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EXPERT REVIEW OF THE WeCWI-ENHANCED 21CLD LESSON PLAN TO IMPROVE COLLEGE ENGLISH WRITING PERFORMANCE: A PILOT STUDY

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Abstract:

This study presents an expert review of lesson plan design based on the WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD pedagogical approach, aimed at enhancing Chinese undergraduates' College English writing performance. The purpose was to validate its instructional clarity and goal alignment, task design and cognitive demand, student engagement and collaboration, and instructional resources and implementation feasibility of the lesson plans. Two experienced College English instructors were invited to evaluate the clarity, feasibility, and alignment of instructional components with learning objectives. A checklist consisting of closed-ended items rated on a 5-point Likert scale and open-ended questions was administered to the instructors. The methodology employed both quantitative and qualitative instruments, comprising Likert-scale items and open-ended feedback. Content Validity Index (CVI) and Cronbach's alpha were computed to evaluate content validity and reliability. Results show excellent agreement (I-CVI and S-CVI/Ave = 1.00) and internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = 0.66). Thematic analysis of qualitative feedback identified strengths such as task clarity, alignment with objectives, and integration of ICT, while suggesting areas for improvement, including differentiated scaffolding and resource adaptation. The discussion offers insights into the role of expert review in refining lesson plans and ensuring implementation of fidelity. As a pilot study, it focused on validating the design components and instructional instruments before the implementation phase. This validation phase contributes to the methodological rigour of the main study and supports the feasibility of deploying the WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD pedagogical approach in real-world EFL classrooms

Keywords:

Expert Review, WeCWI, WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD, Lesson Plan, College English, Writing Performance

Introduction

English writing proficiency is a critical component of academic success and global communication for Chinese undergraduates. While English language learning remains compulsory in most universities, traditional instructional approaches, such as the grammar-translation method and teacher-centred pedagogy, have dominated College English writing instruction in China. These approaches have proven insufficient in cultivating learners' communicative competence, critical thinking, and creativity (Desinan, 2011; Ye & Chen, 2024; Yuan, 2023).

Despite recent reforms encouraging the adoption of digital tools and learner-centred instruction, many Chinese undergraduates continue to struggle with English writing (Gao, 2019). Blended learning tools and pedagogical frameworks have not been consistently translated into effective classroom practices. There is a pressing need for a pedagogical approach that integrates 21st-century skills with structured writing instruction to address these challenges more effectively.

The WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD pedagogical approach integrates Web-based Cognitive Writing Instruction (WeCWI) with 21st Century Learning Design (21CLD) rubrics to cultivate writing performance. This paper presents an expert review of a lesson plan design based on the WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD pedagogical approach, aimed at enhancing the English writing performance of undergraduate students. Prior to implementation in a full study, the expert review was conducted to validate the instructional design for clarity, relevance, feasibility, and pedagogical impact, and refine it based on expert insights.

Expert review serves as a robust method for refining research instruments, designs, or interventions, offering critical feedback to enhance clarity, content validity, and practical applicability (Rylnikova et al., 2024; Tate et al., 2023). This pilot study primarily serves to validate the instrument and instructional design prior to large-scale data collection. Its objectives include refining the lesson plan, assessing feasibility, and collecting insights to inform future implementation improvements. Such validation is critical to identify design flaws and improve both the instructional effectiveness and learner engagement before full-scale implementation.

Problem Statement

One of the primary challenges in developing lesson plans lies in ensuring instructional validity. Without well-aligned objectives and writing tasks, lesson plans may fail to meet curricular standards or address the learning outcomes (Phothongsunan, 2024; Selvakumar et al., 2024). Concerns remain regarding whether the designed lesson clearly defines its writing outcomes and appropriately reflects the goals of College English writing instruction.

A second concern relates to the clarity of instructional guidance within the lesson. Task instructions, sequencing activities, and learner directions must be precise and coherent to support effective classroom implementation. Vague or fragmented instructions can confuse instructors and hinder classroom flow, create ambiguity for both teachers and students, and diminish the efficacy of learner-centred or collaborative activities (Asad Juma, 2024; Zhu, 2022).

The third issue is the practical feasibility of the instructional design. Even when a lesson plan is theoretically robust, its real-world applicability depends on classroom realities, including time management, students' language proficiency levels, and institutional technological infrastructure (Abuhassna et al., 2024; Harris et al., 2009; Li & Walsh, 2011). The extent to which the proposed lesson plan is adaptable to all EFL classrooms remains uncertain.

