stages to achieve a communicative purpose in a social situation”. Thus, ‘genre’ is an umbrella term to show how texts vary in terms of their social purposes, and how different types of text utilize different language resources to achieve their communicative goals. This notion of ‘genre’ is embedded in the SFL model of language and social context (see Fig. 1).

As can be observed in Fig. 1, the ideational, interpersonal and textual meanings are “projected onto social context, giving rise to the register variables of field, tenor and mode” (Martin, 2009, p.11). Language choices in genre construction are made and varied by register variables (Martin, 2009; Troyan, 2014), of which there are three types: field (topic or focus of the activity), tenor (the relationship between the writer and reader), and mode (expectations for how particular text types should be organized). As indicated by the figure, the field variable of discourse is related to ideational resources, while the tenor variable relates to interpersonal resources, and the mode variable relates to textual resources.

The SFL approach to genre instruction is grounded in the belief that learning to write should be based on explicit awareness of language (Byrnes, 2009, 2013; Christie & Derewianka, 2008; Hyland, 2004; Hyon, 1996; Martin & Rose, 2008; Martin, 2009). It should be emphasized that such language awareness for writing development not only entails conscious knowledge of linguistic resources used in the construction of vocabulary and sentence structure but also extends to discourse
awareness (Huang, Berg, Siegrist, & Damsri, 2017). Learning these language resources is not simply about adhering to a set of rules, but rather about being aware of the potential meaning and creativity which can be constructed by language users from the resources offered by the language system, for the purpose of transforming human expressions into meaningful utterances (Byrnes, 2009, 2013).

2.2. Empirical support for the SFL approach

The SFL approach to genre instruction has been proposed as a desirable paradigm shift in L2 writing scholarship, because researchers recognize that there is a crucial need to better understand the relationship between genre and language, and that this relationship can be addressed primarily through a language-based theory of genre (Byrnes, 2009, 2013; Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014; Tardy, 2011; Troyan, 2014). Most distinctly, a standards-based approach based on SFL’s conceptualization of genre has also been proposed for foreign language writing instruction in the US (Troyan, 2014). With regard to L1 literacy in the US, American children have been shown to develop more conscious control of their writing (French, 2010) and to foster greater critical thinking about a text (Williams, 2000) with the use of an SFL approach. Likewise, English language learners (ELLs) across school levels in North America have enhanced their writing abilities for disciplinary content using similar approaches (Quinn, 2004; Mohan & Slater, 2006; de Oliveira & Lan, 2014 in science; Harman, 2013 in literary genre; Huang et al., 2017 in math and science; Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014 in English language arts). When applied to second/foreign language writing, SFL has also been shown to deliver noticeable improvements for both 12-year-olds’ English narrative and argumentative writing (Polias & Dare, 2006), and university-level Taiwanese EFL students narrative writing (Cheng, 2008).

Although little empirical research has adapted an SFL-based genre approach to CSL writing thus far, two particularly relevant pioneering works have shed light on its potential in this context. Mohan and Huang (2002), along with Huang and Mohan (2009), developed a CSL curriculum for young beginners at primary schools in Canada, in which language resources based on the SFL model were integrated with subject content and Chinese culture. Despite their commendable efforts in incorporating an SFL model of language into CSL/CFL instruction, the researchers’ focus was on the model’s effects on the expression of selected themes, and not on genre competence. The current study thus aims to take their research as a point of departure while extending the scope of study by following Martin’s definition of genre. That is, the instructional materials for this research project has been developed within the framework of the SFL-based genre approach, with a focus on mapping language features to different discourse stages associated with a specific genre. In this study, the term “SFL approach to genre” is used interchangeably with other more general terms, such as “SFL-based genre approach”, “SFL approach to genre instruction”, or “SFL-inspired or SFL-informed educational practices”, following conventions in the L2 writing literature.

3. Objectives and research questions

As shown above, the impact of the SFL approach to genre on writing instruction in various educational settings has attracted increasing attention. However, the application of this approach to learning writing for Chinese as a Second or Foreign Language has remained relatively underdeveloped. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the potential of applying the SFL-based approach to genre instruction for scaffolding the writing development of adult CSL learners at the pre-intermediate level. The specific research question formulated for this study is as follows: To what extent can pre-intermediate proficiency college CSL learners improve the quality of their writing with regard to the use of ideational, interpersonal, and textual resources as a result of an SFL-based approach to genre instruction?
4. Method

The study reported here was part of a 3.5-year project aimed at developing a multimedia CSL writing program grounded upon an SFL conceptualization of genre, exploring its effects on CSL learners’ writing development. That project was implemented in Taiwan, adopting six hours of weekend instruction designed to complement foreign students’ regular Chinese classes and to avoid interruptions to students’ regular classes. 16 pre-intermediate level students from a national university in Taiwan participated in the study, and were predominantly from South-East Asia. In the current research setting, they were divided into two CSL classes taught by different Taiwanese teachers with several years of experience teaching CSL. Both teachers were keen to integrate multimedia material in regular class instruction, such as the use of Chinese pop songs and features of traditional Chinese culture, and were very popular among students, based on the end-of-semester evaluations. The study presented here focused on a qualitative case study adopting discourse analysis to evaluate two students’ writing samples in order to provide an in-depth understanding of the potential impacts of SFL approach on students’ writing development with specific regard to the linguistic features of the target genre. Additional findings from the 3.5-year project are beyond the scope of this paper and are reported in another work (Cheng, 2017).

The method section first introduces the proposed multimedia CSL writing program developed based on SFL’s view of genre, since the major purpose of the current study is to report its learning affordances. Next, details on participant selection, unit design (teaching materials) and instructional procedures are presented. Finally, the data compilation methods are discussed, including data sources, collection procedures, and SFL-based linguistic analysis.

4.1. CSL multimedia writing program

A multimedia CSL writing instructional program was developed by a material-design team led by the researcher, consisting of experienced CSL instructors as well as a writing researcher and literacy scholar, working in collaboration with a Research and Design Center focused on multimedia teaching and learning. This online writing program was primarily based on an SFL grounded approach to genre, with a focus on scaffolding language resources to support learning of selected genres related to various themes. This design was also assisted by prior findings on CSL character learning (the website of this multimedia writing program will be provided upon request). In this program, texts, photos, animations, audio files, videos and interactive elements were combined throughout the instructional materials to illustrate meanings and wordings, reinforcing multiple encounters with unfamiliar expressions in various modes, and thus supporting language acquisition and discourse development.

