

Mar 4th, 5:00 PM - 5:30 PM

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Weng, Zhenjie, "Affordances and Second Language Writing: Experiences of Three Chinese Undergraduate Multilingual International Students" (2016). *Purdue Languages and Cultures Conference*. 1.

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## **Affordances and Second Language Writing: Experiences of Three Chinese Undergraduate Multilingual International Students**

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My paper, in alignment with the increased cultural and linguistic diversity of student population in a classroom as a result of globalization, sheds light on the writing experiences of three Chinese undergraduate multilingual international students (CUMISs) in a Western Pennsylvanian University. Literature on second language writing was galore. However, only few studies developed the concept of “affordance” in the field of second language writing in-depth and focused on CUMISs.

“Affordance,” originally was a psychological term coined by the psychologist Gibson (1979) and was later on developed by scholars from different disciplines. In my paper, I borrowed the definition from Norman, an expert in Electrical Engineering and Psychology who defined “affordance” as “the perceived and actual properties of the thing, primarily those fundamental properties that determine just how thing could possibly be used” (1999, p.39). This definition developed Gibson’s “affordance” in that although environment is full of affordances, it relies on individual’s capability to recognize those affordances, which highlights individuals’ agency in language learning; however, some scholars in the domain of language learning utilized this word as granted without elaborate explanations of the notion.

My paper initially applies “affordance” and its features, including “mutuality,” “volatility,” and “perceivability” to the CUMISs’ writing experiences across

curriculum and discusses how disparate levels of English competence, educational backgrounds, and cultural difference affect the CUMISs' recognition of affordances and their performance in writing. Also, it includes how the larger environment, like teachers' instructions and feedback, can possibly enhance their awareness of available affordances and also be cautious of the potential challenges embedded in those affordances. The data collection process starts with the recruitment of participants through emails and personal contacts. The research data include both interview transcripts and participants' writing samples from their composition and other content classes. Those data are analyzed case by case and organized based upon seven defined codes. Through the comparisons and contrasts among different cases, one of the findings in the study is that sometimes it is not the students' written texts need to change, "rather it is the native-speaking readers and evaluators (particularly in educational institutions) that need to learn to read more broadly, with a more cosmopolitan and less parochial eye" (Leki, 1992, p.134). The CUMISs' cultural heritages, like their patterns of writing from L1, should be seen as affordances in L2 writing and encouraged in their writing, and being multilingual speakers per se should be considered as an affordance as well. Both native English speaking teachers and students should accept the CUMISs as legitimate second language writers and respect their efforts. In conclusion, the study argues for a more dialectical perspective in viewing the perceived affordances by the participants and addresses power asymmetry and other issues in classrooms with increased diversity.

**Author**

My name is Zhenjie Weng from China. I got my master's degree in TESOL from Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and now I am an ESL instructor at American Language Institute in the U.S. I have extensive research interests, including second language writing, second language acquisition, discourse analysis, and World English(es).