In light of these challenges, the objective of this study is to evaluate the validity, clarity, and practicality of the lesson plan design based on the WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD pedagogical approach. By engaging two experienced College English instructors to assess the design through closed-ended Likert-scale items and open-ended feedback, this review aims to ensure that the lesson design aligns with pedagogical standards, is clearly articulated for instructional use, and is adaptable to real-world teaching environments. The findings will inform revisions to enhance the instructional quality and effectiveness of the proposed intervention.

Despite frameworks like WeCWI, 21CLD and WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD, their application in Chinese College English writing is underexplored. This study aims to bridge this gap with an expert review to validate lesson plans based on the WeCWI-enhanced approach before implementation, enhancing instructional design and aligning with learner needs and curriculum demands. The review ensures quality and alignment of the research instrument before wider use. As a pilot study with a small sample and two experts, it primarily assesses validity, not generalised conclusions.

Literature Review

EFL in China

In China, English is classified as an English as a Foreign Language (EFL) subject rather than English as a Second Language (ESL) due to the socio-linguistic environment where English is not used for daily communication. English in China is considered a universal language for national development and personal opportunity, rather than as a second language integrated into daily life, indicating an EFL classification rather than ESL (Qu, 2023). English is widely recognised as the language of international communication, which has promoted the development of language education, focusing on listening, speaking, reading and writing skills (Yang & Valcke, 2020). In addition, translation has also become a skill in language learning, as it aids in understanding English better and bridging cultural gaps between China and English-speaking countries (Wu, 2019). It is essential to better spread Chinese culture and let people from all over the world understand diverse topics related to China (Liu et al., 2022).

The impact of globalisation and cultural integration on EFL education has been a critical area of research in China. In the context of globalisation, Sun (2023) emphasises on the integration of Global Citizenship Education (GCE) and EFL teaching to provide equity and global contextualisation to cultivate globally competent and bilingual learners. Juan et al. (2023) highlight globalisation has led to a shift in EFL education in China towards integrating Chinese

culture into English teaching, fostering cultural exchange and mutual learning among civilisations. These studies highlight the importance of English teaching in China, especially the need for global influences and cultural integration, which is crucial to improving students' global competence and bilingual ability.

College English Writing

College English writing remains a vital skill reflecting students' overall language proficiency. Writing is not only a measure of students' mastery of vocabulary, grammar, and sentence structure, but also an essential skill that demonstrates their comprehensive language application ability (Huining, 2022; Zhang, 2022). Despite its importance, many college students struggle with English writing due to traditional teaching methods that emphasise passive language input over active language output, leading to an imbalance in language skills development (Zhang, 2022).

Gao (2019) noted that many Chinese college students struggle with authentic expression in their writing, often producing "Chinglish" despite grammatical correctness. The Chinese Ministry of Education (2004) announced new goals for College English, emphasising individualised and group-based writing instruction. This policy shift aims to address the diverse needs of students and enhance the overall effectiveness of English writing instruction.

WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD

The WeCWI framework integrates insights from language acquisition, cognitive theories, composition studies, and e-learning design, offering a holistic approach to writing instruction. It emphasises structured, scaffolded engagement in reading, writing, and discussion tasks ((Mah, 2015). On the other hand, the 21CLD rubrics promote competencies such as knowledge construction, self-regulation, skilled communication, collaboration, and ICT use. Combining these frameworks creates a robust pedagogical model that addresses both content and process dimensions of writing.

Expert review is crucial due to the complexity, ensuring instructional design is robust, pedagogically suitable, and contextually relevant in Chinese higher education. It promotes synergy between WeCWI (know-what) and 21CLD (know-why), transforming learning into a richer experience (know-how). The six educational tasks include reading to build knowledge, writing to communicate, discussing for collaboration, using ICT, designing for self-regulation, and innovating for real-world problem solving. The review highlights how WeCWI principles align with 21CLD rubrics, emphasising their potential to improve language and cognitive skills by integrating cognitive writing strategies and 21st-century competencies in College English.

Expert Review in Lesson Plan Design

Lesson plan design research frequently positions expert review and pilot testing as indispensable steps in the refinement of new educational interventions. According to Tate et al. (2023), expert review functions as an iterative quality control process, enabling researchers to identify ambiguities, content gaps, or alignment issues before materials are deployed in authentic instructional settings. The process of expert review enhances both the reliability and validity of the instructional design, offering not only theoretical validation but also practical insights that may not be readily apparent to developers. Expert review is particularly valuable for adapting research-based frameworks to local needs and for ensuring the content validity, feasibility, and effectiveness of lesson plans (Sanchez, 2024).

