

READING-INPUT AND WRITING-OUTPUT WITH REGARD TO NOMINAL GROUPS

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Abstract

The main aim of this research is to identify the potential influences of reading texts in textbooks on university students' writing, China. English reading passages are chosen from the textbook for sophomore, and journals are randomly selected from the target students as well. Data analysis is based on functional grammar (Halliday 1998). The similar categories or complexity of nominal groups used in students' journal and guided writing are considered as the possible effect of reading text that might have on students' writing. The findings show that although there are not as many categories of nominal groups in reading texts used in students' writing, some similarities in terms of nominal groups appeared. It is hoped that this study will yield a more precise picture of a potential link between the lexico-grammatical features in particular the use of nominal groups in reading affecting EFL learners' writing. And it is also hoped that the study can help to develop students' reading and writing in English language teaching.

Key words: reading, writing, nominal groups, university, EFL learners, China

Introduction

A large number of studies have been conducted in the EFL teaching in China with the consequence that EFL learners' writing performance has come into sharp focus. Some problems with Chinese EFL learners' writing have been identified. Lu Yuanwen (2002) has suggested that Chinese learners tended to overuse expressions which were directly translated from Chinese

equivalents. Lin (2002) discusses the overuse, underuse and misuse of “it” in English writing of Chinese learners. Xie Yuxin (2013) has suggested that grammatical errors are most frequent errors in writing of non-English major freshmen. As reading has a close connection with writing (Jabbour 2001: 291), English textbooks, as the main source of reading input for Chinese EFL learners have attracted a lot of attention. In both reading and writing, grammatical and lexical features have become focal points. Many researchers in China are now paying more attention to the more functional use of grammar rather than simple the form.

In China, the need for solving EFL learners’ writing problems and improving English proficiency is clearly a major issue. One example of this attempt to improve the writing of students can be seen at Yunnan Normal University in Kunming. These students are non-English majors at the stage of finishing their formal English learning in university and are required to take on two writing tasks: journal and guided writing. Journals are to be written once a week covering the whole semester. The guided writing is given to students twice in a semester, once at the beginning and once at the end. The English language textbook is used by the teacher with a particular focus on the reading passages. The present study investigates what effect the focus on the reading passages has on the writing of the students.

In the present study, special emphasis is placed on the use of nominal groups (Ngs) as one would suppose that these reading texts as writing models affect students’ writing particularly in terms of Ngs because of the descriptive power of the noun group.

Halliday (1998) considered that language has specific aspects according to the purpose of the communication. Depending on what is to be communicated, certain grammatical and lexical features will dominate. Nominal groups as lexico-grammatical units are used by people to present their experiences and to express themselves. And writing with long or complex nominal groups is more specific and more precise (Derewianka 1992). Accordingly, nominal groups act as an important tool to express meaning in the written form. The importance of the nominal group in written texts is because it has the potential to be expanded by adding information (pre-modifier) before the HEAD word and after (the post-

modifier). The nominal group is widely used in certain text-types such as a narrative, recount, procedure, report and in academic writing in particular. Also the processes of nominalization, where verbs or even clauses that are not normally nouns in terms of form are turned into nouns, for example the verb 'erode' can be used as a noun in the word 'erosion'. Consequently, the 'erosion' can be modified to 'extensive erosion'

This study examines nominal groups in reading texts chosen from English textbook, students' journal, and guided writing in terms of university level students, namely sophomores. The reading texts and journal samples are chosen from two phases in a semester: the beginning and final phase. The guided writing is from the beginning and final phase as well. The analysis carried out aims to answer the following research questions:

1. What kinds of nominal groups are the readers exposed to in reading texts in sophomores' English textbook during the beginning and final phases of a semester?
2. What kinds of nominal groups are used in sophomores' writing?
3. Are the nominal groups used in the reading texts in the textbook reflected in the sophomores' writing in their journals and guided writing? If so, what are they?

