

外国语言文化探索与研究书系

北京第二外国语学院翻译学院“职业为导向的复合型英语翻译人才培养”项目资助

# 中国学生英语写作中 语言输出的发展特征

Developmental Aspects of Language Production in Chinese Students' EFL Writing

康竞春◎著



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北京·旅游教育出版社

策 划:李红丽 陈卫伟

责任编辑:陈卫伟

图书在版编目(CIP)数据

中国学生英语写作中语言输出的发展特征 / 康竞春

著. —北京:旅游教育出版社, 2015. 6

(外国语言文化探索与研究书系)

ISBN 978-7-5637-3152-7

I. ①中… II. ①康… III. ①英语—写作—教学研究

IV. ①H315

中国版本图书馆 CIP 数据核字 (2015) 第 071721 号

外国语言文化探索与研究书系

中国学生英语写作中语言输出的发展特征

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出版单位	旅游教育出版社
地 址	北京市朝阳区定福庄南里 1 号
邮 编	100024
发行电话	(010)65778403 65728372 65767462(传真)
本社网址	www. tepcb. com
E - mail	tepx@163. com
排版单位	北京旅教文化传播有限公司
印刷单位	北京京华虎彩印刷有限公司
经销单位	新华书店
开 本	710 毫米 × 1000 毫米 1/16
印 张	13.5
字 数	187 千字
版 次	2015 年 6 月第 1 版
印 次	2015 年 6 月第 1 次印刷
定 价	39.00 元

(图书如有装订差错请与发行部联系)

# 前言

二语写作自 20 世纪 60 年代起备受关注,迄今已有不少研究成果,这些研究大致可分三类:写作结果研究、写作过程研究以及写作教学研究。

通过对以往写作结果和过程研究的总结,笔者发现:一、绝大多数研究以大学生为研究对象,对其余年龄段的二语学习者则很少关注;二、写作任务多限于议论文;三、二语写作过程研究极少涉及时间维度,研究方法以有声思维为主。

因此,本实证研究旨在考察中国学生英语写作中语言输出的发展特征,具体从以下三个方面进行分析。一、写作结果维度——外语写作中的语言发展:考察语言的准确性、流利性、词汇复杂性与句法复杂性;二、写作过程:时间维度——考察写作时间、停顿与语言输出的流利度;三、写作过程:心理维度——尝试将过程研究与结果研究相结合,揭示写作者的思维活动如何影响语言的选择和输出。

本研究的实验对象为熟悉电脑键盘操作的初中、高中毕业生和非英语专业大学生各 24 名,共计 72 名,在三个不同的时间完成议论文、记叙文和图画描写三项写作任务。数据收集方法是让学生在装有击键记录程序 ScriptLog 的电脑上写作,写作结束后立即回放写作过程,同时让学生回忆在停顿处或者修改处的思维活动。

本研究的数据有三类:写作成品数据、时间数据以及访谈数据。通过对写作成品数据和时间数据的定量分析和访谈数据的定性分析,有以下发现:

第一,语言的发展特征:(1)准确性:两项指标(EFT/T、E/T)结果基本一致。随着年级水平的提高,各年级所犯错误逐渐增加。三项写作任务中,记叙文的准确性高于描述和议论文。(2)流利性:两项指标(W/T、W/C)结果在大学阶段的结果不一致。T 单位长度基本呈线性发展趋势,随着年级水平的增加而增加;子句长度在高中阶段显著增加,大学阶段有所下降。三项写作任务中,议论文两项指标都居首位。(3)句法复杂性:两项指标(C/T、DC/C)结果基本一致。年级水平和句法复杂性成正比,年级越高,句法复杂性越高。三项写作任务中,记叙文的句法复杂性最低,议论文则最高。(4)词汇复杂性:两项指标( $WT/\sqrt{2W}$ 、 $SWT/WT$ )结果基本一致。高中阶段显著增加,大学阶段有所下降。

第二,写作时间与停顿:年级水平越高,写作总时间越长,写前计划时间越短。初中组议论文的写前计划时间比记叙文写前计划时间长,且差异显著,表明对于初中组来说议论文难度比记叙文大。从高中组开始,记叙文比议论文所需总时间长,

写前计划时间短,结合访谈数据,可知这两种写作文体对中国的二语写作者来讲,难度有所不同。与议论文相比,记叙文在内容构思上较容易,而在语言表达上更难。记叙文写作需要大量的形容词和动词,而在学生的词汇结构中,形容词与动词的储备似乎严重不足。

停顿时间占写作总时间的60%~65%,年级水平和任务类型对停顿时间不产生影响。在六种停顿种类中,初中组的SCP停顿频率比高中组和大学组高,而ICP停顿频率则要低。语言输出流利度统计结果显示,随着年级水平的增加,语言输出的流利度呈下降趋势。停顿间思维活动数据的分析表明,流利度下降的主要原因有二:写作中母语思维的增加和对作文进行提升性努力的增加。

