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A pedagogical attempt at integrating EFL creative writing into an English-mediated Linguistics module in Mainland China

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This qualitative L2 writing study presents a contextualised response to the movement of Creative Writing Across the Curriculum. A story-writing assignment is implemented in an introductory Linguistics module as an alternative medium for knowledge-construction. The task offered the Chinese students the opportunity to utilise some recently acquired semantics knowledge for purposeful and idiosyncratic construction of a short story in English. 110 stories were collected and examined using a sociocognitive view of "writer voices", seeing voices as arising from the negotiation between the writer and various forms of knowledge in the context, such as the target subject knowledge and the convention of narratives. In order to look for creative modes of knowledge application and examine how the student writers' applications of the target semantics invoke or deviate from established and culturally-rooted cognitive structures (i.e. "schema") the stories were initially examined by corpus linguistics techniques and then manual and hermeneutic coding. Three general tendencies stand out: the stories show 1) strategic, 2) conventional and 3) creative applications of the target semantics knowledge. Subsequently, focal students were interviewed individually. Six focal cases are included here, illustrating characteristic negotiations between the writer and certain symbolic resources. Overall, the study holds implication for how EFL creative writing assignments might help stimulating Chinese students' knowledge-making potential in a subject context.

Keywords: EFL creative writing; disciplinary contexts; writer voices; sociocognitive view; schema; knowledge construction

Introduction

This is a qualitative EFL writing study which looks into the effects of integrating EFL creative writing elements into an assessed writing assignment embedded in an introductory Linguistics module. The Chinese undergraduate students, after one year of EAP training, had just started to learn various subjects through the medium of English. The L2 creative writing assignment was established with the goal of encouraging the students to negotiate an agentive presence in EFL subject-based writing. This paper first reviews the literature documenting the movement of creative writing into disciplinary settings. Then it explains a sociocognitive view of writer "voice" which essentially consists in the negotiation between writer and the surrounding knowledge in meaning-making. Finally, it justifies the interpretative framework of a "creative mode of knowledge application" used by this study.

Creative Writing across the Curriculum

The existing literature in the emerging field of Creative Writing Across the Curriculum consists of studies primarily conducted in the universities in the UK and the States (see, for example, Morley, 2012; Nesi & Gardner, 2005; Peary, 2012) which document

highly situated pedagogical interventions. Story writing, reflective writing, and poetry have been introduced into the assessment methods of disciplines such as Maths (e.g., Bahls, 2009), Psychology (Connor-Greene, Young, Paul, & Murdoch, 2005), Health Care (Kerr, 2010), Chemistry (Petersen, 2001), Sociology (Gordy & Peary, 2005) and Law Studies (Morley, 2012). The movement explores the potential of L2 creative writing as an alternative form of learning and meaning-making. The rationale centres on how creative forms of writing stimulate university students to make innovative connections among disparate knowledge domains. In other words, students who can reproduce target disciplinary knowledge through a form of creative literacy possibly demonstrate active internalisation of knowledge.

In Asian contexts, empirical research shows L2 creating writing enhancing the students' sense of writer (e.g., Disney, 2014; Tin, 2011), nurturing their close-reading capacities (Dai, 2015; Kroll & Dai, 2014), cultivating their creative cognition (Tan, 2009) and developing multi-cultural awareness (Dai, 2010, 2012; Lim, 2015). In China, there have been informed attempts to introduce English creative writing into university classrooms through refined teaching frameworks (Dai, 2015; Sui, 2015). However, compared to Western contexts, there are distinctly fewer L2 creative writing studies which target disciplinary settings although Sui (2015) and Dai (2015) notably have respectively explored how EFL poetry and EFL creative nonfiction led Chinese English majors to approach intercultural and literary theories emotionally and creatively.

Sociocognitive view of EFL writers' voices in a subject field

A sociocognitive view of EFL writer voices is related to a constitutive view of language which highlights the inseparability among language, knowledge, and context (Barron, 2002; Chandrasegaran, 2013). It sees the EFL writers' voices residing in the individuals' self-positioning as certain knowers in a specific discourse and cultural context; and such voices are indispensably expressed through the foreign language. The model used in this study (Figure 1) sees writer voices arising from the negotiation between the writer and the surrounding context. The context includes forms of knowledge relevant to this study and the four aspects of the writer are taken from the heuristics previously used by Canagarajah (2015) to examine his postgraduate student's dialogic voices. He defines "identity" as aspects of one's cultural heritage, such as "language, ethnic, and national affiliations that are part of one's history" (p. 124); "role" as one's social labels including membership in various communities such as, "schools, workplaces, professional communities, and the family" (p. 124); and "subjectivity" with reference to a specific disciplinary field, including disciplinary conventions in knowledge creation, and the 'content knowledge' available in the field.

