

# “Shall we proceed or start over?” : Remedial writing for EFL students

**Hsin-Rong Wu**

Applied Foreign Language Department/ Kao Yuan University

## **Abstract**

The writing deficiencies of students at technological universities are broadly discussed and a remedial course is proposed to enhance English proficiency. Prior studies on remedial education do not always shed light on possible remedies to students' written shortcomings. According to the researcher's observations, learner deficiencies necessitate step-by-step remediation through instruction. In fact, it is recommended that the practical solution of students starting over again from a very basic level, although they may have learned English for as much as six years, be put into affect. This action study describes a four-month remedial writing course involving 22 EFL students at a university of technology located in southern Taiwan. Many participants involved in this study were uncertain of their EFL writing skills. These participants were required to take a pretest – vocabulary level test and a writing test. The remedial writing course contains two sections: first, phonics, phonetic symbols and a 1000 word corpus were taught in order to equip subjects for participation in reading and sentence construction activities. Second, article recitation, sentence construction, and Chinese-English translation were taught to help subjects retain vocabulary, imitate sentence patterns, and apply grammatical rules in written English. A posttest was administrated, and a paired-sample t-test was used to calculate overall improvement levels, with an oral interview utilized to understand their incremental progress over time. Results from both the quantitative and qualitative data revealed that EFL students would not change overnight to become proficient English writers. After receiving this remedial course, participants gradually developed a solid foundation upon which to base their English. It is suggested that EFL educators should lay a solid skill set baseline in EFL writing education to provide students with a well-reasoned start-over remedial course if students are to succeed and then thrive at an appropriate level.

**Key words: remedial instruction, writing course, EFL**

---

Corresponding author: Department of Applied Foreign Language, Kao Yuan University, 1821, Chuang Shan Road, Lu Chu Hsiang, Kaohsiung County, 821, Taiwan.  
Tel: +886-7-6077910, 0919315598  
Fax: +886-7-6077110  
E-mail: hrwu@cc.kyu.edu.tw or vvvvvvv99@hotmail.com