Five units were covered by this Chinese writing program, each with a focus on a different topic: food, accommodation, education, recreation, and travel. Each unit consisted of three major sections: a language resource section, a writing strategy section, and an assignment and assessment section. In the language resource section, learning materials were designed based on the SFL concept of genre, and were further divided into the ideational resources, interpersonal resources, and textual resources required to compose in the target genre. The writing strategy section was further divided into three subsections: brainstorming, organization, and revision strategies. Most importantly, given that an SFL-inspired approach to writing has never been a prominent theme in CSL/CFL research or teacher training, each unit included a teacher’s manual detailing the learning goals and purposes of all instructional materials and activities, and the suggestions on how to teach the content, in order to enhance the teachers’ understanding and application of SFL’s view of genre in their teaching.

4.2. Participants

Two participants were selected for in-depth analysis from among the 16 participating students. Both were registered as post-graduate students at the participating university. Puan (pseudonym) was from Indonesia and studied agricultural science, while Surabot (pseudonym) was from Thailand and was pursuing a master’s degree in chemistry. They were assessed as pre-intermediate level learners based on their results of a simulated TOCFL (Test of Chinese as a Foreign Language) course placement exam administered by the language center of the participating university. Their language proficiency was assessed as between Common European Framework of Reference of Languages (CEFR) levels A2 and B1, or between the level of intermediate-low and novice-high, as stipulated by the 2012 American Council on the Teaching of Foreign Languages (ACTFL) proficiency guidelines. These two students had learned Chinese in their home countries as CFL learners, and also studied in Taiwan for more than one year. It should be noted that most students in the current setting had little experience writing Chinese texts due to several contextual factors, such as the large size of the language class and many teachers’ passive attitudes towards the use of writing as a language learning tool, due to the heavy workload that this would entail. Thus, students were required to compose only two or three simple texts each semester.

The two participants were purposively sampled based on the following factors: 1) representativeness of average textual gains among participating students; 2) different writing abilities; 3) enthusiastic attitudes towards learning Chinese; and 4) demonstrating learning problems common to adult CSL learners. In order to illustrate the extent to which the proposed Chinese writing program can aid students with writing proficiency of varying degrees, the participants were taught by the same instructor to avoid confounding variables, and were chosen to represent both below and above average level writers, after checking their pre-instruction text score and in consultation with their teacher. Moreover, their texts were considered as representative of the average writing gain made between pre- and post-instruction among participants (see Table 1), after
scoring all the texts written by the 16 students based on a Chinese writing assessment scheme (Cheng, 2017; for details on this assessment scheme).

Their texts can, therefore, exemplify any learning affordances for the participating students based on the intervention, and indicate how their writing improved after the pedagogical intervention. In this study, Surabot represents a below average writer among the participants, while Puan represents the above average group. As such, these two participants were purposefully selected to show the potential effects of genre instruction on students of varying writing proficiencies. However, this sampling method obviously constraints the generalizability of the present findings to other educational contexts, and the results can only be applied to CSL learners with the aforementioned features.

### 4.3. Unit design (instructional materials)

The instructional materials used for this pedagogical intervention were from one lesson unit selected from the proposed multimedia Chinese writing instructional program. This unit focuses on food in relation to the learning of the descriptive genre. This theme was selected to teach students how to compose a descriptive text, because it is close to their everyday lives and thus students are assumed to be more motivated to write and express relevant ideas. The design of this unit follows the SFL-based genre approach. The communicative purpose, genre stages, and related instructional language resources associated with the target genre are shown in Fig. 2.

The communicative purpose of this genre was to "describe the ways things are in our natural, built, and social environment by firstly classifying things and then describing their special characteristics" (Macken-Horarik, 2002, p.21). The stages of this genre are further divided into: the general statement (offering information about the subject), description of aspects (listing and elaborating the parts or qualities of the subject matter), and description of activities (possibly behaviors, functions and uses).

To help students list and elaborate the qualities of a specific food, the ideational resources of the instructional materials aim to familiarize students with basic food types, such as meat, seafood, vegetables and fruit, and sample vocabulary items associated with each, such as, 豬肉zhíròu (pork) for meat. In addition, students are taught the descriptive words for sensory images, such as, 酸suān (sour). The instructional focus also highlights verbs and sentence structures to perform the act of description, for instance, 这道菜聞起来 Zhè dào cài wènqǐlái (this dish smells like...), as well as sentence patterns related to activities to be conducted (i.e., when, where, why, with whom, or how they taste the target food), such as, 我經常去吃这道菜 Wǒ jīngcháng qù... chī zhèdào cài (I often go to... to eat this meal). Regarding interpersonal resources, students learned a variety of evaluative adjectives or emotional expressions to explain their preferences and dislikes, such as, 很滿意hěn mǎnyì (satisfied). With respect to textual resources, the instructional focus was on determiners or pronouns (i.e., 这道zhèdào (this dish)), and conjunctions (i.e., 因为yīnwèi (because)) needed to compose this type of text.

In the writing strategy section, students were first guided to brainstorm ideas about different aspects of focal food. To facilitate students' learning, the material-design team chose Thai-style spicy soup as a food for the learners to discuss. This activity prepared the students for the next stage of idea organization: to select ideas from what they have brainstormed, and organize them into a coherent whole. In this section, two different organizational schemes were presented for illustration. However, these were not shown as fixed templates and students were advised to develop their own scheme based on their
personal writing goals. Along with these schemes, various related sentence patterns were also shown to help the students formulate complete ideas.

Throughout this unit, the students were exposed to language expressions involved in composing the descriptive genre through various encounters with text; that is, the same expressions appeared not only in the language resource section but also in the writing strategy section, as well as in different exercise practices. Given that Chinese characters are known to be extremely challenging to learn, it was hoped that multiple exposures would help students to both learn and apply these semiotic resources to compose an effective text in the focal genre. The English version of some sample instructional materials is shown in Appendix A.