The aspects of identity, role and subjectivity have a social constructionist hue, resonating Wenger's (2010) notion of reifications in the Community of Practice conception. Reifications are "physical and conceptual artefacts", such as "words, tools, concepts, methods, stories, documents", that reflect the target community's "shared experience" (Wenger, 2010, p. 180). This social constructionist hue is counterbalanced by "awareness" which is the writers' own reflexive interpretation of their identity, role and subjectivity. Awareness particularly resides in the "strategic footing" (Canagarajah, 2015, pp. 124-125) that writers hold in relation to surrounding values, knowledge and texts. For example, a strategic footing could be achieved through the writer negotiating polysemous or creative applications of the target subject knowledge, or of language choices, within accepted practices in the context.
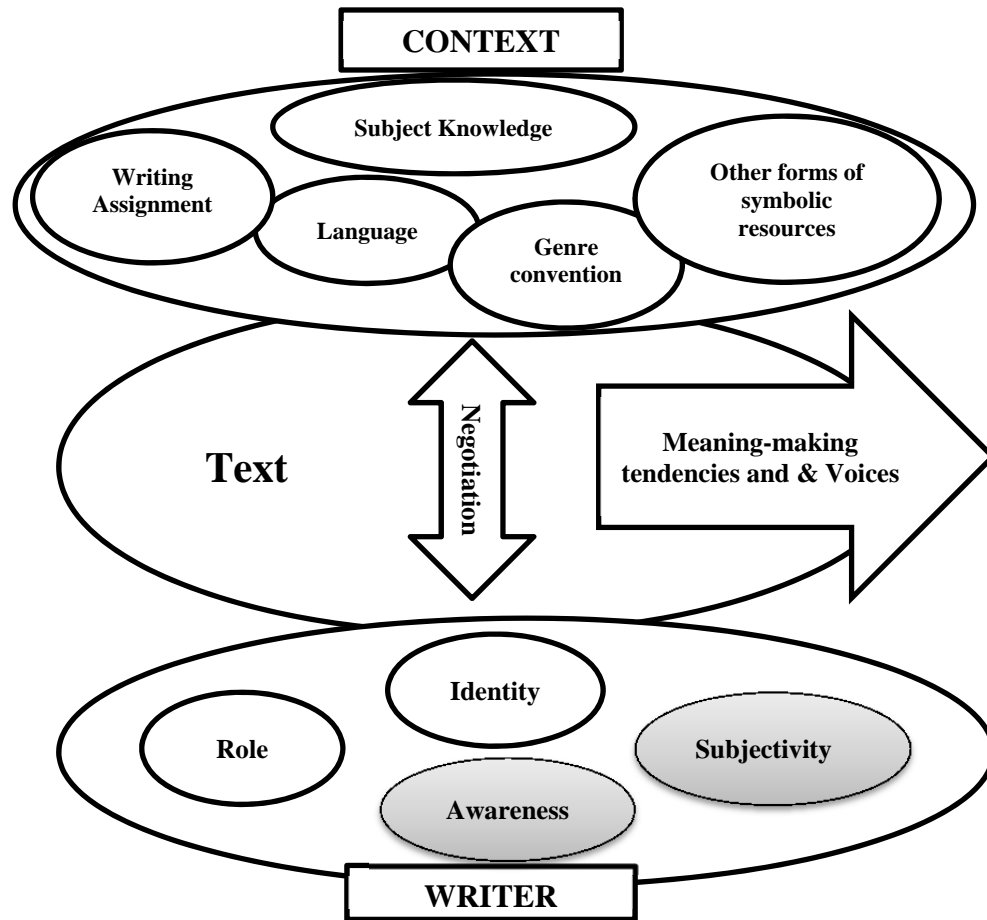
Figure 1. A sociocognitive model of writer voice (with "Writer" taken from Canagarajah, 2015)

Creative application of the target subject knowledge
In this study, the EFL story writing assignment was designed to stimulate the students' active instantiation of newly acquired linguistic knowledge. The target knowledge includes lexical relations (e.g. synonyms, antonyms), figures of speech (e.g. metaphor, metonymy, collocations, or semantic anomaly), connotations and lexical ambiguity. Accordingly, writer voices are examined for tangible or innovative realisations of these semantic concepts which are integrative to the development of the story.

Eubanks (2004) argues that figures of speech are not simply decorative devices but also "fundamental social and cognitive tools" (p. 33) as they rely on sociocultural beliefs and the likely association readers make between particular language items and certain images in their mind. Eubank's argument seems to suggest that meaning is generated and interpreted through "schema" and "deviation". Schema are established and culturally-rooted cognitive structures which are often invoked in the construction and interpretation of, for example, metaphors or lexical relations in texts (Paradis & Willners, 2011). Deignan (2005) demonstrate that individuals, when recruiting such schema, might make use of them with great flexibility in their specific literary instantiations. Creativity could also be invoked by the writer somehow deviating from the schema. In the current study students might apply the target semantics knowledge to the realisation of creative meanings in their stories, through invoking and manipulating sociocultural knowledge and readers' expectations.

The study
This study investigates the effect of using EFL creative writing as a medium for knowledge construction in a semantics written assignment for an introductory linguistics module in a university in China. The study elicited 110 EFL stories from 110 second-year Chinese students. The task prompt (Appendix A) required the target semantics concepts to be the students' tools for sculpting or rejuvenating the story. Since storytelling has been perceived as a human instinct (Gottschall, 2013), the story genre was selected to minimize any effort to acquire the conventions of the genre. After an initial examination of the stories focal participants were selected and invited for individual interviews.

The research questions are:
1. How do the Chinese students apply the target semantics knowledge in their EFL stories so as to achieve distinctive effects?
2. What are the particular manifestations among focal participants of the individuals' voices as revealed in their idiosyncratic application of the target semantics knowledge? In addition, could any connecting thread be detected between the focal writers' voices in this particular story writing task and the writers' reflections on their EFL writing experience in some other subject courses?

