

English Writing Mindsets and Feedback-Seeking Behaviors of Chinese College EFL Students

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Abstract: English writing effectively prompts learners to internalize the English language knowledge gained through reading and listening into their own linguistic and communicative competence, and thus comprehensively contributes to the improvement of their overall English language proficiency. English writing is the ultimate and most fundamental measure of students' language proficiency. This study sought to investigate the relationship between English writing mindsets and feedback-seeking behaviors of selected Chinese EFL students. In this study, quantitative research was used. The respondents comprised 400 college students from three Chinese universities. Correlational analysis was used to handle the data that were gathered utilizing survey questionnaires. The results demonstrated that, on the whole, the participants tended toward a growth mindset in the setting of English writing mindset and that, by using monitoring or inquiry techniques and delaying feedback seeking, they had a favorable attitude toward feedback-seeking behaviors. Furthermore, the T-test findings indicated gender disparities in mindsets, with males having stronger growth mindset than females. Additionally, correlation analysis revealed a strong relationship between English writing mindsets and feedback-seeking behaviors. Students who frequently applied growth mindset also tended to have higher levels of feedback-seeking behaviors. Finally, pedagogical suggestions were put forward based on these findings.

Keywords: Chinese EFL Students, Growth mindset, fixed mindset, Feedback-Seeking Behaviors.

1. Introduction

Writing plays a significant role in English foreign language (EFL), which reflects the learners' language application ability. English writing is vital for students to share ideas, communicate feelings, and promote culture. In the 21st century, the criteria for evaluating qualified skills are related to the level of English writing proficiency. As an output skill, English writing shows language learners' comprehensive language use as well as their high degree of English acquisition. Writing is often an advanced skill and a complex action that requires motivation, language processing, and cognition, making it a crucial gauge of a learner's proficiency in a foreign language.

The most recent edition of *A Guide to College English Teaching*, published in 2020, states that improving college students' writing skills is crucial. College students need to be able to use their writing skills appropriately and write clearly across a wide range of topics and genres. Additionally, they must be free to voice their thoughts in written English. Despite the emphasis that writing has gotten, Chinese college students' writing skills are inadequate. A lot of college students struggle to write clearly and concisely. Moreover, the composition scores on significant English proficiency exams, like the College English Test Band 4 and 6, are imperfect.

Given the writing status of Chinese college EFL students, there is still a significant gap between the expectations of the state and society and the English writing proficiency of these students. As a result, successfully promoting college students' writing development needs more attention in English instruction.

Writing is a unique combination of cognitive and emotional activity. Students' writing proficiency is influenced by various non-intellectual factors, including their writing mindsets and feedback-seeking behaviors, as well as their English proficiency and cognitive development level.

Whether students believe writing intelligence can be improved is the foundation for enhancing their writing proficiency. Dweck (2006) adopted "mindsets" to tell whether brightness can be changed (growth mindset) or not (fixed mindset). Many researchers have noted the influence of mindsets on language learning. Chinese, a character-based language with a very different grammatical structure from English, can lead to unique challenges in English sentence construction, tenses, and prepositions. In language learning, fixed mindset keeps learners from taking on new tasks, makes them give up quickly when things become challenging, and makes them believe their efforts are worthless. In contrast, a person with growth mindset loves challenges, overcomes obstacles, and recognizes that effort is the key to mastering skills and knowledge. While much effort is put into studying the function of mindset in language acquisition, its role in the writing domain is not considered.

Applying Dweck's theory to the writing context, Limpo and Alves (2014) defined writing mindset as "beliefs about the malleability of one's writing skills." A growth mindset is the belief that writing is "an increasable skill" that can be enhanced with effort, according to their definition. After researching implicit theories of writing intelligence (writing mindsets), Waller and Papi (2017) concluded that learners' desire to write in English might be predicted by the incremental theory of writing intelligence (growth writing mindset). The English writing mindset refers to how English language learners view their ability to write in the language. English writing growth mindset refers to students' beliefs that English writing skill is malleable and can be enhanced by hard work, in contrast to English writing fixed mindset, which refers to students' beliefs that English writing ability is fixed and cannot be changed by effort.