4.4. Instructional procedures

The above instructional materials for the target genre were implemented through instructional cycle lasting two sessions, with each session consisting of three class hours. Instructional activities were designed to help students develop a descriptive text through a sequence of activities that moved three different learning phases, partially adapted from aspects of the Teaching and Learning Cycle of the genre-based pedagogy documented in Martin (2009). These phases consisted of text deconstruction, joint text construction by teachers and students, and students' independent construction. However, not all activities stated in the Teaching and Learning Cycle were included due to several contextual factors, such as time constraints with regard to conducting this research, students' genre knowledge (i.e., their familiarity with descriptive genre in L1), and the difficulty in processing texts with unfamiliar Chinese words. Note that the instruction, either in the regular classes or the research setting, was conducted primarily in Chinese, along with English if necessary.

Phase one of this pedagogical intervention focused on reviewing the contextual variables associated with descriptive genre: the writers' role and communicative intent and the reader's role and intention. The goal of this stage was for students to understand that writers do not just respond to a topic, but instead take several contextual variables into consideration while generating their texts. The instructors first introduced this genre through Q & A sessions by raising several general questions, such as “Under what conditions do we need to describe our experiences or observations?”, “What’s the purpose of doing this?” and “What’s the reader’s expectation?” This contextual awareness was considered essential for students to understand how the writing context shapes how a writer interprets task demands. This general introduction to a genre was then narrowed down to a specific issue related to describing one's favorite food or meal. Students were initially asked about their favorite food, further probed about which aspects they were going to focus on in order to best inform their family or friends, and related actions or behaviors, such as when, where and how they enjoyed it. The purpose of this activity was to raise their awareness of the communicative purposes of this genre and its composite stages, and to motivate students to notice their language gaps in preparation for language scaffolding during the next phase.

Phase two called on participants to focus on learning the lexico-grammatical features associated with the communicative purposes of descriptive writing. This phase was aimed at helping students understand how the situational context was constructed through linguistic features (i.e., various ideational, interpersonal, and textual resources) based on the teaching materials. Since the majority of these language expressions were considered new to the students, they were presented initially as isolated instances in the instructional materials to simplify the acquisition of these meaning-making resources. This was considered necessary, as both prior literature and the Chinese teachers involved in the material design acknowledge
the enormous challenges that students from alphabetic first language backgrounds face when learning Chinese characters (see Chen et al., 2013; Lee & Kalyuga, 2011; Shen & Xu, 2015; Ye, 2013 for reference). The participants were then engaged in textual analyses with regard to the use of each resource in a variety of simple and brief descriptive texts. These texts were composed by the research team as illustrative examples of the descriptive genre and thus, were uncomplicated to process and comprehend by students at this level. The learning materials of phase two were offered through an online multimedia program (see subsection 4.3) and were designed to enable students to understand how the use of these words/sentence patterns related to the genre stages introduced in phase one, thereby highlighting their communicative purposes.

In phase three, the teachers then demonstrated how to integrate what the students had learned in the previous phases by constructing a coherent and effective text, following the writing strategy sections included in the instructional materials. The students in this phase were guided through the brainstorming and idea organization stages by co-constructing a text in response to the topic of “Thai-spicy soup” designed by this study.

Prior to this pedagogical implementation, both instructors had received training to provide them with background on the SFL principles, the instructional materials designed for this study, and the instructional approach to be followed, as specified in the teacher’s manual for each unit. After this training, the instructors were required to preview all of the teaching materials developed by the team, as shown in subsection 4.3 and met again with the researcher to ask any questions about the materials prior to this instructional intervention. Given that this research intended to explore the effects of the SFL-inspired instructional materials developed by the team, the instructors were asked to follow the instructional procedures and materials as stipulated above.

4.5. Data collection and analysis

Compositions from the 16 participants were collected from before and after the instructional intervention in order to investigate its impact on CSL learning. All participants were required to write a descriptive paragraph in response to a Chinese topic for the pre/post-instruction compositions. They were provided with three topics related to the subject of food: their favorite Taiwanese food (topic A), their favorite international food (topic B), or any strange food they have tasted (topic C). A sample writing topic, along with its English version, is provided in Appendix B. Each of the pre/post-instruction essays were written based on the same writing prompt selected by the students. However, the participants were not informed of the post-instruction essay topic in advance, and completed these essays without the assistance of their pre-instruction texts. This procedure was adopted with the intention of minimizing threats to validity stemming from participants’ familiarity with the topic. Each of the pre/post-instruction essays was written with access to an on-line dictionary and other related resources (i.e., teaching materials). Note that the both the pre-instruction and post-instruction essays were composed strictly for research purposes, and no peer or teacher comments were provided.

To carry out an in-depth SFL analysis of the students’ work, the present study reports on essays written by two purposively sampled participants. Textual analyses were conducted to examine their use of ideational resources, interpersonal resources, and textual resources in achieving the communicative purposes of the descriptive genre. Ideational meaning refers to how we represent our experience, and is expressed “in terms of processes involving participants in certain circumstances” (Thompson, 2014, p.92). Here the analysis on the processes and participants focused on identifying verbal acts of description (processes), food taxonomy (participants), and food attributes relating to sensory appeals (participants). With regard to the interpersonal function, analysis centered on how students communicated their emotional responses through evaluative expressions. These attitudinal features consisted of language resources to convey (un)happiness, (in)security, (dis)satisfaction, fear or desire, and value (Martin & White, 2005). For textual resources, the use of determiners/pronouns and conjunctions in reference to the target food or presentation activities related to the topic were identified. These linguistic elements were first singled out and labeled for each clause, and then pre/post-instruction texts were compared to decide whether and to what extent the instructional intervention impacted participants’ writing development.