Participants: the EFL student writers
The 110 Chinese students were from five language-related undergraduate programmes: Language and Literature; Communication Studies; English and Communication; English and Finance; and English and International Business. Their average language proficiency was around IELTS 5. When the data were collected, the students were taking a core linguistics module in the English department and three other subject modules, some specific to their chosen programmes but all delivered through the medium of English. They were also taking English for Academic Purpose (EAP) classes. The students had just entered their second year at the university and were transitioning into English-mediated disciplinary studies after one year of intensive EAP training and study skills practices. Before taking the introductory linguistics module, the students had had limited knowledge or learning experience of English linguistics.

Data collection

The EFL creative writing task
The story-writing task was assigned in the third week of the course when fundamental semantics topics had just been covered, including conceptual and associative meaning, lexical relations, various manifestations of word play (such as polysemy, homophones and homonyms), semantic role and semantic feature analyses. The task required the students to apply particular semantics concepts to the creation of an original story in English (minimum 300 words). The marking criteria were listed on the assignment instruction page (Appendix A). For purposes of illustration and idea-generation, *The Ugly Duckling* was used as a sample story for collective scrutiny and discussion including an in-class interpretation of how particular semantics concepts, such as synonymy, antonymy and hyponymy, are instantiated in the story for particular literary and social purposes. For example, the story's target audience is children; hence the usage of paraphrases and the synonyms help the young reader to follow the plot.

Meanwhile, antonymy helps to bring out conflicting social values and the transformation processes undergone by the central character. There is also evidence of hyponymy and prototypes which cultivates the young reader's mental representation of the world regarding, for example, types of animals, birds, farm instruments. The task produced 110 stories which were marked by the teacher-researcher before data analysis started.

Selection and recruitment of the focal participants

Focal participants were selected from those who displayed characteristic usage of the target semantics knowledge based on three general tendencies which emerged from the initial data coding. Firstly, some student texts reveal instrumental use of antonymic or synonymic meaning relations for the realisation of tension or themes of transformation. Secondly, some students tapped into the associative meaning of words to evoke identifiable social references, perceptions and values. Thirdly, some attempted to construct unconventional meanings or to create visual imagery, typically through polysemy, metaphor or associative meaning.

It was also important to select focal participants from different grade ranges to capture potential variation in negotiation of writer voices in students' application of the target semantics knowledge. Participants were selected from five marking bands: 70-79 (Distinction); 60-69 (Good); 50-59 (Competent); 40-49 (Adequate); and 30-39 (Fail). Requests for individual interviews were sent to eighteen individuals from which twelve agreed to participate. The interviews lasted from 20 to 50 minutes. Eleven interviews were conducted in Chinese and one in English, according to the individual preferences of the participants. Given the limitation of space, this paper will only report on six focal students who have shown characteristic knowledge applications and self-positioning efforts: three are drawn from the mark range of 60-69; one from 50-59; and two from below 50.

Individual interviews with the focal participants

In the interview, the focal participants were presented with their stories with snippets of the texts highlighted. They were asked to recall their thinking processes behind the semantics approaches in the highlighted excerpts. The students were also asked about their strategies to utilise the various forms of knowledge available to them during this creative writing task. To determine how their subjectivity and awareness might have surfaced in other subject settings, they were also asked to reflect on the similarities and differences between their actions when writing for this assignment and their EFL writing experience in other subject courses. The interviews were audio-recorded and portions were transcribed verbatim and then translated into English where necessary. Finally, content analysis was conducted.

Data analysis

Corpus analysis of the collected 110 EFL stories

It was important to establish a unit of analysis and construct a coding scheme to enable systematic and sensitive analysis of the students' application of the target semantics knowledge. To allow for a hermeneutic and manual analysis the scope of the examination was narrowed down. The following procedures were used.

Using Wordsmith 6 a wordlist was established ranked by the consistency or range of the words in the 110 story corpus. This allowed the location of one prominent word which recurs relatively consistently throughout the corpus and which somehow characterises the story genre that is represented by this corpus and which informs the settling of the analytical unit. The word TIME was selected because it was the third most consistent lexical word in the corpus (occurring in 76 texts), positioning after DAY (in 85 texts) and SAID (in 79 texts). However, DAY, compared to TIME, seemed to appear in a narrower range of meaning contexts For example, although DAY could portray both a point in time (e.g. one DAY) and a temporal process (e.g. DAY by DAY, everyDAY, all DAY), DAY is rarely used to depict time as resources (as in "not enough TIME") or to signify a landmark in someone's experience (as in "the first TIME" he/she performed a certain action). TIME is also preferable to SAID on the basis of genre expectation, that is, temporal relations are central in narratives(Eubanks, 2004). SAID mainly functions to bring in character speeches which, admittedly, is key to narratives. However, the rhetorical roles played by SAID seem to be much more restricted than those played by TIME. For example, TIME could indicate the entry of new characters, or signpost a crucial moment of the story or a turning point.