Theoretical and Practical Issues

In academia, the connection between reading and writing has been well established. Jabbour (2001: 291) has discussed the close connection between reading and writing. In her study, writing is considered as an activity informed by reading, and influences reading, as learners become more proficient in their language use. According to Cunningsworth (2002: 73), reading as a kind of input can be linked to other skills work, particularly listening and writing. As for writing, acting as a kind of output, it is closely related to reading in a textbook. As Grabe (2001) indicates reading turns into a tool to increase learning, writing turns into a tool to share contributions. Van Dijk (1993) states that writing is involved with expressing ideas by means of acceptable sets of patterns and models, and acquiring information about those patterns and models occurs through

reading, specifically reading centered on grammar and vocabulary. Accordingly, lexico-grammatical unit, namely nominal groups, in reading texts, can act as the model for language learners to use in their written work. Consequently, language teaching combining reading with writing can increase learners' language proficiency.

Specifically with reference to nominal groups Foley (2011: 55) explains a nominal group can be the single noun and the noun with modifiers. The modifier contains pre-modifier and post-modifier at least in English.

Pre-modifier refers to words that go before the head word, involving one or more elements of Deictics (D), Numeratives (N), Epithets (E), and Classifiers (C) (Halliday 1998: 181-186; Foley 2011: 8-9). Following is an example given by Foley (2011: 58):

The	first	little	baby	boy
Deictic	Numerative	Epithet	Classifier	Thing

Foley (2011) further explains the four elements in nominal groups with some examples:

1) Deictics (D) point to the noun functioning as the “Thing”.

Deictics	Articles	e.g. a, an, the
	Demonstratives	e.g. this, that, these, those
	Possessives	e.g. my, her, their, his father's

2) Numeratives (N) tell how many of the “Things” there are or in what order they occur.

Numeratives	Cardinal numbers	e.g. one, two, three, a thousand
	Ordinal numbers	e.g. first, second, third
	Indications of quantity	e.g. lots of, a few, some, every, all

3) Epithets (E) describe the quality of a “Thing”. Epithets mainly consist of adjectives. For example, young, clean, blue, happy, interesting.

4) Classifiers (C) establish the “Thing” as a member of a class.

Classifiers	Adjectives	e.g. Chinese, Thai, public, financial
	Nouns (functioning as Classifiers)	e.g. car park, home party

Nominal groups can also have a post-modifier. The post-modifier is namely words that come after the head word. According to Foley (2011), there are several types of post-modifier. One is the preposition phrase [pp+ng]. For instance, *the little dog [in her room]* “in” is preposition, “her room” is a nominal group. Other post-modifier can be finite and non-finite relative clauses. For example, “*The man **who is speaking now** [finite relative clause] is the president. The man **speaking now** [non-finite relative clause] is the president.*” (2011: 9)

To make it clear, *Table I* provides an overview of constituents of nominal groups.

Table I Constituents of nominal groups

Nominal Groups (Ngs)				
Single noun	Noun with modifier			
A Noun/ Pronoun	Pre-modifier		Head	Post-modifier
	Deitic	Article		Preposition phrase (pp+ng)
		Demonstrative		
		Possessive		
	Numerative	Cardinal number		Finite relative clause
		Ordinal number		
		Indication of quantity		
	Epithet	Adjective		Non-Finite relative clause (reduced relative clause)
	Classifier	Adjective		
		Nouns (functioning as classifiers)		

Modified from Foley (2011)

Methodology

Data collection

Both reading and writing data are involved in the study. The reading texts are chosen from English textbook for sophomore: *New Horizon College English 3—Reading and Writing*. The researcher indicates the reading texts chosen from *Book 3* as “**RS**”. And “**a**” and “**b**” are assigned to the reading texts chosen from the beginning and final phase. There are four texts selected from each phase. The texts chosen from a particular phase are coded from 1 to 4.

The writing data (*Table 2*), it is collected from Chinese-major sophomores’ journals and guided writing. “**WS**” refers to English writing of sophomore, “**JS**” stands for journal writing and “**GS**” refers to guided writing. Both journals and guided writing are selected from two phrases: 1) the beginning “**a**” and 2) the final “**b**”. There are 18 weeks in one semester. Each student is expected to write fifteen journals in a semester. As for the beginning phase, the 3rd journal is selected. In the final phase, the 15th journal is chosen. The rationale for selecting the 3rd and 15th journal is because the 3rd journal has been written in the fourth week when students have finished their reading in the beginning phase, and the 15th journal is the last journal of the semester.