5. Results

The potential learning affordances of the SFL-inspired genre approach to CSL writing development were presented through analysis of two sets of pre-instruction and post-instruction essays written by the participants. The first set of essays was written by Surabot in response to writing prompt A. The second set of essays was written by Puan in response to topic B. These writings exemplify in what ways and to what extent progress can be made by both below- and above-average L2 writers in terms of textual construction after the instructional intervention. The students’ Chinese texts are shown below, along with Pinyin transcriptions and English translations. The English translations presented are as close to the Chinese texts as possible and include several morphological and syntactical errors. To facilitate readers’ comprehension of their writing, ungrammatical and incomprehensible parts are underlined in the English translations and correct expressions have been added in parentheses. Note that, although many grammatical and word usage errors occur in students’ texts, for space consideration, the following discussion will center on their use of language resources related exclusively to the features taught during this intervention.
5.1. Surabot’s texts

Although Surabot’s pre-instruction text (see Extract 1) did respond to the topic in terms of the written content, there is a limited presence of concrete supporting details.

Extract 1: 當我來台灣讀書，我看看特別菜。我吧吧說跟我，在台灣有名得菜是臭豆腐。如果來台灣不是的一樣還沒來。然後我

is is is看看在台灣那臭豆腐點好吃。我覺得臭豆腐的氣味不好香，那個菜的氣味一樣垃圾但是特別菜。為什麼我喜歡的，它有特別的意

識。

Dàng wǒ lǎi Táiwān dúshū, wǒ kàn kàn tài bié cài. Wǒ bā bā shuō gēn wǒ, zài Táiwān yǒúmíngde cài shì chóudòufǔ, rúgū lǎo Táiwān bǔ shí de yǐyáng hái méi lái. Ránhòu wǒ shǐhūn zài Táiwān nǎ chóudòufǔ diān hào chī. Wǒ jù duì chóudòufǔ de qiāiwèi bǔ hào xiàng, nǎi cài de qiāiwèi yǐyáng lèi dānshì tāi bié cài. Wèishìměi wǒ xiāhuán de, tā yǒu tāi bié de yìsi. [When I came to study in Taiwan, I saw (was looking for) some special Taiwanese food. My dad (a heterographic error, barba should be written as 爸爸) told me (told me) that stinky tofu is a well-known (a heterographic error, 有名得 should be written as 有名的) Taiwanese food. If came to Taiwan not tried (a heterographic error, 不是 should be written as 不試) has never been here (if I didn’t try this food while in Taiwan, it seems that I have never been here). Then, I tried (a heterographic error, 是不应该 be written as 试著吃了) in Taiwan that stinky tofu little tasty (tried this food in Taiwan to see how it tastes). I felt that the stinky tofu is not particularly fragrant (is not savoury). That dish’s flavor smells like garbage but special food (Its flavor is special but it smells like garbage). Why I like (Why do I like it)? It has special meaning (It is special).]

Surabot did make an attempt to introduce the topic by stating the target food, “stinky tofu”, but the text does not neatly tie up several loose ends in describing this food. Due to a lack of ideational resources to build elaborated meanings, the text fails to specify the ingredients and sauces utilized in this food, and the sensorial description of stinky tofu is restricted to three modifications, 好吃 hào chi [delicious], 不好香 bù hào xiàng [not very savoury], or 一樣垃圾 yìyàng lèi [like garbage]. In addition, there were only two verbal acts utilized to describe the target food (e.g., 取 yí [choose], 喜歡 xǐhuān [like]). Likewise, the use of interpersonal resources to convey attitudinal evaluations of the food is confined to the repetitive use of the adjective evaluation 特別 tèbié [special] and 有名得 yǒumíngde [well-known]. The essay is also poorly handled in terms of textual language, with limited and inappropriate use of determiners/pronouns (e.g., 那nà [that], 那個 néige [that one], it ta [it]). The transitions between ideas are somewhat unclear or even non-existent, except for the use of 如果 rúguǒ [if], 然後 ránhòu [then] and 但是 dànshì [but], indicating a lack of textual resources or inability to manage the tactics necessary to implement them. This also resulted in occasional sentence fragments, which sometimes made understanding the text difficult. This text serves as a clear example to illustrate that although adult L2 learners might be able to conform to the rhetorical stages of this genre (i.e., general statement of their selected food and description of food aspects), as illustrated in the SFL approach to genre, they lack a sophisticated or expansive linguistic repertoire necessary to achieve the different genre stages in ways that can meet the expectations of this genre.

Textual analyses of Surabot’s text produced after the pedagogical intervention (see Extract 2 below) reveals noteworthy developments in this CSL writer’s use of language for the descriptive genre.

Extract 2: 當我知道, 我來台灣念書。我爸爸跟我說, 在台灣有特別菜是臭豆腐, 在泰國沒有那個菜所以我覺得試試看。在台灣

有很很多臭豆腐店, 我們都沒吃過那道菜是臭豆腐一樣垃圾。我走路還沒經過臭豆腐店, 我也這道那道是臭豆腐店, 有一天我朋友

幫我買豆腐了是她買的對, 買豆腐臭豆腐, 我吃了這道菜。它不很臭不算後來也喜歡了, 它看起來豆腐豆一樣像吃泡菜和辣椒醬就喜歡吃, 我每天都想吃這道菜, 因為這道菜從豆腐, 吃了身體最好可是有小心油。不用擔心這道菜還有臭豆腐。

Dàng wǒ zhídào, wǒ lái Táiwān niànshuì. Wǒ bā bā gēn wǒ shuò. Zài Táiwān yǒu tāi bié cài shì chóudòufǔ, zài Táiguó miéyǒu

néige cài suǒyì wǒ jù duì shǐhūn zài Táiwān yǒu hén dòu chóudòufǔ diān, wǒ hén hái méi chì wènqǐlái zé dào cài hén chou
gén lèi yǐyáng. Wǒ zǒulái hái méi jìngguò chóudòufǔ diān, wǒ yě zhédào néige shì chóudòufǔ diān. Yǒu yī tiān wǒ pèngyǒu

bàng wǒ mái zhā duǒufǔ kēshì tā mái de bǔ dùi, tā mái zhā chóudòufǔ. Wǒ chī le zhē duǒào cài. Tā bǐ hén chou bǔ è xí hǎláo