There are altogether 140 entries of TIME in 138 phrasal items (there are two instances of "from TIME to TIME"), occurring in 76 out of the 110 stories. TIME is used exclusively as a noun. Through the concordance data of TIME, the immediate contexts surrounding each of the 138 phrasal items were examined. A radius of the surrounding context of TIME needed to be set so as to establish the scope of each analytical unit. For purpose of consistency of the segmentation and for balancing sensitivity of the coding with the representativeness of the picture offered by each analytical unit, the following arbitrary decision was made. The sentence where TIME appeared along with its preceding and subsequent sentences were carved out as a single analytical unit. Subsequently, the examination of each analytical unit (138 units altogether) aimed to tease out the following three dimensions of negotiation between the student writer and forms of knowledge that prevail in the context.

Firstly, in each TIME-unit a search was made for the main semantics knowledge that has been instantiated by the student writer, for example, antonymic meaning relation or lexical connotation. This analysis process, to some degree, was assisted by reading the students' explanation of their semantic strategies which was submitted along with their stories. Next, to interpret how the students' application of the target semantics concepts might be seen as creative modes of knowledge application, that is, to see how the instantiation relates to specific rhetorical actions and purposes of the story genre, two key concepts were utilized from genre theory: "rhetorical steps" (Swales & Feak, 2000) and language as a "social semiotic" (Halliday, 1978). Initially, the writing of a particular genre tends to exhibit some typical rhetorical steps which are the communicative objectives to be achieved by segments of the text (Swales & Feak, 2000). Each TIME-unit was examined for how it might have contributed to a certain rhetorical step, for example, to bring in the protagonist or to refer to a future or past incident. The rationale is to identify the rhetorical context realised by the TIME-unit where a key instantiation of the semantics knowledge is situated. Lastly, Halliday (1978) states that various linguistic resources (the target semantic strategies being one) are employed by the speakers/writers to achieve distinctive effects in a particular social and meaning context. Hence, focusing on the application of the target semantic concept previously identified in each TIME-unit, the effect that the particular semantic strategy seemed to have facilitated was analysed, for example, to stimulate visual imagery in the

reader, or to invoke a particular script of actions, that is, "a series of conventional actions" that normally occur in a certain scenario (Yule, 2010, p. 150).

The coding scheme (Appendix B) emerged from inductive and recursive data analysis processes in which the entire data was examined three times. There was a 2-week interval between each two adjacent coding cycles. The teacher-researcher was the sole coder. Insider knowledge, for example, knowing what input students had received in the course, probably assisted in making contextualised interpretation of the semantics strategies used by the students.

Results and Discussions

Tendencies emerging from the TIME-units
Each of the four most used rhetorical functions accounts for over 10% of the overall analytical units (Table 1). These four rhetorical functions reveal that the major roles played by TIME in the student texts concern the sustaining and the twisting of the plotlines, and the explicit introduction of new characters. Looking in more detail at the distribution and ranking of the particular effects behind the semantic strategies identified in the TIME-units of these top four rhetorical functions shows signs of strategic and creative, but also predictable applications of the target semantics (see Table 2, column three shows the distribution and ranking of the semantic strategies)

Table 1. The ten rhetorical functions realised by the TIME-units (ranked by quantity)

Rhetorical functions	TIME-units	Percentage
1. Process of changes or continuity	31 Units	22.46%
2. A turning point in the story	24 Units	17.39%
3. The entry of new character(s)	21 Units	15.22%
4. A crucial moment of the story	20 Units	14.49%
5. Bringing up a particular action	12 Units	8.70%
6. A particular period of time	9 Units	6.52%
7. Reflecting the speaker's attitude	7 Units	5.07%
8. Comparison between two periods of time or between two scenarios	7 Units	5.07%
9. A previous incident	4 Units	2.90%
10. Referring to the future	3 Units	2.17%

A number of important points can be made based on this analysis. Firstly, strategic or instrumental applications of the target semantics knowledge particularly manifest in the students' employment of antonymic meaning relation for the creation of contrasts or oppositions to build up dramatic situations (the effect which ranks top on the first and second rhetorical functions in Table 2). To illustrate this tendency, the following

example of a TIME-unit is displayed (the language items which reflect antonymic meaning relations are highlighted in bold):

> The boy felt **satisfied** with his life in town and he promised that he **would never leave** there. As <u>time</u> went by, more and more villagers **left** the village for living and exploration. Until one day, the last villager said **goodbye** to him, "There are many attractive scenery out of **this hamlet**, you cannot stay here for your whole life and it is worth to see **the world**.

TIME signifies the passage of time. Throughout time, dramatic tension, as in the different world views between the boy and the other villagers, accumulates and manifests in the boy's final isolation in "the hamlet".

Table 2: The distribution and ranking of particular effects for the top four rhetorical functions played by the TIME-units

Rhetorical Function Realised by the Time-Units	Effect of the Applied Semantics Knowledge	Particular Semantics Knowledge Instantiated
1. Process of changes or continuity: 31 units	Building up a dramatic situation: 11	Antonymic meaning relation: 8 Synonymic meaning relation: 1 Lexical or phrasal connotation: 1 Ideological reference points: 1
	Invoking prevalent sociocultural values or perceptions: 7	Antonymic meaning relation: 2 Personification: 2 Hyponymy: 1 Lexical or phrasal connotation: 1 Metaphor or Metonymy: 1
	Deviation from habitual meaning: 3	Word play: 3
	Stimulating visual imagery: 3	Metaphor or Metonymy: 3
	Invoking a particular script of actions: 2	Lexical or phrasal connotation: 1 Ideological reference points: 1
	Polarized social values: 2	Lexical or phrasal connotation: 1 Antonymic meaning relation: 1
	Posing individual desire against external pressure or responsibilities: 1	Antonymic meaning relation: 1
	Catering to conventional story beginning: a peaceful setting: 1	Metaphor or Metonymy: 1
	Enhancing stereotypes: 1	Metaphor or Metonymy: 1
2. A turning point in the story: 24 Units	Building up a dramatic situation: 13	Antonymic meaning relation: 5 Synonymic meaning relation: 2 Metaphor or Metonymy: 2 Irony: 1 Personification: 1 Ideological reference points: 1 Word play: 1
	Invoking prevalent sociocultural values or perceptions: 4	Synonymic meaning relation: 1 Personification: 1 Metaphor or Metonymy: 1 Nothing in particular: 1