There are four classes of Chinese-major sophomores. The researcher randomly selected five students’ writing from both phases in each class. Accordingly, there are 40 journals and 40 examples of guided writing ($5 \text{ students} \times 4 \text{ classes} \times 2 \text{ entries} = 40 \text{ entries}$). And 20 target students are coded by numerical order.

In journals, students can write whatever they like but in order to meet the requirements of the CET4 (College English Test—Band 4), students are required to write about 200 words in their journal.

Table 2 Writing Data Selection

Writing Data (80 entries)			
The beginning phase (40 entries) WS (I-20)a		The final phase (40 entries) WS (I-20)b	
Journal (the 3 rd journal)	Guided writing	Journal (the 15 th journal)	Guided writing
JS (I-20) a	GS (I-20) a	JS (I-20)b	GS (I-20)b
20 entries	20 entries	20 entries	20 entries

Method of Analysis

This research has employed a qualitative method based on quantitative analysis. Constituents of nominal groups (*Table 1*) are applied to the data analysis. The framework of data analysis is as follows (*Table 3*):

Table 3 Categorization of nominal groups

Single Noun & Noun with Pre-modifier			
NI	Single Noun	A Noun / Pronoun	<i>e.g. there, he, English</i>
N2	with Pre-modifier	D+H	<i>e.g. a gift, my friends</i>
N3		N+H	<i>e.g. some games</i>
N4		E+H	<i>e.g. new e-mail</i>
N5		C+H	<i>e.g. strawberry smoothie</i>
N6		D+N+H	<i>e.g. the first alley</i>
N7		D+E+H	<i>e.g. a big seal</i>
N8		D+C+H	<i>e.g. Clash’s music video</i>
N9		N+E+H	<i>e.g. many big leaves</i>
NI0		N+C+H	<i>e.g. many water activities</i>
NI1		E+C+H	<i>e.g. pink nail polish</i>
NI2		D+N+E+H	<i>e.g. these three remote controls</i>
NI3		D+N+C+H	<i>e.g. the first pine tree</i>

NI4		D+E+C+H	<i>e.g. the big sun glasses</i>
NI5		N+E+C+H	<i>e.g. two closed circuit cameras</i>
NI6		D+N+E+C+H	<i>e.g. this first little baby boy</i> <i>(Foley 2011: 58)</i>

Noun with post-modifier			
NI7	with Post-modifier	preposition phrase [pp+ng]	<i>e.g. the colour [of the word]</i>
NI8		relative clause	<i>e.g. My friend who is standing next to me is Thai.</i>
NI9		reduced relative clause	<i>e.g. You just press the Talk button located in the middle.</i>

(*D = Deictic, N = Numerative, E = Epithet, C = Classifier and H = head noun.*)

Modified from Foley (2011)

The categories of Ngs are from NI to NI9. The input of Ngs is considered as a variety of categories used in English reading texts. And the output of Ngs is considered as similar categories or complexity of nominal groups that appear in reading texts used in students' writing in terms of the beginning and final phase of a semester.

In the process of data analysis, for the convenience of data analysis, firstly, the researcher typed both reading and writing texts into the computer. Secondly, an analysis was performed to identify categories of English nominal groups in each text in terms of the framework (*Table 3*). There are eight reading texts chosen from English textbook and 80 writing entries collected from sophomore. Thirdly, the researcher compared nominal groups between reading and writing in terms of the two phases (beginning and end of the semester). Excel was employed to provide a histogram of Ngs in both reading and writing texts to show the variation of Ngs.

