

PhD studentship (Full-time)

Institution	Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University, China
School	School of Humanities and Social Sciences
Supervisors	Principal supervisor: Dr Dawei Wei (XJTLU, Department of Applied Linguistics) Co-supervisor: Dr Rining Wei (XJTLU, Department of Applied Linguistics) Co-supervisor: Dr Nektaria Efstathia Kourtali (UoL, Department of English)
Application Deadline	Open until the position is filled
Funding Availability	Funded PhD project (world-wide students)
Project Title	English writing processes and products of young Chinese learners: The roles of motivation and cognition
Contact	Please email Dawei.Wei@xjtlu.edu.cn (XJTLU principal supervisor's email address) with a subject line of the PhD project title ("EFL writing PhD").

Requirements:

The candidate should have a UK Pass with merit Master degree (or equivalent qualification), in Psycholinguistics, Applied Linguistics, Education, Psychology, or Linguistics.

Evidence of good spoken and written English is essential. The candidate should have an IELTS score of 7.0 with 7.0 minimum in each component, if the first language is not English.

For details on language requirement, please refer to this link:

<https://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/admissions/doctoral/entry-requirement-phd>

The appointed student should have excellent communication skills, be self-driven and highly motivated in the project and applied/psycho- linguistic research as a whole and willing to be actively involved in relevant research projects.

Previous research experience in EFL writing, eye-tracking/experimental linguistic studies will be an advantage.

Experience in computer programming and statistical modeling is desirable.

This position is open to all qualified candidates irrespective of nationality.

Degree:

The student will be awarded a PhD degree from the University of Liverpool (UK) upon successful completion of the program.

Funding:

The PhD studentship is available for three years subject to satisfactory progress by the student.

The award covers tuition fees for three years (currently equivalent to RMB 99,000 per annum).

It also provides up to RMB 16,500 to allow participation at international conferences during the period of the award. The scholarship holder is expected to carry out the major part of his or her research at XJTLU in Suzhou, China. However, he or she is eligible for a research study visit to the University of Liverpool up to six months, if this is required by the project.

Project Description:

Writing is widely acknowledged as a demanding activity. It is even more challenging for young Chinese writers due to less-developed English knowledge and writing skills. To cope with such an effortful task, they need to be motivated to improve their use of linguistic knowledge in achieving quality written output. Few studies have directly focused on motivational roles in EFL writing development, especially among inexperienced teenage writers. Additionally, many of the existing studies focused on the end products of writing, largely neglecting the writing processes which are closely related to writing performance. The current project therefore will investigate how motivation and linguistic-cognitive factors contribute to writing processes and outcomes. Four objectives include: 1) to gain a precise understanding of writing motivation of elementary school EFL writers; 2) to examine the relationships between motivation and linguistic-cognitive variables and writing performance; 3) to explore how different motivational types may influence writers' writing behaviors and whether such an effect might be influenced by compositions of different topic familiarity; 4) to track the developmental pathways on how writing performance grows as a function of motivation and cognition (cognitive strategies).

Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU) is offering a three-year fees-only doctoral studentship to work on this project exploring EFL writing dynamics among young learners of English in Chinese elementary schools, studying under a supervisory team led by Dr. Dawei Wei (XJTLU, Department of Applied Linguistics), whose research interests centre on language acquisition and psycholinguistics. Two co-supervisors in the team are Dr. Rining Wei (XJTLU, Department of Applied Linguistics) and Dr. Nektaria Efstathia Kourtali (UoL, Department of English), who are established researchers in the fields of English Education & TESOL, Bilingualism, second language acquisition etc. XJTLU is the largest and most successful Sino-Foreign University in China – a unique partnership between the Russell Group University of Liverpool and the prestigious Xi'an Jiaotong University – celebrating 20 years in 2026. (More information about the University is available at <https://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/about/>.)

The successful applicant will be primarily based in the Department of Applied Linguistics in the School of Humanities and Social Sciences at XJTLU in Suzhou, China. The Department of Applied Linguistics is a research-intensive environment, housing a Language and Cognition Laboratory, with eye tracking and ERP technology. The scholarship thus offers a rare opportunity to study and to gain research experience at this vibrant department.

For more information about doctoral scholarship and PhD programme at Xi'an Jiaotong-Liverpool University (XJTLU), please visit

<https://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/admissions/global/entry-requirements/>

<https://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/admissions/global/fees-and-scholarship>

How to Apply:

Interested applicants are advised to email Dawei.Weiz@xjtlu.edu.cn (XJTLU principal supervisor's email address) the following documents for initial review and assessment (please put the project title "EFL writing PhD" in the subject line).

- CV
- Two formal reference letters with company/university letterhead
- PDF copy of Master Degree dissertation (or an equivalent writing sample such as book chapter, journal article, etc.) and examiners reports available
- A research proposal of up to 2,500 words, detailing your project design and indicating suitability for the scholarship position
- Proof of English language proficiency (an IELTS score of 7.0 with 7.0 minimum in each component, or an equivalent certificate) if English is not your first language
- Full academic transcripts in both Chinese and English (for international students, only the English version is required)
- Verified certificates of education qualifications in both Chinese and English (for international students, only the English version is required)

Informal enquiries may be addressed to Dr Dawei Wei (Dawei.Weiz@xjtlu.edu.cn), whose personal profile is linked below,

<https://www.xjtlu.edu.cn/en/study/departments/school-of-humanities-and-social-sciences/department-of-applied-linguistics/department-staff/academic-staff/staff/dawei-wei>