	Invoking a particular script of actions: 2	Antonymic meaning relation: 1 Ideological reference points: 1
	Posing individual desire against external pressure or responsibilities: 2	Metaphor or Metonymy: 1 Ideological reference points: 1
	Deviation from habitual meaning: 2	Antonymic meaning relation: 1 Word play: 1
	Stimulating visual imagery: 1	Metaphor or Metonymy: 1
3. The entry of new character(s): 21 Units	Catering to conventional story beginning: a peaceful setting: 7	Lexical or phrasal connotation: 3 Synonymic meaning relation: 2 Hyponymy: 1 Nothing in particular: 1
	Invoking a particular script of actions: 4	Ideological reference points: 2 Lexical or phrasal connotation: 1 Antonymic meaning relation: 1
	Catering to conventional story beginning: a typical initial problem: 3	Synonymic meaning relation: 1 Antonymic meaning relation: 1 Hyponymy: 1
	Building up a dramatic situation: 3	Metaphor or Metonymy: 1 Personification: 2
	Stimulating visual imagery: 1	Hyponymy: 1
	Deviation from habitual meaning: 1	Antonymic meaning relation: 1
	Invoking prevalent sociocultural values or perceptions: 1	Ideological reference points: 1
	Enhancing stereotypes: 1	Antonymic meaning relation: 1
4. A crucial moment of the story: 20 Units	Building up a dramatic situation: 9	Synonymic meaning relation: 3 Lexical or phrasal connotation: 3 Antonymic meaning relation: 2 Nothing in particular: 1
	Deviation from habitual meaning: 4	Ideological reference points: 2 Word play: 1 Antonymic meaning relation: 1
	Invoking a particular script of actions: 3	Lexical or phrasal connotation: 2 Nothing in particular: 1
	Stimulating visual imagery: 2	Metaphor or Metonymy: 2
	Invoking prevalent sociocultural values or perceptions: 1	Personification: 1
	Setting up polarized social values: 1	Antonymic meaning relation: 1

Secondly, apart from the construction of drama, the target semantics knowledge is also instantiated by the students to invoke, cater to, or enhance particular schema. These are certainly evidenced in the generated effects of invoking prevalent sociocultural values or perceptions, invoking a particular script of actions, or catering to a conventional story beginning. For example, in the following TIME-unit, the student describes the appearance of a girl. The personification that "[the] sun was smiling" invokes the prevalent perception that a girl with "white skin", "fascinating appearance"

and dazzling smile is a highly delightful scene to witness. This personification consequently evokes a hopeful tone in a crucial moment of the story:

> Few second later, Ivy, a girl has white skin and fascinating appearance, turned her face to the window and smiled dazzlingly. **Sun was smiling** and time was freezing there.

The generated effects of invoking prevalent sociocultural values or perceptions, invoking a particular script of actions, or catering to a conventional story beginning figure visibly in the first and third rhetorical functions (see Table 2) which respectively concern the sustaining of plot and the introduction of new characters. This indicates the students' tendency for retrieving and using existent and hence fairly accessible cognitive structures to initiate and shape the flow of the narratives. Nevertheless, a variety of semantics approaches have been utilised to achieve the above meaning effects. In particular, logic of difference (antonymic meaning relation), logic of equivalence (facilitated by synonymic meaning relation, personification, and metaphor or metonymy), or classification (hyponymy), and words and phrases which have accumulated noticeable associative meanings (ideological reference points, and lexical or phrasal connotation) have been utilised to instantiate prevalent perceptions or collective knowledge. Some examples of such TIME-units are shown below (the particular semantic strategies are annotated within square brackets):

> I wonder that how her **husband** and **son** can bear such dirty **underwear** and **socks**." She blamed the woman from time to time. The **family** all thought she was right. [Hyponymy]

> I was **scared** and **upset to death**. Forgive me, babe, I will **spend more time** to be together with you and not let you alone. **I love you** so much." [Synonymic meaning relation]

> But **the thorn bird** still flies to the place where she wants. Three days, ten days, one hundred days, the thorn bird is flying all the time. No one knows where she is going to. [Ideological reference points]

Thirdly, various semantic approaches have also been used to manipulate existent conceptual structures so as to yield creative meanings as in unusual conceptual combinations. Noticeably, regarding the fourth rhetorical function (A crucial moment of the story), to realise the effects of deviation from habitual meaning and stimulating visual imagery, the semantic approaches of word play, ideological reference points, antonymic meaning relation and metaphor or metonymy have been employed. They serve to engage the readers and to fashion the effect of reversal. The following TIME-unit exemplifies this:

> Unfortunately, he is killed by **the evil** in order to protect the **princess**. At that time, he seems to change from ugly **animal** to a **superman**, which moves the princess. However, the **princess** said to **the evil**: Thanks for **killing** him and now we can plan have a **wedding**. [Antonymic meaning relations]

Such creative effects generated by the applied semantics are also visible under the first rhetorical function (i.e. process of changes or continuity), possibly creating a sense of visual dynamism and unexpectedness to energise the process of the plot. However, such creative effects figure much less prominently than the instrumental/strategic and the schema-enhancing applications of the target semantics knowledge (see Table 2).