Findings

Reading

Table 4 The application of nominal groups (Ngs) in Book 3 (New Horizon College English 3—Reading and Writing) for Sophomores in the beginning phase

	N ₁	N ₂	N ₃	N ₄	N ₅	N ₆	N ₇	N ₈	N ₉	N ₁₀	N ₁₁	N ₁₂	N ₁₃	N ₁₄	N ₁₅	N ₁₆	N ₁₇	N ₁₈	N ₁₉
RSa1	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+			+	+		+	+	+
RSa2	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+			+			+	+	+
RSa3	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+	+		+	+	+		+	+	+
RSa4	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+		+		+	+		+	+	+

(“+” means the category of nominal group is used in the text)

Table 5 The application of Ngs in Book 3 for Sophomores in the final phase

	N ₁	N ₂	N ₃	N ₄	N ₅	N ₆	N ₇	N ₈	N ₉	N ₁₀	N ₁₁	N ₁₂	N ₁₃	N ₁₄	N ₁₅	N ₁₆	N ₁₇	N ₁₈	N ₁₉
RSb1	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+			+	+	+			+	+	+
RSb2	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+					+	+		+	+	+
RSb3	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+			+			+	+	+
RSb4	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+			+			+	+	+

Text	Topic	Genre*	Category
RSa1	Iron and the effects of exercise	Explanation	I6
RSa2	Unexpect benefits of exercise	Information Report	I5
RSa3	Principles first	Information report mixed with personal recount	I6
RSa4	Cultural differences in decision-making	Persuasion	I5
RSb1	legal and moral implications of cloning	Persuasion	I5
RSb2	The beneficiary of human cloning	Persuasion	I3

RSb3	Premarital Agreements	Persuasion mixed with recount	15
RSb4	Traditional family structure at risk	Persuasion	14

*The genre chosen were in reference to the genres used in College English Test (CET).

There are eighteen categories of Ngs used in the chosen texts for Sophomores in both the beginning and final phase. One-element and two-element premodifiers are in the majority. NI7, NI8 and NI9 as the postmodifiers are also extensively used. However, NI6 (D+N+E+C+H) is not found in the chosen texts. As for the complexity of Ngs, Ngs with both premodifier and postmodifier are used. Expanded N4, N5, N7, N8, N9, NI0 and NI5 are used in the reading texts in the beginning phase; expanded N4, N5, N7, N8 and NI4 are used final phase. Ngs in apposition are used in both phases. Embedded NI7, NI8 and NI9 present in the texts chosen from the beginning phase; in the final phase, embedded NI7 and NI9 can also be found.

Writing

Extracts of five students' writing are provided in this part.

Extract 1 (SI)

Table 6 Nominal groups' output of SI

	N ₁	N ₂	N ₃	N ₄	N ₅	N ₆	N ₇	N ₈	N ₉	N ₁₀	N ₁₁	N ₁₂	N ₁₃	N ₁₄	N ₁₅	N ₁₆	N ₁₇	N ₁₈	N ₁₉
JS 1a	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+		+	+		+	+		+	+	+
GS 1a			+	+	+		+				+						+	+	
JS 1b	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				+		+	+	+
GS 1b	+	+			+			+		+				+			+	+	

In the journal at the beginning the genre is mainly that of persuasion and which uses fifteen categories of Ngs. The final journal again being a persuasive type text mixed with recount also involved fifteen categories of Ngs. With regard to the guided writing; in the beginning the first one is an

explanation and the final is more like persuasion. Seven categories of Ng are used in the beginning entry and eight categories are used in the final entry.

A variety of epithets in Ng are used in both of the phases, for instance, “a famous university” (D+E+H), “some painful failures” (N+E+H) and “a high academic title” (D+E+C+H) in the beginning, and “useless persons” (E+H), “my favorite actor” (D+E+H), “some harmful things” (N+E+H) and “many excellent young people” (N+E+C+H) in the final. Various numeratives are also used in the two phases, for example, “a great deal”, “some”, “two”, “first” and “plenty of” in the beginning; “many”, “a lot of”, “some” and “eleventh” in the final.

Some abstract words acted as the head noun of Ng are used in the beginning journal, for example, “confidence”, “possibilities” and “importance”. The non-finite present participle used as epithet also can be found in the beginning writing, for instance “outstanding contributions”. And NI7 embedded in NI7 can be found in the beginning phase, for instance, “some **mentions** from parents and friends about weight” in GSIa, the head noun is “**mentions**”, “from parents and friends” and “about weight” are two NI7 that are used to modify the head. In the final phase, the compound epithet in an expanded NI4 can be found in the final phase, for example “a well-known international work language” in GSIb.