hén xǔluán de. Tā kǎnqǐlái gēn duǒufǔ hái yǐyáng rúgū chǐ gēn pàocǎi gēn làjiāojiāng jiǔ xiāhuán chī. Wǒ mèitiān xiāng chì zhéi
duǒào cài, yīnwèi zhéi duǒào cài cóng dàdòu, chīle shènzhī zúi háo kēshì yóu xiǎoxiān yòu. Bú yòng dànxīn zhě duǒào cài háiyìng zhōu-chóudòufǔ. [When I know, I came to Taiwan for study. My dad told me. In Taiwan there is special food is stinky tofu, in Thailand there is no that special food so I felt to give it a try. (Once I knew I would come to study in Taiwan, my dad told me that stinky tofu is famous in Taiwan. We don’t have this special food in Thailand so I was looking forward to this food.) In Taiwan, there are many stores selling stinky tofu. Even before I tried this food, I can smell its stinky flavor just like garbage, 很多都 should be written as 當多). I walked around, I knew it must be a stinky tofu store even though I have not passed by yet. 這道应该被 written as 知道). One day, I asked my friend to buy me this stinky tofu store, but she got me wrong, she (She) bought fried stinky tofu. So (so) that I tasted it. It didn’t taste stinky and not as disgusting (恶心应该被 written as 沖心) as what I expected, so that I began to like it more. It looks like tofu if eating with pickled cabbage and chili sauce I like to eat (and I like to eat it with pickled cabbage and chili sauce). I want to have this food every day. This is because this dish is from (made of) soybean and is good for our body but is careful of (be aware that it is) oily. No need to worry about this, there is steamed stinky tofu. (You can also choose steamed stinky tofu.)]

In terms of ideational resources, there are more supporting details that explain the main idea in terms of sight, smell or taste, painting a vivid picture for the readers (i.e., 很臭 hén chōu [very stinky], 不很臭 bù hén chōu [not very stinky], 跟豆腐一樣 gen dòufǔ hái yǐyáng [like tofu], 跟垃圾一樣 gen lèi yǐyáng [like garbage]). Surabot is more capable of presenting relevant supporting factual details about stinky tofu (such as, it was eaten along with 泡菜 pāocài [pickled cabbage] and 辣椒醬 làjiāojiāng [chili sauce], and is made of 大豆 dàdòu [soybean] and fried with 油 yóu [oil]), or introducing a variety of tofu foods,
such as 炸豆腐zhā dòufu [fried tofu], 蒸臭豆腐zhēng chòudōufu [steamed stinky tofu]. The text also shows greater developmental control over the acts of description, as shown in the deployment of 看起來kànqǐlái [looks like] and 開起來wēngqǐlái [smells like]. The writer appears to be using ideational resources productively and with increasing elaboration. Not only did the text explicitly incorporate this aspect of language features from the curricular materials, but the writer also embellished the paragraph with more interpersonal comments (i.e., 想xiǎng [long for], 惡心e xīn [disgusting], 身體最好shēntǐ zì hǎo [good for body], 擔心dānxīn [worry]) to evoke emotional assessment from readers. This information contributes to the creation of a mood, although it may not be particularly inviting to the readers in this case. With regard to the use of textual resources, more determiners/pronouns and transitions are utilized to connect ideas at the discourse level, such as the use of demonstratives (i.e., 還zhē [this]) and conjunctions (i.e., 後来hòulái [then], 所以suǒyǐ [so], 可是kěshì [but], 因為yīnwéi [because]). 還有háiyǒu [in addition], and 還沒hái méi [yet]) introduced during the instructional intervention. Surabot’s expanded use of these textual resources is demonstrated by the fact that the text is more cohesive and effective, with a smooth rhythm and flow of ideas, even though errors in grammar and word choice still occur, and simple language is used throughout the text.

This post-instruction essay clearly shows traces of this L2 writer’s greater semiotic resources acquired during the instructional intervention, and demonstrates the writer’s improved proficiency in making meanings better suited to the genre. This text is a more successful attempt at achieving the intended communicative purposes by adding more dimensions to the description and incorporating activities related to stinky tofu. Table 2 presents a summary of a comparison between the pre- and post-instruction texts composed by Surabot, indicating the progress made in terms of extending the constructed message and utilizing a wider array of linguistic repertoire.

5.2. Puan’s texts

As shown in Extract 3, Puan’s pre-instruction writing shows that the writer understands what is to be included in this genre, but more sufficient details and more effective organization were needed to engage readers.

**Extract 3:** 我喜歡印尼的菜. 我很喜歡吃香腸. 在印尼, 妹一個地方都有很好吃的香腸. 印尼的香腸有的甜有的辣. 我最喜歡我媽媽的香腸. 他做飯做得很好吃. 我媽媽的香腸不甜也不太辣. 我也喜歡 Nasi Padang. 這些菜真得很涼, 原來Sumatera的東邊. 在印尼, 每市有Padang 的飯館. Padang的飯館有很多的菜. 有糖裡, 洋肉,牛裡, 也有會郎. 都是很好吃但是很辣.


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<td>Language function</td>
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<td><strong>Ideational meaning</strong></td>
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<td>(i) Processes: verbal acts of description</td>
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<td>(ii) Food taxonomy</td>
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fănguàn. Padang de fānguàn yǒu hén duō de cài, yǒu jīròu, yàngròu, niǔròu, yúròu, yè yǒu qǐngcái, dòu shì hén hàochi kēshì hén là. [I love Indonesian food. I love grilled chicken. I In Indonesia everywhere (偲nā should be 偲nā [where]) there is delicious grilled chicken (考績[performance] should be written as 烤雞 [grilled chicken], and hereafter). Some Indonesian grilled chicken is sweet and some are spicy. My favorite grilled chicken is made by my mom. He (She) (他[she] should be 他[she] [she]) is a fairly good cook. My mom’s grilled chicken is not too sweet nor too spicy. I also love Nasi Padang. These meals are very famous [有明 should be written as有名], originated from (原來yūn lài [originally] should be 原於yuányú [originate from]) the eastern part of Sumatera. In Indonesia, you can find Padang restaurants in every city (每市měi shì should be 每個城市meige chengshi [every city]). These Padang restaurants offer a variety of dishes, including chicken (纓肉should be written as 雞肉), mutton (羊肉should be written as羊肉), beef, fish (漁肉should be written as魚肉) and vegetables. These meals are good but very spicy.]