The six focal cases

The six focal writers demonstrate characteristic ways of applying the target semantics knowledge to their literary creations (see Appendix C). They all commented that this was the first time they had written creatively in English. The following discussion is divided into three sections which look at the six students as three pairs. The discussion is built upon: 1) an analysis of the TIME-units in the focal students' stories and 2) an interpretation of the students' interview comments (all direct quotes in this discussion are drawn from the interviews). The discussion focuses on interpreting particular manifestations of the writers' subjectivity and awareness. It also examines whether the kind of awareness coming through the current story-writing task re-emerges in the students' interview recounts of how they had coped with the writing required by other subject courses.

Shen and Ying: Using words vested with conceptual meaning to fashion the ideology of the story

Shen and Ying's stories scored *under 50* and *60-69* marks respectively. Nonetheless, their stories both rely on ideological reference points. Shen's story depicts his protagonist Maple's travelling experience which is eventful though somewhat stereotypical. Meanwhile, Ying re-contextualised *Little Red Riding Hood* for an idiosyncratic construction of her story. In the interviews, both writers indicated their strategy of creating a convenient content shell within which they can then deliberate upon the semantics. This reflects their awareness of instantiating their subjectivity in this task from a strategic angle.

Their respective take on the target semantics knowledge is intentionally self-representational. For example, as listed by Shen in the appendix to his story, his applications of the target semantics revolve around the theme of traveling and geographical locations (Homophone: sole-Seoul-soul; Synonymy: tour-travel; Hyponymy: World-Korean-Seoul). In the interview, Shen expressed his passions for travelling and the culture of Canada. He invented a story on how Canada's maple trees found their name initially. His story, though meant to be original, is somehow superimposed on existent conceptions, for example, by referring to a series of celebrated landmarks (see Appendix C). This might have created a sense of stereotyping.

Ying described herself as an imaginative person and avid reader of fairy tales. She invented a reversal ending where the big wolf and Little Red Riding Hood fall in love with each other. In Ying's appendix, she commented on the line "He bent down his knees on the ground and seemed that the little red cap *ate* his heart out". Lexical ambiguity was intended for *ate*, as in physically eating the person or mentally tormenting him. This attempted wordplay somehow connects Ying's reversal with the original classic. Ying's awareness resides in her attempt to interweave her rewriting of the folklore with her negotiation with the semantics concept of word play. Ying's awareness of finding a self-representational footing was also palpable in her description of her other EFL subject writing experience. She justified her agentive, though certainly subjective, take on knowledge construction when writing for her literature studies module:

> Perhaps our thoughts are different from those scholars who specialise in literature studies. Maybe they examine the social background or the life of the author so that to understand the literature...Perhaps we just focus on one chapter, and think about what was going through the author's mind when writing this chapter. As a student, we created our own spiritual dialogue with the author.

Liu and Gui: Attending to descriptive and visual details

Liu and Gui both achieved a *60-69* score for their stories. Details stand out in their applications of the target semantics knowledge. Gui invoked the schema of a royal and an aristocrat playing mind games while conspiring with each other behind the façade of chess-playing. As for Liu, her semantics strategies seem to focus on verbal and visual details.

It is noticeable that Gui utilises word play (lexical ambiguity) to construct layered meanings (see Appendix C). Like Ying, Gui interweaves her negotiation with other forms of symbolic resources (i.e. the rules of chess playing) and her negotiation with the subject knowledge (i.e. word play). Gui's attentiveness to linguistic form and meaning is also reflected in her interview comments on a scriptwriting module she was taking. She half-joked that her scriptwriting was "immature" and "unsubtle" given her lack of experience and that she saw her English language as "elementary school level". Despite (or exactly because of) such critical self-evaluation, Gui's awareness of her identity (a Chinese EFL speaker) and role (i.e. a student) drove her to painstakingly negotiate accurate language choices when writing her film script:

> I downloaded an Oxford dictionary on collocation and I searched for specific collocations every day, for example, a certain type of cloth fabric and what adjective would be used to modify this fabric to describe its lustre or other features. I'd spend time researching it.

Jiajia and Ping: Instrumental application of target semantics to create tension

Jiajia and Ping's stories got *50-59* and *under 50* marks respectively. They both visibly rely on antonymic meaning relations. In the interviews, both writers explicitly expressed their practical approaches toward this writing assignment. They understood that contrasts and conflicts are essential to dramatic stories and could be achieved through lexical relations.