The Ng in student’s writing indicates some development in terms of the complexity of Ng.

Extract 2 (S2)

Table 7 Nominal groups’ output of S2

	N 1	N 2	N 3	N 4	N 5	N 6	N 7	N 8	N 9	N 10	N 11	N 12	N 13	N 14	N 15	N 16	N 17	N 18	N 19
JS 2a	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+		+			+	+	+		+	+	+
GS 2a		+	+	+							+						+	+	
JS 2b	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+	+	+		+	+			+	+	+
GS 2b	+	+	+				+							+			+	+	

As for the second sophomore, the beginning journal belongs to persuasion mixed with recount included fifteen categories of Ngs. The final journal is a recount mixed with persuasion also involved fifteen categories of Ngs. With regard to the guided writing, six categories of Ngs are used in the beginning entry and seven categories are used in the final.

A variety of epithets can be found in both of the phases. The superlatives acted as the epithets can be found in “*the most important life dream*” in JS2a and “*the most powerful language*” in GS2b. The present participle acted as the epithet of Ng can be found in the beginning journal JS2a, for example “*the amazing scenery*”. And NI7 embedded in NI7 also can be found in the beginning phase. In the final phase, Complex Ngs can be found in the final guided writing. For example, “*a well-known language*” involves the compound epithet “well-known”. And two classifiers are used in “*a popular international meeting language (D+E+CI+C2+H)*”. As for the head, “competition” acted as an abstract noun appears in NI4 “*a real singing competition*” in the final journal JS2b. The nonfinite verbs “singing” is used as the classifier in the Ng. In terms of the complexity of Ngs, the development can be seen from writing in the final phase.

Extract 3 (S6)

Table 8 Nominal groups' output of S6

	N 1	N 2	N 3	N 4	N 5	N 6	N 7	N 8	N 9	N 10	N 11	N 12	N 13	N 14	N 15	N 16	N 17	N 18	N 19
JS 6a	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				+			+	+	+
GS 6a		+		+			+	+			+						+		
JS 6b	+	+	+	+	+		+	+	+					+			+	+	+
GS 6b	+		+		+		+	+									+	+	

As for the sixth sophomore, four entries are involved. Both of the journals are recounts. The beginning journal includes fourteen categories of Ngs. The final journal involves twelve categories of Ngs. With regard to the guided writing, six categories of Ngs are used in the beginning and seven categories are used in the final.

One-element, two-element and three-element premodifiers are used in the two phases. Two-element premodifier dominates Ngs in writing, N7 in particular. Ngs with both premodifier and postmodifier can be found in the two phases. And expanded N7 can be found in both of the phases; expanded N5 can be found in the final.

In the final journal JS6b, embedded Ng can be found. In the Ng “*many miracles [in his life] which seem to be impossible to him*”, “*miracles*” is the head noun. And “*which seem to be impossible to him*” as postmodifier (finite relative clause) also modified “*miracles*” is embedded in the nominal group “many miracles in his life”. Compared with “a strong woman”, “a strong female” used in JS6b might indicate greater potential range of vocabulary. The superlative used as the epithet can be found in “*the most beautiful girl (D+ADVERB INTENSIFIER+E+H)*” in the JS6a. And various epithets in Ngs are also used in the final journal, for example, “tragic” and “kind-hearted” in “*a tragic but kind-hearted girl*”, “noble” in “*his noble personalities*”, “classic” in “*many classic lines*”, and “great” in “*a great English movie*”. In “*a tragic but kind-hearted girl*”, the complicated epithet “kind-hearted” can be found. In the final phase, the hyphenated classifier can be found in “*a fast-track language*” in GS6b.