We are informed about Puan’s favorite foods: homemade Indonesian grilled chicken and Nasi Padang. The text indicates the writer's acquisition of food taxonomy (i.e., 烤鷄kǎoji [grilled chicken], 羊肉yángròu [mutton], 魚肉yúròu [fish], 雞肉jīròu [chicken], 青菜qīngcài [vegetables]) appropriate to the general description of meals offered in a restaurant, but the relevant features of these foods or the reasons for her choices are left underdeveloped. The writer can only draw on the limited ideational resources at her disposal prior to this pedagogical intervention to describe how the foods taste (i.e., 好吃的hàochī [delicious], 甜tián [sweet], 辣là [spicy]), and lacks a considerable range of related lexical items to describe more aspects of the target food in greater detail. The text likewise exhibits a limited attempt to manage interpersonal relationships by evaluating the focal items as merely 很hěn yāòmǐn [well-known], but readers are left to guess why and how they are famous in the absence of further clarification. With respect to textual resources, logical relations between ideas or sentences are moderately established (i.e., the demonstrative 这些“zhèxiē” [these] and pronouns, 這個nà [where], 她tā [she], or the connections, 可是kēshì [but], 有的…有的yǒu de…yǒu de [some are…and some are], 但…不…但bù…但bù [neither…nor]), although some occasional errors in sentence constructions make understanding somewhat dificult. Despite the commendable attempt to illustrate the rhetorical stages of a descriptive genre by presenting a general statement of the target foods, descriptions of some aspects of them and activities related to each food (i.e., where to taste the local food), the ideas in this text were only raised and then quickly dismissed in the absence of any of the greater meaning construction of the target foods. The information helps capture the readers' interest. The use of vivid word choices and food-related terms demonstrates the descriptive genre, based on the subsequent SFL analysis.

Extract 4: 我最喜欢吃烤鷄。在印尼, 每一個地方都有很好吃的烤鷄。印尼有很多種烤鷄, ‘rica-rica’烤鷄, 蜂蜜烤鷄, 酱油烤鷄, 辣椒烤鷄和kalasan烤鷄。每一種烤鷄有不一樣的顏色, 有棕黃色, 黃色, 綠色和紅色。這些烤鷄聞起來很香, 吃起來的味道又辣又甜也有一點鹹。這道菜簡單又好吃, 這道菜的材料主要是雞肉, 大蒜, 洋蔥, 鹽巴, 醬油, 油和辣椒, 我最喜歡我媽媽的烤鷄。因為她做烤鷄做得很好吃, 她的烤鷄不太甜也不太辣。在台灣, 我會學我媽媽做的烤鷄。所以我很想去學媽媽的烤鷄。

Wǒ zú xīhuàn chī kēji. Zāi Yīnín, méi yìge dīfǎng dōu yǒu hěn hàočī de kēji. Yīnín yǒu hén duō zhòng kēji, “rica-rica” kēji, fēngmǐ kēji, jiàngyòu kēji, lǚ lájiào kēji hé “kalasan” kēji. Méi yì zhīhōng kēji yǒu bǔyìliǎng de yánse, yǒu tūhuángsè, huángsè, lǒsē hē hónɡsè, Zéixiē kēji wènqīlái hén xiāng. Chūqiǎi de wèidào yǒu lǎo yóu tián yě yǒuyídiǎn xiān. Zheì dào cāi hěn rónɡyì zuò. Zēi dào cāi de cāi lǐliáo zhúyāo shì jīròu, dāsuàn, yánɡcōnɡ, yánbā, jiāngyòu, yǒu hē jiāo. Wǒ zú xīhuàn wǒ māmā de kēji. Yínwēi tā zuò kēji zuò de hěn hàočī. Tā de kēji bǔ tián yě bǔ tián lǎi. Zāi Táiwān, wǒ bǔhú chǐ wǒ māmá zuò de kēji. Sūyǐ wǒ hěn xiāng māmá de kēji. [I love grilled chicken most. In Indonesia, you can find delicious grilled chicken throughout the country. There are many different types of grilled chicken in Indonesia, including ‘rica-rica’ fried chicken, honey grilled chicken, soy sauce grilled chicken, green pepper grilled chicken, and kalasan grilled chicken. Each variety has different colors, such as khaki, yellow, green and red. These types of grilled chicken smell good and taste sweet, spicy and a little salty. It is easy to cook this food. The major ingredients include chicken, garlic, onion, salt, soy sauce, oil and pepper. I love my mom’s grilled chicken most because her tastes tend to not be too sweet and not too spicy. As I am studying in Taiwan, I am not capable of (can’t) eat her grilled chicken so I yearn for her grilled chicken very much.]

In this text, Puan primarily focuses on one favorite food, and provides not only more information about it, but also more relevant, telling and quality details, that linger and spark pictures in the readers’ mind. We are informed not only of the variety of Indonesian—style grilled chicken (i.e., 醬油烤鷄jiàngyòu kēji [soy-sauce grilled chicken], 辣椒烤鷄làjiāo kēji [green pepper grilled chicken], but the text also includes sensory details appealing to the readers’ sight (i.e., 偲黃色tūhuángsè [khaki], 綠色lǒsē [green], 紅色hónɡsè [red], smell (i.e., 很香hěn xiāng [very savoury]), and taste (i.e., 甜tián [sweet], 辣là [spicy], 鹹xiān [salty]). Since a greater variety and range of food taxonomy was offered to expand the learners’ linguistic repertoire through the instructional scaffolding, Puan drew upon these ideational resources in her work, as evident in the specification of this food’s ingredients (i.e., 大蒜dāsuàn [garlic], 洋蔥yánɡcōnɡ [onion], 醬油jiàngyòu [soy sauce], and in the deployment of a greater variety of descriptive acts (i.e., 開起來wènqīlái [smells like] and 吃起來chūqiǎi [tastes like]), in addition to the use of 喜歡xīhuàn [like] appearing in the first draft. Because ideas are better supported with details, this information helps capture the readers’ interest. The use of vivid word choices and food-related terms demonstrates the writer’s reaching toward more mature language on this theme. However, in contrast to the greater complexity of ideational meaning constructed in this post-instruction essay, the range and variety of interpersonal resources employed is rather limited, with just two instances, very easy 很容易hěn rónɡyì zuò [easy to make] and 想xiǎnɡ [miss]. The infrequent use of this linguistic feature could be ascribable to the fact that the research was conducted under strict time constraints. In terms of textual features, the text improves by varying the cohesive ties used and better establishes logical relations between sentences with the proper use of conjunctions (i.e., 又…又yòu…yòu [not only…but also], 因為yīnwéi [because], 所以suǒyǐ [therefore], and
determiners (i.e., 每一個 mei yige [every kind], 每一種 mei zhong [every type]) or the use of pronouns (i.e., 她 tā [she]). Moreover, this text also illustrates a variety of sentence constructions, and most grammar usages were appropriate to the experience being reported, and subsequently contribute to the overall development of the text.