Getting feedback has always been crucial for learning a second language and EFL. Numerous in-country and international empirical studies have demonstrated the critical

role that feedback plays in language learning. Corrective feedback, for instance, significantly impacts how students acquire English writing and grammar (Su & Jiang, 2020). Many academics have researched the aspects that affect feedback's usefulness, including the forms of feedback, teacher expertise, and teacher beliefs, to use feedback to promote language learning (GURZYNSKI-WEISS, 2016; Mori, 2011).

However, a review of previous studies on feedback indicates that learners' active participation was mostly ignored. Many studies that deal with feedback still have "teacher-centered" fundamental ideas, which is the polar opposite of the current learner-centered learning trend (Scott, 2014). Feedback-seeking behaviors (FSB) are actions and strategies learners use to seek information about their learning (Papi et al., 2019). Feedback-seeking behavior is essentially a self-monitoring learning strategy, which reflects the process of individuals seeking valuable external feedback information, continuous monitoring, and reflection on their learning process and results in order to actively adjust and self-improve the process. Few studies have looked at how learner-related factors, such as learner beliefs and mindset, may influence how learners respond to feedback (Li & Wang, 2018). In this sense, feedback research ought to take students' active participation into account more.

Research on feedback-seeking in writing has focused a lot on the sorts, behaviors, and characteristics of feedback students accept. First and foremost, obtaining feedback on writing demands a commitment from students in terms of time, effort, and focus. Seeking feedback is generally understood as an intentional attempt to attain accuracy and correctness in writing behavior. A common characteristic of feedback-seeking attitude is the search for information that can improve students' writing accomplishments or competencies. The initiative, interpretation, and subsequent behavior of learners make up the feedback-seeking process (Crans et al., 2022).

Using the earlier framework of FSB and the features of language acquisition, Papi et al. (2019) divided FSB into two categories: feedback monitoring and feedback inquiry (teacher/others). Feedback monitoring refers to observing situations and other people's behaviors while learning. For English writing, Feedback monitoring mainly covers the instructor or teachers giving suggestions to improve the EFL writing. Feedback inquiry (teacher/others) entails directly seeking feedback about one's performance from teachers or others (such as parents or classmates). Different from monitoring, inquiry is a way to actively get advice on writing from teachers, classmates (or peers), parents, and so on.

For the timing of FSB, it can be divided into immediate feedback and delayed feedback. Immediate feedback, provided when the learner replies to a question or completes an assignment, promotes the retention of learned information. However, delayed feedback, which is withheld for some time, is more conducive to learning. According to Yasaei (2016), giving students oral feedback that was both immediate and delayed had a significant impact on their ability to use the intended function more accurately.

Researchers have conducted studies on English writing mindsets and FSB and offered significant insights into each variable examined in this study, but there were still some limitations. First, many academics have studied mindsets in language learning; nevertheless, mindsets in English language skills, such as writing, have received less attention.

Second, Chinese college EFL students have not typically been the subject of prior research. These problems create the space and need for the current investigation.

Therefore, to bridge the gap, the present study focuses on exploring the characteristics of Chinese EFL learners' writing mindset and FSB in English learning, then further investigate the relationship between their English writing mindsets and FSB. Accordingly, pedagogical suggestions may improve the writing proficiency of Chinese EFL learners.

2. Research Methods

2.1. Research Design

The present study employed quantitative research and sought to survey some college students in China concerning their English writing mindsets and feedback-seeking behaviors. A quantitative descriptive strategy was used in the investigation. According to Babbie (2010), quantitative methods place an emphasis on exact measurements and statistical analysis of information gathered through surveys, polls, and other data collection techniques. Its main objective is to collect numerical data and project it to encompass large individual groups or to explain a specific occurrence.

2.2. Participants of the Study

Participants in the study were chosen from three colleges in Shandong Province, China, majoring in liberal arts and sciences and taking English as a foreign language. They were first- and second-year students since students only take a college-level English writing class during their first two years of study.