Extract 4 (SI7)

Table 9 Nominal groups’ output of SI7

	N 1	N 2	N 3	N 4	N 5	N 6	N 7	N 8	N 9	N 10	N 11	N 12	N 13	N 14	N 15	N 16	N 17	N 18	N 19
JS I7a	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+						+			+	+	+
GS I7a				+	+		+										+		
JS I7b	+	+	+	+	+		+	+						+			+	+	+
GS I7b	+				+			+						+			+		

As for the seventeenth sophomore, the beginning journal is a recount, and the final belongs to persuasion mixed with information report. Both of the journals include twelve categories of Ngs. With regard to the guided writing, four categories of Ngs are used in the beginning and five categories are used in the final.

One-element and two-element premodifier dominate Ngs in writing. Ngs with both premodifier and postmodifier can be found in the two phases. NI9 embedded in NI7 can be found in the beginning journal RS17a. And expanded N5 and NI4 can be found in the final.

Some abstract head nouns are used in Ngs, for example “my *teammates*”, “the *exhibitions*” and “many *activities*” in the beginning phase and “*Tibetan Buddhism*” and “the most beautiful travel *paradise*” in the final phase. Various epithets in Ngs are applied to writing. For instance, “important” in “*important points*”, “amazing” in “*an amazing experience*” (the present participle is involved), “wonderful” in “*wonderful shows*”, “well-educated” in “*well-educated person*” (compound epithet) and “colorful” in “*my colorful school life*” can be found in the beginning; “a perfect dream”, “a little child”, “a beautiful place”, “a great palace” and “the most beautiful travel *paradise*” (the superlative acted as the epithet) are used in the final. A variety of numeratives also can be found in the two phases, such as “many”, “three” and “all sorts of” in the beginning phase; “a lot of” and “first” in the final phase.

Extract 5 (S20)

Table 10 Nominal groups' output of S20

	N 1	N 2	N 3	N 4	N 5	N 6	N 7	N 8	N 9	N 10	N 11	N 12	N 13	N 14	N 15	N 16	N 17	N 18	N 19
JS 20a	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+			+				+	+	+
GS 20a			+	+			+										+		
JS 20b	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+	+				+			+	+	+
GS 20b	+	+					+	+		+							+		

As for the twentieth sophomore, four entries are involved. Both of the journals are recounts, involving fourteen categories of Ngs. With regard to the guided writing, four categories of Ngs are used in the beginning and six categories are used in the final.

Totally there are fourteen categories of Ngs used in both the beginning phase and the final phase. NI3 only can be found in the beginning phase, however, NI4 only appears in the final phase. Although Ngs with one-

element, two-element or three-element premodifiers are used, one-element and two-element premodifiers dominate in writing. Ngs with both premodifier and postmodifier can be found in the two phases. Expanded forms of Ngs, such as N8 “*the national protected animals (D+CI+C2+H)*” and N10 “*three Chinese tea performances (N+CI+C2+H)*” are used in the final journal JS20b. And embedded NI7 can be found in RS20b, such as “*one [of the beautiful islands [on the Erhai Lake]]*”.

Some abstract head nouns are used in Ngs, for example “*interesting histories*”, “*Chinese literature*” and “*a sudden attack*” in the beginning phase and “*an appointment*”, “*the monasteries*”, “*three pagodas*”, “*black-headed gulls*”, “*the beautiful scenery*”, “*three Chinese tea performances*” and “*a small farm hostel*” in the final phase. There are different numeratives in the two phases. For example, “some”, “more”, “many”, “8th” and “15th” are used in the beginning; “a few”, “next”, “three”, “third” and “fourth” can be found in the final. And various epithets in Ngs are also applied to writing. For instance, “interesting” in “*interesting histories*”, “colorful” in “*colorful lights*”, “sudden” in “*a sudden attack*”, “important” in “*the important event*” and “brave” in “*some brave men*” can be found in the beginning; “ancient” in “*the ancient town*”, “beautiful” in “*a beautiful town*” and “small” in “*a small farm hostel*” are used in the final. Classifiers with different forms also can be found in ENgs, such as “*the Mid-Autumn Festival*”, “*the meeting place and time*”, “*the Chinese people*” and “*a jade rabbit*” in the beginning phase; “*the national dress*”, “*the tour guide*”, “*the black-headed gulls*” (compound classifier) and “*the national protected animals*” in the final phase.