Quantitative methods such as the Content Validity Index (CVI) are commonly used in expert review to measure the level of consensus among reviewers regarding the clarity, relevance, and appropriateness of instructional materials (Polit & Beck, 2006; Zamanzadeh et al., 2015). High CVI scores indicate strong agreement among experts, supporting the reliability and practical value of the instructional design. Zamanzadeh et al. (2015) stress the importance of using both item-level (I-CVI) and scale-level (S-CVI) analysis to ensure the consistency and comprehensiveness of expert validation in educational research. Qualitative analysis of expert feedback further enhances the refinement process, providing nuanced insights into potential improvements and contextual adaptations.

Moreover, there is a growing demand for combining quantitative indices like CVI with qualitative thematic analysis of open-ended feedback to provide a more holistic validation process (Ayre & Scally, 2013). The literature underscores the value of integrating rigorous expert review into the instructional design. It ensures that instructional design aligns with learner needs and educational goals, but few have tested the WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD pedagogical approach in the Chinese EFL context, highlighting a critical research and practice gap.

Recent international scholarship has increasingly emphasised the transformative potential of educational technology in EFL instruction. Papadakis et al. (2023) highlighted how the integration of cloud-based technologies and augmented reality can enhance open and immersive learning environments, fostering learner autonomy and engagement. Lavidas et al., (2024) investigated students' intentions to use artificial intelligence (AI) tools for academic purposes, revealing high levels of digital readiness and cross-disciplinary acceptance of AI-driven learning supports.

Furthermore, from a pedagogical perspective, Godwin-Jones (2022) argued for a collaborative model between instructors and AI writing assistants, such as Grammarly, in instructed language learning. He emphasised how these tools support metacognitive engagement, learner autonomy, and iterative revision, while calling for critical reflection on their pedagogical use. These studies reflect a growing international shift toward technology-integrated, learner-centred writing instruction. The WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD model aligns with this trend by embedding collaborative writing, digital scaffolds, and cognitive strategies into the writing process, making it a timely and adaptable framework within both local and global EFL contexts.

Methodology

This expert review is part of a pilot validation process. Its main aim is to test and improve the lesson plan instrument and checklist before full use. The small number of experts involved is typical for pilot validation studies, which concentrate on evaluating the validity, clarity, and practicality of the instrument prior to full implementation.

The expert review process began with the purposive selection of two College English instructors, both of whom had over ten years of teaching experience, specialising in College English writing instruction. One has 12 years of experience in College English instruction, a doctoral degree in curriculum and pedagogy. Another has 10 years of teaching, holding an academic background in pedagogy and education, ensuring a blend of practical and theoretical insights.

Prior to evaluation, the experts received detailed orientation materials outlining the WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD pedagogical model and participated in an online calibration session to ensure a consistent understanding of the evaluation framework and checklist dimensions. The two experts were briefed on instructional principles of the WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD pedagogical approach and were given access to lesson plans through Tencent Documents, an online document-sharing platform in China.

The process employed both quantitative and qualitative approaches to enhance the validity and trustworthiness of the findings. The quantitative validation instrument consisted of a structured checklist with two components. The first was a set of close-ended items categorised under four dimensions: instructional clarity and goal alignment, task design and cognitive demand, student engagement and collaboration, and instructional resources and implementation feasibility.

Each item was rated on a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree to 5 = Strongly Agree). The items assessed key features of lesson design, including clarity of objectives, alignment with intended outcomes, task feasibility, ICT integration, learner motivation, and theoretical coherence. Item development was informed by existing lesson plan evaluation frameworks (Baldwin & Ching, 2019; Moreno et al., 2018) and adapted to match the structure and priorities of the WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD pedagogical approach.

The Content Validity Index (CVI) was then generated to determine the degree of agreement among experts on each item (I-CVI) and across the full scale (S-CVI/Average). A CVI of 0.78 or higher was considered acceptable (Darabi & Karimian, 2024), with 1.00 indicating perfect agreement. In addition, Cronbach's alpha was computed to determine the internal consistency reliability of the closed-ended items.

The second checklist component included four open-ended questions aligned with the four dimensions. Experts reviewed 8-week lesson plans based on the WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD pedagogical approach, focusing on instructional tasks, goals, outcomes, and activities. They responded to questions about strengths, limitations, and suggestions for the lesson design. Responses were collected for thematic analysis.

