

BRIDGING THE CULTURAL GAP: THE EFFECTIVENESS OF WRITING PREPARATION IN CHINA AND JAPAN AND 'RELEARNING' ACADEMIC CONVENTIONS (TONY CLARK, UNIVERSITY OF BRISTOL: TC9734@BRISTOL.AC.UK)

Objectives



Aims of the overall project: a deeper understanding of the issues faced by Chinese and Japanese students learning to write;

- 1) To explore issues surrounding students' learning of British academic conventions and shed light on the challenges of acquiring them (in both the short and long term)
- 2) To offer the stakeholders a chance to voice their opinions on their perceived problems and possible solutions regarding learning and teaching written academic conventions

Research Questions



RQ 1: To what extent are Chinese and Japanese learners aiming to study abroad sufficiently supported to achieve their required IELTS writing section exam score in their own country?

RQ 2: To what extent does achieving the required writing score allow previous IELTS candidates to manage academic writing on a British course of postgraduate study afterwards?

Data Collection and Analysis

(Qualitative Data Project)

Data site: (collected Jan-Dec. 2016)	Japan (1 IELTS preparation school)	China (1 IELTS preparation school)	UK (several institutions, postgrad only)
Duration & Progress at site, participants	2 months, intensive course observed in its entirety (complete) 10 students, 2 instructors	6 months, intensive course fully observed (complete) 20 students, 3 instructors	2 months (nearing completion) 5-6 student in total from China and Japan
Data Collection Methods	Classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, collecting writing homework	Classroom observations, semi-structured interviews, collecting writing homework	Semi-structured interviews with participants on a UK course of study and collection of assignments
Analysis (interpretivist philosophy and approach)	Interview transcripts, writing & observation notes thematically analysed using Nvivo software (coding)	Interview transcripts, writing & observation notes thematically analysed using Nvivo (coding)	Interview transcripts and written assignments currently being analyzed using thematic analysis & Nvivo

Preliminary Results (China & Japan)

- “When the water level rises, the ship must also float higher” (Chinese Instructor)
- Honestly speaking I do not understand the contents IELTS wants to require. Just a little bit difficult. Japanese education in different direction.....the idea Japan’s education require, and England’s education require, is different” (Japanese student)
- “The real improvement is little, for most of them. Because you can’t acquire language during 2 or 4 months, it’s impossible. At least....if you learn every day.....maybe 2,3 or 5 hours.....maybe 5 years. At least” (Chinese instructor)

Background: participant perspectives on the influence of prior education on academic writing

Starting point: A brief note on timeframe expectations and instructors' concerns

Strategy 1: Strength in numbers; The benefits of pre-writing group planning activities in the short and longer term

Strategy 2 : Bridging the gap; no uniform, internationally transferable essay template and seeking alternative pedagogical means (& the role of feedback in the writing process)

Strategy 3: Lexical work and mind maps for 'triggering the mechanism'; tackling perceived topic knowledge and vocabulary deficiencies

Postscript: Revisiting potentially outdated conclusions; logic, critical thinking and how these are applied to test preparation

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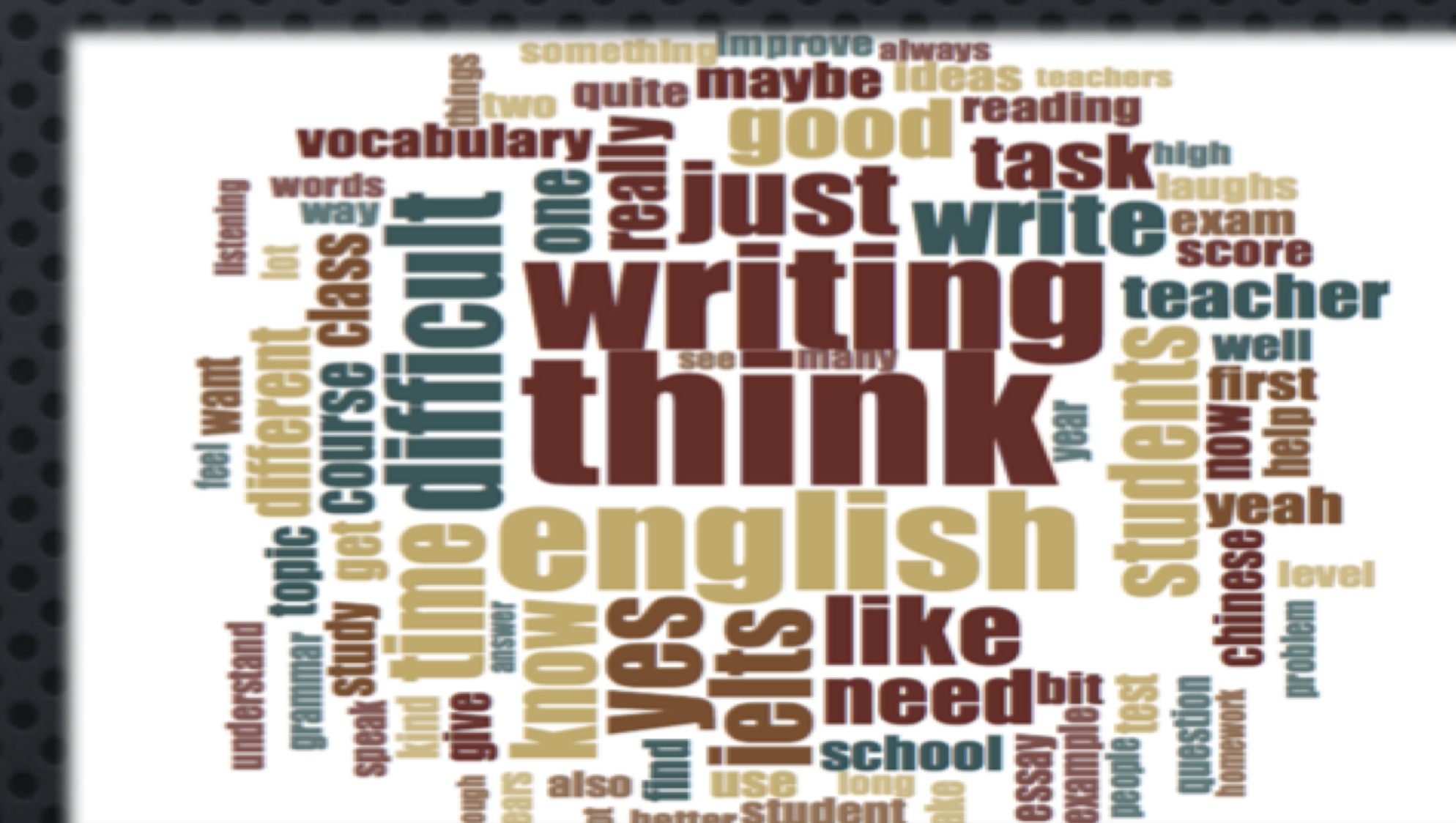
Linking Previous Research



The central objective of this part is to connect salient existing studies on:

- intensive IELTS preparation process (Green, 2006a, 2006b, Green 2007a, 2007b, Green & Hawkey, 2005)
- experiences of previous IELTS candidates on UK courses (Banerjee: 2003)

Words most used by interview participants, as identified by Nvivo software:



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