The complexity of Ngs used in writing in the final phase might indicate greater potential range of vocabulary.

Comparison of Ngs between reading and writing

In order to make the comparison possible, two formulas were used:

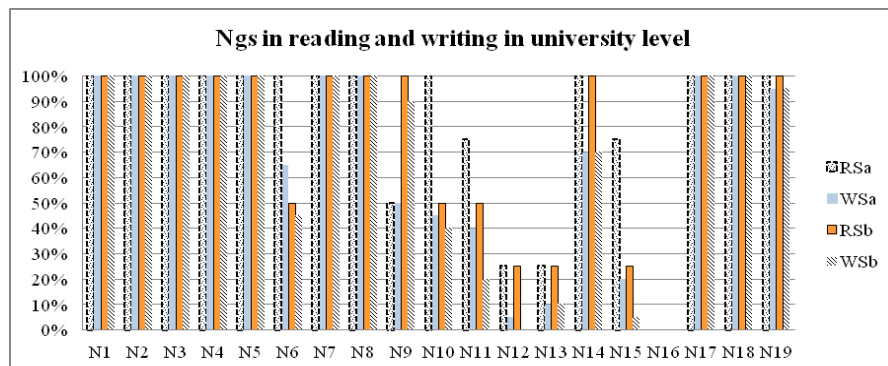
(I) The percentage of Ngs in reading

$\frac{\text{the number of reading texts which involve the certain category of Ngs in a certain phase}}{\text{the total number of texts in the certain phase}} \times 100\%$
--

(2) The percentage of Ngs in writing

the number of reading texts which involve the certain category of Ngs in a certain phase	X100%
20 students	

Figure 1 The comparison of Ngs between reading and writing in terms of sophomore



RSa = English reading texts for Sophomore chosen from the beginning phase. English writing entries collected from the beginning phase = WSa. RSb = English reading texts chosen from the final phase. English writing entries collected from the final phase = WSb.

As shown in Figure 1, eighteen categories of Ngs are used in both reading and writing of sophomores in the beginning phase; in the final phase, eighteen categories of Ngs can be found in reading, whereas seventeen categories of Ngs are used in sophomores' writing. In both phases, Ngs that are used in writing overlap with the Ngs in reading. And NI6 (the most complete form of Ng with premodifier, e.g. *the first little baby boy*) cannot be found in either reading or writing.

Generally, the more Ngs are exposed in the reading texts, the more responses students can give in their writing, one-element or two-element premodifiers and postmodifiers in particular. N1 (e.g. *I, English, it*), one-element premodifier N2 (e.g. *our confidence, a teacher*), N3 (e.g. *many dreams, four girls*), N4 (e.g. *good friends, wonderful shows*) and N5 (e.g. *TV series, Chinese teacher*), two-element premodifier N7 (e.g. *a little girl, a famous university*) and N8 (e.g. *the university life, our English level*), three-element premodifier NI4 (e.g. *the best English film, my colorful school life*), and postmodifiers NI7 (e.g. *the most beautiful travel paradise [in China], the*

stories [*of Forrest Gump*]), N18 (e.g. ...*the person who is perseverant and hardworking*), N19 (e.g. ...*the key word known as "team work"...*) extensively used in reading are also widely used in writing. N6 (e.g. *the first prize, the 15th day*), N10 (e.g. *more English films, many moon cakes*), N11 (e.g. *short term goals*) and N15 (e.g. *plenty of great life experience*) used more in the beginning reading are also used more in the beginning writing; N9 (e.g. *many different songs, many classic lines*) increased in the final reading also increases in the final writing.