In general, the greater range of lexical and grammar resources used to convey the intended meanings in this text makes a clear contrast with Puan’s earlier work. This initial comparison clearly reveals that the post-instruction essay exhibits encouraging signs of greater awareness and increased control in terms of meaning-making that is expected of this genre. A summary of this comparison between Puan’s two texts is shown in Table 3.

It should be noted that several expressions appearing in the post-instruction text but not in the pre-instruction text, as observed in Tables 2 and 3 (i.e., dàdòu [soybean], zhèng [steam], zhá [fried], bìyíyang [different], tūhuángsè [khaki]), were not covered in the instructional materials, given that it is impossible to provide a wide range of food items and their ingredients or possible emotional responses in a CSL multimedia writing program aimed at pre-intermediate level students. The use of these expressions might be ascribed to the instruction of genre stages, by which highlighting specific aspects to be covered in each genre stage may have inspired the participants to search for linguistic resources to achieve their intended meanings.

6. Discussion

The SFL-inspired approach to genre instruction has been strongly advocated in second/foreign language writing scholarship (e.g., Byrnes, 2009, 2013; Coffin & Donohue, 2012; Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014; and special issues of Linguistics and Education, 2009, on foreign language writing instruction; Journal of English for Academic Purposes, 2012, on academic literacy; and Journal of Second Language Writing, 2013 on second language writing), yet few empirical studies have examined the efficacy of an SFL-inspired approach with regard to CSL/CFL writing at the adult level. This exploratory study has thus added a piece of evidence to the emerging and highly promising literature on L2 writing by suggesting that this approach holds potential for supporting students’ meaning-making in some educational settings.

The textual analysis reveals that explicit scaffolding of the language resources associated with the descriptive genre appears to have helped the participants develop a greater ability to use the resources needed to construct an effective text. In their pre-instruction texts, both students wrote a skeletal description in the absence of any attempt to elaborate details of the described foods, thus indicating a lack of language resources. In the post-instruction essays, however, they demonstrated progress in terms of more elaborated content to convey messages along with the use of more sophisticated linguistic and

<p>| Table 3 |
| Configurations of linguistic means in Puan’s texts. |</p>
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<th>Language function</th>
<th>Pre-instruction text</th>
<th>Post-instruction text</th>
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<td><strong>Ideational meaning</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>(i) Processes: verbal acts of description</td>
<td>xi huán [like]</td>
<td>xi huán [like]</td>
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<tr>
<td>(ii) food taxonomy</td>
<td>cài [meal/dish]</td>
<td>cài [meal/dish]</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>kǎo ji [grilled chicken]</td>
<td>kǎo ji [grilled chicken]</td>
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<td>jīròu [chicken]</td>
<td>jīròu [chicken]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>yángròu [mutton]</td>
<td>dāsūn [garlic]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>niúròu [beef]</td>
<td>yánghóng [onion]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>yùròu [fish]</td>
<td>yàn bá [salt]</td>
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<td></td>
<td>qīngcài [vegetable]</td>
<td>jiàngyòu [soy sauce]</td>
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<td>(iii) food attributes: sensory descriptions</td>
<td>hǎo chī [delicious]</td>
<td>hǎo chī [delicious]</td>
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<td>tián [sweet]</td>
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<td>là [spicy]</td>
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<td>xiàn [salty]</td>
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<td>bìyíyang [different]</td>
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<td>tūhuángsè [khaki]</td>
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<td>huángsè [yellow]</td>
<td>huángsè [yellow]</td>
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<td>lúsè [green]</td>
<td>hóngsè [red]</td>
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<td>hén xiàng [very savory]</td>
<td>hén xiàng [very savory]</td>
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<td>rónggái [easy]</td>
<td>rónggái [easy]</td>
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<td>xiàng [long for]</td>
<td>xiàng [long for]</td>
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<td><strong>Interpersonal meaning</strong></td>
<td>yòumíngde [well-known]</td>
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<td>(i) determiners/pronouns:</td>
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<td>tā [she]</td>
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<td>tā [he]</td>
<td>zhēi dào [his dish]</td>
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<td>(ii) conjunctions:</td>
<td>yóudé...yóude [some...some]</td>
<td>méi yíge [very kind]</td>
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<td>bù...yē bù [neither...nor]</td>
<td>méi yízhòng [very type]</td>
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<td>kěshì [but]</td>
<td>hě [and]</td>
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<td>suǒyǐ [therefore]</td>
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<td>yīnwěi [because]</td>
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<td>yóu...yóu...yě [not only...but also...</td>
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</table>
grammatical features. With regard to ideational meanings, they made noticeable efforts to present more sensory images and concrete details, which added to the style and effectiveness of their writing. Both also incorporated more emotional language to comment on foods, indicating their personal preferences and engaging in interpersonal bonds with readers, inviting them to share emotional responses (Martin & White, 2005). With respect to textual resources, the participants were better capable of using transitions and a variety of sentence patterns to connect ideas following the instructional intervention, which contributed to the enhancement of the actual descriptions produced. Although the students’ choices could be critiqued on various fronts, for example, in terms of grammatical errors, their progress in this context demonstrates a greater ability to construct extended structures of meaning in the texts by using an increased range of linguistic resources. This finding suggests that the linguistic resources provided by the instructional materials may scaffold the development of the language demands required for composing in this genre.