Jiajia confessed that the first thing she did was to check the internet. Through some internet searches she collated a list of homophones and homonyms. Then, she extended the list to synonyms and antonyms. Subsequently, she created her story to accommodate this word list. Ping did the reverse, but her approach is equally strategic. She built the story based on pre-formulated dramatic themes: limelight vs. normality, and success vs. tranquillity. After drafting a skeleton of the story, she deliberately inserted words fulfilling various lexical relations in whatever way she saw possible. One consequence of Ping's approach is that her story seems to be mostly invoking existent sociocultural values. Ping's practical take on negotiating with the subject knowledge is also reflected in her recount of how she had approached and accomplished a writing assignment required by a journalism module. The following comment shows her using social resources strategically to create the news story within the genre convention stipulated by professional journalistic practice.

> We were asked to make up a news story on the opening of Disney Park in Shanghai in 2015 and in the news we needed to compare it with the Disneyland in Hong Kong. I completed the assignment very quickly. I did some interviews with people in Shanghai. I wrote 1500 words in one day. I looked for relevant sources online. I felt that the news story has a clear formula, and it's easier than academic writing.

Conclusion

The goal of the EFL stories in this study was to "manifest course content…in action" (Peary, 2012, p. 69). The students needed to instantiate the target disciplinary knowledge in their development of dramatic character and plot and in their creation of descriptive details without referring to the linguistics concepts explicitly. Previous projects of creative writing in the disciplines have suggested that creative writing stimulates the students to make personal connections with the course concepts (Bahls, 2009; Petersen, 2001; Shapiro & Stein, 2005) and to "relate seemingly disparate pieces of information" (Petersen, 2001, p. 100) in the surrounding context, such as subject knowledge, cultural observation or stylistic devices (Sui, 2015). This study has shown some evidence of Chinese students utilising the target course concepts, i.e. the set of semantics knowledge, to either invoke particular story-writing conventions and sociocultural knowledge or to manipulate such conventions and knowledge to yield creative meanings.

Focusing on how creative writing facilitates agentive learning in a particular EFL disciplinary context, this study examines the particular mappings among: 1) the rhetorical functions of the TIME-units, 2) the applied semantics knowledge, and 3) the effects which seem to derive from the semantics strategies. Selective yet systematic analyses have located tendencies concerning how the students interact with schema and how they achieve deviation. The creative effects generated by the EFL students' applications of the target semantic concepts figure less prominently than the drama-building and schema-enhancing usages of the semantics. These results are somewhat different from the English-Native-Speaking students' creative writing demonstrated in Gordy and Peary (2005) and Shapiro and Stein (2005) whose studies include convincing evidence of students manipulating literary devices and generic features of story or poetry to creatively instantiate the target course concepts. Such difference in the results might be due to insufficient stimulation and modelling in the pedagogical attempt reported in this paper. Future changes might involve selecting a wider range of sample creative texts, for example, film scripts, sci-fi fiction, or educational documentaries, which instantiate specific subject knowledge. Also, after scrutinising the sample texts, the students could be directed to share their observations on how, in the texts, connections have been made across diverse domains of knowledge. Subsequently, through carefully designed writing prompts, the teacher could organise collective creative writing activities in class which target certain subject knowledge that has been recently acquired. The above procedures might improve the efficacy of creative writing as a knowledge-making medium between the teacher and the students.

The detailed view achieved provided by the six focal cases shows manifestations of individual writers accessing certain knowledge and how such strategic access (i.e. awareness) somehow limits or guides the originality of their stories (also see the creative cognition approach of Ward & Lawson, 2009, p. 196). A certain connection seems to exist between some focal students' tendencies for applying the target linguistics knowledge and their interview comments recounting how they had coped with the demands of writing and learning under some other disciplines. This connection embodies the writer's agentive take on learning and knowledge-making across the disciplines. There is more to be learned about this connection. Future research could systematically explore the relationship between EFL writers' epistemic voices emerging from the creative writing medium and the voices from other types of academic written assignments. In addition, it would be useful for future research to compare the knowledge-construction exertion of students involved in the creative-writing medium with that of those working through the essay-writing medium.

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Appendix A: The story writing task instructions

Do a piece of story writing in English (300 words minimum) which employs the semantics knowledge we learned lately, e.g. the various lexical relations, metaphorical use of language, semantic anomaly, lexical ambiguity, or word play, for purposeful literary and aesthetic effects. With your story, you shall include an appendix (which does not count toward the 300 words) which explains to me in some details how you have employed specific semantic approaches to achieve certain intended effects for your story.

Marking criteria:

<u>Knowledge and understanding</u>: demonstrate your understanding and application of particular semantics concepts

<u>Intellectual skills</u> (creativity, originality, perceptiveness):

- Imaginative ways of using the semantics knowledge in your story
- Or evidence of skilful literary writing with depth, which is somehow enhanced by particular semantic approaches