The present phase founds a pilot study focusing solely on instrument validation, without the involvement of student participants or the collection of personal or sensitive data. The study posed minimal ethical risk and did not require full ethics board approval at this stage, and two invited experts were informed of the study's purpose and voluntarily consented to participate in the evaluation process. And their feedback would be anonymised and used strictly for academic purposes.

As a pilot study without student involvement, the scope was limited to expert review of instructional materials to ensure ethical compliance and data quality in subsequent research stages. In the subsequent stages of data collection involving students, full ethical clearance and written informed consent will be secured in accordance with institutional and international ethical guidelines.

Results and Discussion

Quantitative Analysis: Content Validity Index (CVI)

A Likert scale questionnaire was used to evaluate key aspects of instructional design, including instructional clarity, task design, engagement and collaboration, and implementation feasibility. Each item was rated from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Table 1 shows that the CVI of the experts rated the items on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree). The Content Validity Index (CVI) was calculated for both the item level (I-CVI) and the scale level (S-CVI/Ave).

Table 1. Content Validity Index (CVI)

Dimension	Item 1	Item 2	Item 3	I-CVI Average
Instructional Clarity & Goal Alignment	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Task Design & Cognitive Demand	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Student Engagement & Collaboration	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
Instructional Resources & Implementation Feasibility	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00

S-CVI/Ave = 1.00

To assess content validity, the CVI was calculated to determine the degree of agreement between the experts. Based on the two experts, each item is considered “valid” if rated 4 or 5. For each item on the Likert-scale instrument, the experts rated the instructional components as either 4 (Agree) or 5 (Strongly Agree). As a result, all the items received an I-CVI (Item-level CVI) score of 1.00. The average S-CVI (Scale-level CVI) was also 1.00, indicating high content validity and confirms that the lesson plan aligns with both the objectives of College English writing instruction and implementation in Chinese university classrooms.

Table 2. Reliability of Checklist

Items	Cronbach's Alpha
17	.664

Cronbach's alpha was calculated to assess the internal consistency of the checklist items. A Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranging from 0.6 to 0.7 is generally interpreted as indicating moderate, acceptable reliability (Taber, 2018). The Cronbach's alpha was calculated at 0.66, reflecting moderate reliability among expert responses. This is partly due to the relatively high number of items in the checklist, which can reduce alpha values in exploratory studies, and the limited sample size, with only two experts participating in this initial validation.

Figure 1 presents the average expert ratings across the four dimensions. All categories received high scores, with “Instructional Clarity & Goal Alignment” rated highest (4.9). “Instructional Resources & Implementation Feasibility” followed with an average score of 4.83. “Student Engagement & Collaboration” scored 4.8. “Task Design & Cognitive Demand” scored 4.75. These scores reflect strong consensus on the coherence between instructional objectives and writing tasks. It demonstrates the lesson plan's strong content alignment and applicability.

Table 3. Average Expert Ratings by Categories

Categories	Average Score (out of 5)
Instructional Clarity & Goal Alignment	4.9
Task Design & Cognitive Demand	4.75
Student Engagement & Collaboration	4.8
Instructional Resources & Implementation Feasibility	4.83

Qualitative Analysis: Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis was conducted using NVivo to identify recurring themes in the open-ended responses provided by the experts. The analysis yielded four major themes, and these themes align with the categories used in the checklist:

First, in terms of content and goal alignment, the experts highlighted the coherent alignment between the instructional objectives and the specific writing tasks, noting that the objectives were clearly defined and well-aligned with College English writing requirements. They appreciated the explicit articulation of intended outcomes, the sequence of activities, and the integration of ICT and collaborative tasks.

Additionally, they commended the lesson plan's capacity to motivate students and foster real-world problem-solving skills. Expert A remarked that *"the lesson plan clearly states instructional objectives for each session, and these are well-aligned with the College English writing objectives."* Similarly, Expert B emphasised that *"the objectives show strong alignment with both the national College English curriculum and 21st-century writing skills."* Second, regarding task design and cognitive demand, the experts agreed that the writing tasks were cognitively rigorous and well-sequenced.

They also recommended the inclusion of more scaffolding techniques to support lower-proficiency learners, suggesting that such support is essential for successful task completion. Suggestions included the use of visual aids, step-by-step examples to support clarity and understanding. As they said, *"lesson plan may assume a higher level of learner autonomy than some students actually possess, especially in lower-proficiency learners"*.