Moreover, Ngs with both premodifier and postmodifier can be found not only in reading but also in writing. Embedded N17 appeared in the beginning reading (RSa2 and RSa3) also can be found in the beginning writing (WS1a, WS2a, WS7a and WS10a), for example, *a succession [*of scientific studies [*of animals*]*]* (RSa2) and *outstanding contributions [*to the development [*of our country*]*]* (WS1a); embedded N19 is used in RSa1 also can be found in WS17a, for instance ...*affecting one in four female teenagers and one in five women aged 18 to 45* (RSa1) and *the first prize [*in the basketball match held in our school*]* (WS17a). Embedded N17 used in the final reading (RSb1, Rsb2 and Rsb4) also can be found in the final writing (WS20b), for example, *wild questions [*on the topic [*of cloning*]*]* (RSb1) and *one [*of the beautiful islands [*on the Erhai Lake*]*]* (WS20b); embedded N18 is used in Rsb3 also can be found in WS6b, for instance, ...*retired people in their 60s and 70s who are remarrying after a spouse has died* (RSb3) and *many **miracles** [*in his life*] which seem to be impossible to him* (WS6b). Appositive Ngs used in Rsb4 can be found in WS5b. For example, *the Population Council, an international organization based in New York that studies issues related to childbearing* is used in Rsb4 and *our head teacher Miss Jiang* is used in WS5b. There are same forms of epithets, classifiers or head words in reading texts also used in students' writing, for example, hyphenated word used as classifier in Rsb4 (*single-parent households*) and WS6b (*a fast-track language*). As for the expanded forms of Ngs, students' writings involve same forms as well as reading. For instance, expanded N7 (e.g. *the most important thing*) in four reading texts is also used in nine students' writing.

Discussion

As for the differences of Ngs between reading and writing, the main reason might refer to genres, curriculum requirements, CET and students' English proficiency.

The difference of Ngs between reading and writing	
Beginning phase	Final phase
N10 (N+C+H) (e.g. <i>one English class, every human being</i>) and N15 (N+E+C+H) (e.g. <i>any additional iron loss, one former inner-city high school teacher</i>) in writing are far less than reading.	N12 (D+N+E+H) (e.g. <i>the one possible exception</i>) appeared in reading is not used in students' writing. N11 (E+C+H) (e.g. <i>beautiful English songs</i>), N13 (D+N+C+H) (e.g. <i>the first English song</i>) and N15 (N+E+C+H) (e.g. <i>plenty of great life experience</i>) in writing are far less than reading.

The decrease of the use of N10 and N15 in students' writing might be because genres of sophomores' writing differ from the reading texts. Sophomores are not required to write very many complicated nominal groups, such as three-element premodifier of Ngs (e.g. *his treasured ice-cream collection*) in terms of the curriculum requirements and requirements of English writing in CET4. Therefore, N12, N13 and N15 are used less in students' writing. However, the limited English proficiency of students might be another reason for the difference in terms of certain Ngs.

With regard to the similarities, the categories of Ngs that are used in writing overlap with the Ngs in reading. The similarity in terms of certain categories is as follows:

The similarity of Ngs between reading and writing	
Beginning phase	Final phase
N6 (D+N+H) (e.g. <i>the first prize, the 15th day</i>), N10 (N+C+H) (e.g. <i>more English films, many moon cakes</i>), N11 (E+C+H) (e.g. <i>short term goals, different life periods</i>) and N15 (N+E+C+H) (e.g. <i>plenty of great life</i>	N9 (N+E+H) increased in the final reading also increase in the final writing, for instance, <i>many different songs, many classic lines, and some ancient trees</i> .

<i>experience, one beautiful sea bird</i>) used more in the beginning reading are also used more in the beginning writing	
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And similar embedded forms, expanded forms, components of Ngs also can be found in both phases. The similarities between reading and writing might be because reading has its potential impact on students’ writing.

Conclusion

The results indicate that reading texts in textbook might have some effect on sophomores’ writing output. The question is how can this ‘effect’ be identified more specifically? The general argument would be that the more Ngs students are exposed to in the reading texts, the more use students might make of the Ngs in their writing. In the data collect for this small study, there is evidence of Ngs in both expanded and embedded forms that are important in descriptive writing where detail is required. Perhaps more important is the need for teachers to focus on how these Ngs are used in the reading texts by more accomplished writers. It is felt that through such focus the students writing might be encouraged to use long nominal groups which are often a dominant characteristic in certain types of genres and will be potentially beneficial in their college examinations.

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