The researcher used random sampling as the sample technique, choosing the individuals at random. Following receipt of the questionnaire from "Questionnaire Star" by WeChat or an internet link, students who wished to take part in the study filled it out. In the end, 422 samples were gathered. Following a thorough review process, 400 records were deemed valid while 22 were deemed invalid and removed.

2.3. Instruments

In survey research, the questionnaire serves as the main instrument for gathering data. The first part of these questionnaires was intended to gather basic information about participants, including sex, major, grade level, and level of English language proficiency. The second part of the questionnaire is adapted from the Language Mindset Inventory (Lou & Noels, 2017). The original questionnaire consists of a number of statements about language intelligence, which is the capacity to use spoken and written language to express what is in mind and to understand other people. The third part of the questionnaire was based on Feedback-seeking Method Scale developed by Papi et al. (2019) and Feedback-seeking Timing Scale developed by Wang et al. (2021).

2.4. Data Gathering and analysis

The questionnaire underwent extensive revisions before being tested and refined. After being input into the Questionnaire Star platform, the questionnaire items were carefully reviewed to guarantee accuracy. This study concentrated on characterizing, interpreting, and debating the figures and tables in terms of percentages, frequencies, rankings, weighted values, and correlations based on SPSS

data analysis. The results of the analyses can be used to explore the objectives of the study.

2.5. Ethical Considerations

This study is an anonymous survey because the researcher didn't force the respondents to provide their names due to ethical issues to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants. Before the commencement of the study, all the participants were informed about the study and its data collection protocol, and their informed consent was sought. They were also given the assurance that their privacy would be maintained and that the information collected about them would only be utilized for academic purposes.

3. Results and Discussion

3.1. Demographic Information Analysis

Table 1. Percentage Distribution of the Respondents' Profile

Sex	Frequency	Percentage %
Male	148	37.0
Female	252	63.0
Major		
Liberal arts	182	45.5
Science	218	54.5
Grade		
Freshman	214	53.5
Sophomore	186	46.5
Level of English Language Proficiency		
Poor	56	14.0
Fair	258	64.5
Good	56	14.0
Excellent	30	7.5

Table 1 illustrates the frequency distribution of the respondents' profiles in terms of sex, primary, grade, and level of English language proficiency. The first indicator is the sex of the participants. As seen in the table, among all the 400 students surveyed, the number of female students is 252, accounting for 63 percent, while the number of male students is 148, only taking up 37 percent. The proportion of female respondents is much higher than that of male respondents. The findings indicate that the sampled population has a notable sex-representational imbalance. Girls make up the great majority of students, with boys making up a very small portion of the student body. This condition results from a natural imbalance between the number of male and female students at most schools and institutions, as each participant was chosen at random without conscious effort.

The major of respondents serves as the second indicator. Eighty-two participants, or 45.5% of the total, are majoring in liberal arts, while 218 students, or 54.5% of the survey, are majoring in science. For this measure, the proportion was fairly even.

The grade level of the responders is the third factor. For first- and second-year students, colleges and universities usually provide structured College English writing courses; the participants in this study were selected from the first two years of higher education. The table shows that there are 186 (46.5%) sophomores and 214 (53.5% of the total enrollment) first-year students. With somewhat more first-year students in the sample, the distribution between these two-year levels is

fairly balanced.

The fourth indicator is the participants' self-rated results of their English proficiency. With a ratio of 64.5 percent, 258 participants feel they have reached the intermediate level of English ability. Most responders fit into the "Fair" category, meaning that a sizable fraction of the sample speaks English at a reasonable level. Thirty-six and 56 participants, respectively, accounted for 14.0 percent and 7.7 percent of those who rated their English competence as good or exceptional. They believed they were fluent in the language. Considering the big picture, over half of the participants believed they were at a fair level of English competence, which may have something to do with the ten years or more they had spent studying the language.

3.2. English Writing Mindsets of Chinese College EFL Students

Table 2. Summary Table on English Writing Mindsets

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Fixed Mindset	1.85	Disagree	2
2. Growth Mindset	3.25	Agree	1
Composite Mean	2.55	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.50 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

Table 2 summarizes English writing mindsets, with two main categories: Fixed Mindset and Growth Mindset. The composite mean of 2.55, falling in the Agree category, suggests that participants in this study overall lean toward a growth mindset in the context of English writing skills. This reflects a belief that improvement is possible and that abilities can be developed through effort and learning.