Third, in terms of student engagement and collaboration, experts highlighted *"peer reviews, group brainstorming, and co-writing activities"* as strengths. The effective incorporation of peer review, group discussions, and project-based writing activities foster engagement and collaboration among students. ICT tools were seen as effectively enhancing interaction and student motivation. And they suggested *"adding reflection checkpoints or mini peer presentations"*.

Finally, under instructional resources and implementation feasibility, the experts considered *"the lesson plan is feasible for most College English classrooms in China, especially in terms of ICT accessibility and sequencing of tasks"*. They also identified areas for further improvement. The lesson plan's practicability in real classrooms is needed for support, such as technological support and instructors' training. Both experts also pointed out that *"the lesson plan's applicability in settings with limited resources may be limited by differences in student digital literacy and technological infrastructure"*. This emphasises the necessity of low-tech alternative options to ensure accessibility.

In order to promote equitable implementation in settings with limited resources, instructors are advised to include offline or blended methods, such as printed templates or offline brainstorming in small groups. The significance of instruction preparation was emphasised to ensure that instructors are fully prepared to implement the approach. Expert A said, *“instructors’ training is also essential to ensure they are well-equipped to deliver the approach effectively”*. Expert B said, *“We also need to make sure instructors get proper training so they can confidently apply the approach”*.

Conclusion and Recommendation

This expert review validated the lesson plan as a pedagogically complete, clearly structured, and practically applicable instructional tool for College English writing. The high CVI values and moderate inter-rater reliability indicated that the content was relevant, clear, and consistent with learning goals. The open-ended feedback provides deeper insight into the pedagogical implications and practical considerations of using the WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD pedagogical approach in real classrooms. Experts affirmed that the WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD approach aligns well with current pedagogical needs. The WeCWI framework and 21CLD rubrics create a strong learning structure.

Key recommendations include differentiated supports, flexible resources for limited classrooms, and professional training for teachers. Success hinges on instructors’ familiarity with the WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD approach. As one expert said, even good lesson plans can fail if teachers are untrained or lack confidence. Thus, professional development should accompany implementation. These factors are vital to maximise the model’s accessibility and impact across China’s diverse educational settings.

The findings emphasise the importance of systematic expert review in validating the design of the lesson plans based on WeCWI-enhanced 21CLD pedagogical approach prior to implementation. The review not only confirmed the suitability of the lesson plan but also highlighted specific areas for improvement to enhance its instructional impact. The validated approach offers a promising model for improving EFL writing instruction in China and contributes to the growing discourse on integrating technological and learner-centred pedagogies in higher education.

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Appendices

Appendix A: Expert Review Checklist

Close-Ended Items (Likert Scale) (Scale: 1 = Strongly Disagree, 2 = Disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree, 5 = Strongly Agree)

Category 1: Instructional Clarity & Goal Alignment

Item No.	Item
1	The lesson plan clearly articulates its learning objectives
2	The stated objectives align with College English writing requirements
3	The lesson aligns with 21CLD competencies (e.g., knowledge construction, real-world problem solving).
4	The tasks and activities clearly support the intended learning goals.
5	The writing outcomes are explicitly connected to instructional goals.

Category 2: Task Design & Cognitive Demand

Item No.	Item
1	The lesson includes cognitively demanding writing tasks.
2	Tasks are logically sequenced to build upon prior learning.
3	There is appropriate scaffolding to support different proficiency levels.
4	The lesson provides opportunities for higher-order thinking (e.g., analysis, synthesis).

Category 3: Student Engagement & Collaboration

Item No.	Item
1	The lesson includes activities that foster student interaction and collaboration.
2	The use of ICT enhances student engagement and writing performance.
3	The tasks are motivating and relevant to students' interests.
4	The lesson promotes peer feedback or group discussion.
5	The activities support student autonomy and self-regulation.

Category 4: Instructional Resources & Implementation Feasibility

Item No.	Item
1	The lesson can be realistically implemented in a typical Chinese College English classroom.
2	The time allocation and pacing are feasible within standard class hours.
3	The instructional resources are appropriate and ready to use.

Open-Ended Items

Q1: In your view, how well does this lesson plan articulate learning objectives and aligns them with College English writing requirements?

Q2: What do you think of the design of writing tasks in this lesson plan?

Q3: In terms of promoting students' interaction, collaboration, and active participation in writing, what strengths or areas for improvement do you see in this lesson plan?

Q4: How feasible are the resource preparation and class hour allocation in this lesson plan?