The above findings are consistent with prior studies, which report that an analysis of participants’ language output shows a strong relationship between the focus of SFL-based instructional materials and the meaning and wording used by students (Byrnes, 2009; Cheng, 2008; Huang & Mohan, 2009; Mohan & Huang, 2002; Pollas & Dare, 2006; de Oliveira & Lan, 2014). These studies demonstrate that an SFL approach to L2 language writing could foster learners’ writing development across various languages (i.e., Chinese, English, and German), genre types (i.e., narrative, argumentative writing, and disciplinary texts), and at different literacy levels (i.e., college, high school, and elementary). This leads L2 writing scholars to stress that effective writing instruction should make salient links between meaning and form (Byrnes, 2009, 2013; Cheng, 2008; Harman, 2013; Moore & Schleppegrell, 2014; Tardy, 2011).

Although the findings from this exploratory study cannot be generalized to other second/foreign language writing instruction and research contexts, several tentative implications can be drawn. First, the current findings make a significant attempt to move CSL/CFL research forward by expanding the focus of CSL/CFL research from the learners’ acquisition of Chinese characters, to examining learners’ communicative competence at the discourse level in order to uncover more effective pedagogical practices to improve their communicative proficiency. Important follow-up steps are to submit the present findings to rigorous empirical tests, examining a wider range of genres, studying CSL/CFL learners at other proficiency levels, and evaluating learning in a variety of educational settings. This line of research is urgently needed, as more CSL/CFL learners will need Chinese as a working language in order to fulfill academic and career needs.

Furthermore, this paper suggests that CSL/CFL material designers take into account the SFL approach to genre in developing writing materials. Current CSL/CFL textbooks fail to specify the connections between language use and targeted communicative purposes of different genres. Thus, greater collaboration among SFL researchers, experienced CSL/CFL practitioners, and L2 writing experts is necessary to address the deficiencies in current instructional materials. The present study indicates that theoretically sound and well-constructed materials may offer CSL/CFL practitioners without an SFL background a convenient and effective way of applying this theory as an instructional model for classroom practice. Based on informal discussions with the teachers who took part in this study, both were capable of effectively implementing this online writing program, and had positive attitudes towards the program, as indicated by their eagerness to adapt some of the teaching materials used in this work in their current teaching practices.

The progress made by inexperienced CSL participants in this study offers encouragement that SFL-inspired educational practices may prove effective in expanding CSL/CFL learners’ capabilities in textual construction. Nevertheless, the findings of this study are limited in several ways. First, since this work adopts a qualitative methodology for in-depth textual analysis with two participants from South-East Asia, the findings are not representative of the overall population of CSL/CFL learners. However, the purpose of this study was to explore the potential of the SFL-inspired approach as applied to Chinese instruction. Moreover, the use of the same writing prompts for the pre- and post-instruction tasks may also have mitigated the textual challenges of the post-instruction writing task. However, the two participants did not simply revise their first drafts for the post-instruction essay, but chose either to portray different aspects of the same food or to describe a different item entirely. Finally, given the enormous difficulty involved in recognizing and acquiring Chinese characters, as noted in prior literature, several vocabulary from the instructional materials were presented and initially taught in isolated formats to facilitate Chinese character recognition. This practice goes against the common principles of second/foreign language education and warrants further research to examine whether or not this instructional procedure is necessary for CSL/CFL writing instruction at the novice level. Despite the inherent limitations of the research method adopted in this study, it appears that traces of language resources from the curricular materials can be identified in the participants’ post-instruction essays, revealing L2 knowledge internalization and development, and a growing awareness of genre construction. This result provides tangible evidence about what is possible to achieve through SFL-inspired instructional materials, although more research is necessary to substantiate the current findings.

7. Conclusion

Although the SFL-informed educational practice proposed in this work is not a panacea to all the textual challenges and problems encountered by CSL/CFL learners, it appears that explicit instruction in language and discourse features related to a genre may enhance learner awareness of the target features, and thereby improve written communication. This research reveals how an SFL approach can address the gaps in current L2 writing instruction, which tends to de-emphasize language scaffolding in the instructional process, as contended by Tardy (2011). Along with the findings of existing literature, the present study indicates that students who are informed by an SFL perspective can learn how to deploy various ideational,
interpersonal and textual resources to construct more elaborated content, establish interactions with their intended readers, and organize their texts into meaningful units. Students appear to move along a continuum of language development that fosters their generic mastery, an ability regarded as one typical advanced literacy skill. This study thus adds to the literature by extending the adoption of such an approach to improving L1/L2 literacy beyond the original Australian context, second/foreign language writing, and second/foreign language learning contexts. Although the impact of SFL on aspects of language learning for languages other than English has remained largely untouched by second and foreign language researchers, the current study illuminates the potential of this language-based writing pedagogy with regard to acquiring L2 writing abilities for Mandarin Chinese. Most importantly, this study advances discussion in the CSL/CFL field by expanding CSL/CFL instructional approaches from the acquisition of Chinese characters to text construction at the discourse level. It is hoped that in response to the pressing demands of CSL/CFL learners, future research can expend more energy on uncovering the relative effectiveness of other instructional approaches to writing or the facilitating effects of SFL-informed writing instruction to the development of other communicative modalities.

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Appendix A. English translation of sample instructional materials

1. Instructional materials for ideational resources

![Diagram of ingredient categories]

2. Instructional materials for brainstorming strategies (writing instruction section)

Step 2: Brainstorming strategies

![Diagram of brainstorming categories]
Appendix B. Chinese and English versions of one sample writing prompt

Writing prompt B: 請向你班上的同學說明，你所吃過的各種食物中，有哪一道菜或小吃你最喜歡？這道菜或食物有什麼特別的地方？(顏色/氣味/味道/材料/做法...)？你為什麼會特別喜歡吃這道食物？ Please describe your favorite international food or meal to your classmates, based upon your previous experience. You will need to show what’s special about this food in terms of its taste, smell, color, ingredients, etc.

References