Growth Mindset ranked first, with a weighted mean of 3.25, indicating a solid agreement that improving English writing skills is possible through effort and learning. This outcome indicates a strong belief in the capacity for English writing skills to improve. Participants overwhelmingly concur that learning new skills and working hard can help them become more proficient. The high agreement with the growth mindset aligns with extensive research on mindset theory. People who have a growth mindset are more likely to overcome obstacles, see failures as chances for personal development, and eventually perform better academically. Students with growth mindset appreciate the chance to receive ongoing feedback and rewrites in order to enhance their writing abilities rather than viewing it as a natural talent (Feltham & Sharen, 2015).

Fixed Mindset ranked second, with a weighted mean of 1.85, indicating that participants disagree that their English writing skills are fixed and cannot be changed significantly. According to this finding, participants don't think that their aptitude for writing in English is innate or fixed. Instead, they convey a conviction that development and advancement are achievable within the confines of English writing. Better learning results are often the result of those who adopt a growth mindset (as opposed to a fixed mindset). These people are typically more driven, set higher goals, and persevere in their efforts.

3.3. Feedback-Seeking Behaviors of Chinese College EFL Students

Table 3. Summary Table on English Writing FSB

Indicators	Weighted Mean	Verbal Interpretation	Rank
1. Feedback Monitoring	3.25	Agree	2
2. Feedback Inquiry/Teacher	3.25	Agree	1
3. Feedback Inquiry/Others	3.23	Agree	3
4. IFS	3.00	Agree	5
5. DFS	3.11	Agree	4
Composite Mean	3.17	Agree	

Legend: 3.50 – 4.00 = Strongly Agree; 2.50 – 3.49 = Agree; 1.5 – 2.49 = Disagree; 1.00 - 1.49 = Strongly Disagree

The five main aspects of feedback-seeking activities in English writing are compiled in Table 3. With a composite mean score of 3.17 across all indications, the offered legend's Agree category best describes the overall positive attitude toward feedback-seeking behaviors, albeit with some variability.

With a weighted mean of 3.25, feedback monitoring and inquiry/teacher were scored highest. These top-ranking indicators imply that students actively discuss feedback with their lecturers and pay great attention to the criticism they get on their writing. These actions show a proactive attitude toward learning and developing writing abilities, which is consistent with educational theories that stress the value of feedback in the learning process.

The learners all acknowledge the authority of teacher feedback, which is the most commonly employed form of feedback in the teaching of writing in English as a second or foreign language. The fact that the teacher's particular alteration ideas or words of encouragement will greatly aid students in improving their writings is indicative of the usefulness of the feedback they receive from teachers. Students' understanding of chapter arrangement in writing can be greatly increased by their teachers' feedback (Zhou, 2013; Yang et al., 2013; Razali & Jupri, 2014).

With mean values of 3.11 and 3.00, respectively, Delayed Feedback-Seeking (DFS) and Immediate Feedback-Seeking (IFS) ranked lowest with regard to timing of feedback-seeking. These actions show a willingness to talk about writing tasks with teachers either right away or after some time has gone; the latter option is less desirable. This entails carefully planning the timing of feedback to match the learning paces of students and the feedback's perceived relevance over time. This is aligned with the study of Yekta and Dafe'ian (2016), who looked into how students' depth of vocabulary knowledge was impacted by teachers' immediate and delayed feedback. According to their findings, teachers' delayed feedback much surpassed their immediate feedback in terms of the depth of vocabulary knowledge.

Yasaei (2016) found that students' ability to use the intended function more properly was significantly impacted by both immediate and delayed oral feedback. Because written forms of remedial feedback are difficult for students to detect and understand, experimental groups who received input either immediately or later on did better than the control group that received direct correction.