<u>Language, clarity and the presentation</u>

Appendix B: Coding scheme for analysing the TIME-units in the EFL story corpus

Application of the Target Semantics Knowledge	1. Lexical or phrasal connotation 2. Antonymic meaning relation 3. Synonymic meaning relation 4. Hyponymy 5. Personification 6. Metaphor or Metonymy 7. Word play: polysemy, lexical ambiguity, homonymy, homophones	8. Ideological reference points: titles of or characters from well-known books, films or stories; particular cultural products or terms; particular countries or landmarks ; social institutions and names; social and aristocratic titles 9. Irony
Rhetorical Function Realised by Each Time-Unit	1. The entry of new character(s) 2. A crucial moment of the story 3. A turning point in the story 4. Bringing up a particular action 5. Process of changes or continuity	6. Reflecting the speaker's attitude 7. A particular period of time 8. Comparison between two periods of time or between two scenarios 9. Referring to the future 10. A previous incident
Effect Behind Each Application of the Semantic Knowledge	1. Catering to conventional story beginning: a peaceful setting 2. Catering to conventional story beginning: a typical initial problem 3. Invoking a particular script of actions 4. Enhancing stereotypes 5. Deviation from habitual meaning or reader expectation	6. Stimulating visual imagery 7. Invoking prevalent sociocultural values or perceptions 8. Building up a dramatic situation 9. Setting up polarized social values 10. Posing individual desire against external pressure or responsibilities

Appendix C: Examination of the six focal writers' TIME-units

TIME-based analytical unit	Writer	Rhetorical function of a TIME-unit	Application of target semantics knowledge	Effect behind each application the target semantics
*Then, in Europe, Maple enjoyed the Eiffel Tower in French, the Thames River in UK and etc. In October, he was in Canada, a poor country at that **time** where he may spend his last week in the whole life. He was attracted by a great number of high trees with yellow leaves, which were almost in every area in Canada.*	Shen	A previous incident	Ideological reference points (Maple, Eiffel Tower, Thames River)	Enhancing stereotypes
*His first station was Seoul, South Korea. Finding a young man was going to kill himself near a river, he stopped that man jumping to the deep river and told his miserable condition and wonderful **time** in Seoul. Compared to Maple, this Korean man found his life was not terrible enough.*	Shen	A particular period of time	Antonymic meaning relation ('miserable' vs. 'wonderful')	Building up a dramatic situation
*She took a deep breath. She continued to walk but at the **time** she turned around she found that there was a big wolf standing close to her. She was so scared that she cannot move or even say anything.*	Ying	A turning point in the story	Ideological reference points (the big wolf).	Building up a dramatic situation
*He gazed at the little red cap's eyes and said nothing. The wolf and the little red cap just looked at each other for a long **time**. After a century long, the wolf gently took the little red cap's face in his hands and laid a soft kiss on her lips.*	Ying	Process of changes or continuity	Ideological reference points (the little red cap, the wolf)	Deviation from reader expectation
*"You win, son." smiled the man. "Anyway, **time** for bed now. Early to bed and early to rise…"*	Liu	Bringing up a particular action	Lexical or phrasal connotation (the idiom 'early to bed and early to rise' connotes certain moral value)	Invoking prevalent sociocultural values or perceptions
*"I was awake, not sleeping as sound as you were over your book!" fought back Maggie this **time** - she had run out of her patience to explain. "I was reading…" protested Tom unwillingly, but swallowed the following words by the force of his father's eyes.*	Liu	Comparison between two scenarios	Metaphor ('swallowed the following words') Metonymy ('the force of his father's eyes')	Building up a dramatic situation

Text				
*"The earl of Boulogne deserves reward for his loyalty and honesty. In the future, the queen won't be up to anything that I don't know because my cardinal will inform me ahead of **time**, especially when I show my generosity." said the king, with satisfaction...*	Gui	Referring to the future	Ideological reference points (earl, queen, cardinal, king, cabinet)	Invoking a particular script of actions (plot is invoked by the aristocratic titles and by words like 'loyalty', 'generosity', 'cabinet' or 'moneybag')
*[…said the king, with satisfaction,] for the first **time** smiling genuinely. Holding tight that moneybag given by the king, the cardinal left cabinet with satisfaction.*		A turning point in the story	Metonymy ('moneybag' refers to the money)	
*Now all your knights and rooks are taken by me." "I apologize..." "Checkmate. Next **time**, choose your followers more carefully." Game was over.*	Gui	Referring to the future	Word Play: lexical ambiguity ('knights', 'rooks', 'checkmate', 'followers', 'game' as in a chess game or in real power struggle)	Deviation from habitual meaning
*Maybe I let her down..."he speak to himself with pain. Happy memories came to his mind **from time to time**, and he lie down on the sofa unconsciously, almost crying himself to sleep. In the morning, sunshine covered his face through curtain.*	Jiajia	Process of changes or continuity	Antonymic meaning relation ('with pain' vs. 'happy memories')	Building up a dramatic situation
*I was scared and upset to death. Forgive me, babe, I will spend more **time** to be together with you and not let you alone. I love you so much."*	Jiajia	Bringing up a particular action	Lexical or phrasal connotation (the stereotypical images invoked by 'Forgive me, babe, I will spend more time to be together with you' and 'I love you so much')	Invoking prevalent sociocultural values or perceptions
*"Damn it!" he reached to the telephone in his home with a swear. At this **time**, he recognized that he did not even remember his wife's phone number, rather than any other her friends' or families'. And he yelled at her this afternoon when she called him in an exciting voice.*	Jiajia	A turning point in the story	Antonymic meaning relation ('yelled at her' vs. 'in an exciting voice')	Building up a dramatic situation
*Initially, Nana is excited and thrilled because she can show her value. However, over **time**, she is all scratched up. She feels tired, and rethink this kind of life is that she dreamed.*	Ping	Process of changes or continuity	Antonymic meaning relation ('excited and thrilled' vs. 'all scratched up' and 'tired')	Posing individual desire against external pressure or responsibilities