3.4. Relationship between English Writing Mindsets and Feedback-Seeking Behaviors

Table 4. Relationship Between English Writing Mindsets and FSB

Fixed Mindset	rho	P-value	Interpretation
Feedback Monitoring	-.347**	<.001	Highly Significant
Feedback Inquiry/Teacher	-.352**	<.001	Highly Significant
Feedback Inquiry/Others	-.296**	<.001	Highly Significant
IFS	-.213**	<.001	Highly Significant
DFS	-.262**	<.001	Highly Significant
Growth Mindset			
Feedback Monitoring	.470**	<.001	Highly Significant
Feedback Inquiry/Teacher	.441**	<.001	Highly Significant
Feedback Inquiry/Others	.411**	<.001	Highly Significant
IFS	.294**	<.001	Highly Significant
DFS	.371**	<.001	Highly Significant

Legend: Significant at p -value < 0.05

The relationship between English writing mindsets and English writing feedback-seeking behaviors is displayed in Table 4. The calculated rho-values were found to show a moderate indirect correlation, and the p-values that were produced were below the alpha threshold. This illustrates the existence of a negatively significant link and suggests that writing feedback-seeking behaviors improve with a decreased fixed mindset. Additionally, it demonstrates a strong positive correlation between growth mindset and feedback-seeking behaviors in English writing. Students that have a growth mindset ask more questions of teachers and other people, actively monitor feedback, and are more focused on getting it. They seek out feedback more frequently, both immediately and later, suggesting that they regard it as a chance for growth and learning.

According to the statistics, mindset has a big impact on how people seek out comments on their English writing. People with fixed mindsets could be reluctant to ask for feedback out of concern for a critical assessment or validation of their self-perceived fixed talents. On the other hand, those with a growth mindset are more likely to seek out and use feedback since they see it as a constructive tool for personal growth.

4. Conclusion

The examination of the basic data provided by respondents allows for the drawing of certain important conclusions. First, the sample's representativeness is vital due to the number of responders with similar majors and grades. Second, the participants are overwhelmingly female. Secondly, the majority of the participants are females. Lastly, a sizable fraction of the sample speaks English at a moderate level.

The participants held a negative attitude towards a fixed mindset but a relatively positive one towards a growth

mindset. Participants' disagreement with a fixed mindset is essentially the same as their agreement with a growth mindset, since fixed and growth mindsets represent two sides of continuity. Accordingly, most of the participants have a growth mindset. As to feedback-seeking behaviors, the participants generally exhibited a positive stance towards feedback-seeking behaviors, strongly agreeing with inquiring about feedback from teachers and monitoring feedback, inquiring about feedback from others, and preferring delayed feedback to immediate feedback.

Significant correlations are identified between English writing mindsets and English writing feedback-seeking behaviors. Learners who have a growth mindset are more inclined to ask for criticism in all contexts, which could improve their academic achievement while writing in English. First and foremost, educators may support students in forming growth mindsets by giving them the chance to grow from their mistakes, recognizing their accomplishments, and pushing them to take on new challenges. Furthermore, by fostering a classroom climate in which students feel at ease asking for feedback from peers, the teacher, and other experts, teachers can support their students' development of feedback-seeking behaviors in English writing. Finally, by sharing their personal experiences of seeking and using feedback, teachers can serve as role models for students in how to seek out and use feedback.

5. Recommendation

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations were drawn. To encourage feedback-seeking behaviors, teachers might use alternative teaching methods, foster a growth mindset in their students, and establish a relaxed environment. By bringing in competent professionals and writers, the colleges may have more salons and talks to increase students' understanding of mindsets and feedback. To provide students the opportunity to practice what they have learned and reinforce it at the same time, they may also hold more competitions or contests. By moderating their writing mindsets and seeking out more criticism, students can become more proficient writers. By examining further students from different schools and verifying the differences in English writing mindsets and feedback-seeking behaviors based on the location and duration of English language acquisition, future research may increase the quantity and variety of responses.

Future researchers could increase the number and variety of respondents by looking into more students from various schools and confirming the variations in English writing mindsets, achievement goals, and feedback-seeking behaviors based on the location and duration of English language learning.

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