第三,思维活动:(1)写前计划:初中组主要根据自己的外语水平计划可写的内容,很少顾及作文的组织与结构;高中组和大学组则主要构思作文的结构。(2)写作过程:初中组主要运用知识讲述策略,把计划好的内容写下来,写作过程中与结束后很少对作文做调整或修改;高中组和大学组则能积极运用知识转换策略,根据需要对内容和表达做出调整。

简而言之,初中组与高中组差异显著,但高中组与大学组在写作结果和过程两方面都是相似性多于差异性,表明高中期间,中国学生的外语水平和写作能力都获得了显著发展。进入大学后,外语写作能力发展速度减慢。访谈数据表明其中的主要原因是:外语写作在外语学习中的重要性没有得到充分的认识,学生很少练习写作,且对外语写作持消极态度。

本研究意义在于:将不同年龄段、不同外语水平的学习者和不同写作任务类型纳入考察范畴,将过程和结果维度相结合能较为全面地展示外语写作中语言输出的发展特征。这对于外语写作研究与教学,尤其是中国的非英语专业学生的英语教学具有一定的指导意义。

本书是根据笔者的博士论文写成,得到了北京第二外国语学院翻译学院“职业为导向的复合型英语翻译人才培养”项目的出版资助。在本书的写作过程中,笔者得到了导师王振亚教授的悉心指导,学友陈光明、吴林等也对本书的初稿提出过宝贵的意见,旅游教育出版社李红丽女士为本书的出版提供了热情帮助,在此一并致谢。

由于笔者学识水平和研究能力有限,书中的错误疏漏和不当之处在所难免,恳请同行批评指正。

编 者

2015年2月

## Abstract

Second language writing has received growing attention since the 1960s. Fruitful results have been gained from a large number of previous studies that fell into three main categories: product research, process research, and writing pedagogy research.

A review of the previous studies on product and process revealed the following three weaknesses. First, most studies chose college students as their research subjects. Learners of other age groups and second language proficiency levels have received little attention. Second, writing tasks were mostly argumentative writing. Third, the temporal dimension of online writing has been scarcely tapped in process research.

The present study aimed to investigate the developmental patterns of language production in Chinese students' EFL writing. First, foreign language development was examined in terms of accuracy, fluency, lexical and grammatical complexity. Second, several temporal aspects such as writing time, pauses, and productivity were studied. Third, an attempt was made to combine online writing process with written product: how the foreign language writers' cognitive activities influenced their language production.

The participants of the present study were 72 junior high school and senior high school graduates and non-English major college students with good computer keyboard skills, 24 in each group. They were required to write an argumentation, a narration and a description on a computer equipped with ScriptLog (a keystroke logging program). Immediately after writing, their writing process was replayed and they were asked to recall their cognitive activities at a pause or a revision.

The study had three data sets: written product data, temporal data and interview data. The following findings were obtained through quantitative analyses of the product and temporal data and qualitative analyses of the interview data:

1. Language development in EFL writing. (1) Accuracy. The two measures (EFT/T, E/T) yielded consistent results. More errors were made with increased grade levels. The accuracy of narrative writing was higher than that of argumentative and descriptive writing. (2) Fluency. The two measures (W/T, W/C) produced inconsistent results for the college group. There was a linear increase in T-unit length



from junior high school to college. Clause length increased significantly in senior high school but decreased in college. The average length of T-units and clauses was longer in argumentative writing than in the other two text types. (3) Grammatical complexity. The two measures (C/T, DC/C) produced consistent results. Students produced grammatically more complicated T-units as they entered higher grade levels. Regarding text type, argumentative and narrative texts respectively exhibited the highest and lowest degree of grammatical complexity. (4) Lexical complexity. The two measures ( $WT/\sqrt{2W}$ ,  $SWT/WT$ ) yielded consistent patterns: a significant increase in senior high school and a slight decrease in college.

2. Writing time and pause. Participants at higher grade levels needed more writing time and spent less time on pre-writing planning. The junior high school participants spent significantly more time on pre-writing planning in argumentative writing than in narrative writing, which indicated that argumentative writing imposed more cognitive demand on them. The senior high school and college participants needed more time for narrative writing but spent less time planning. The interview data revealed that the two text types posed different levels of difficulty to our learners. Compared with argumentative writing, narrative writing was easier in content generation but more difficult in language aspects. For example, narrative writing required more adjectives and verbs which seemed to be seriously lacking in our participants' vocabulary structure.

Pause took up 60% ~ 65% of writing time, regardless of the grade level and text type. The junior high school group paused significantly more frequently between sentences and less frequently between phrases than the other two groups. Analyses of productivity showed that participants at higher grade levels wrote in their FL with lower degrees of fluency. The interview data further revealed that the increase of L1 thinking and upgrading efforts in FL writing were the two major reasons for this decrease in productivity.

3. Cognitive activities in online writing. (1) Pre-writing planning. The junior high school group mainly planned what their FL proficiency allowed them to write, while the senior high school and college groups focused on the organization of ideas and the structure of their intended texts. (2) Formulation process. The junior high school participants mainly employed the knowledge-telling strategy. They wrote down what came to their mind and made very few adaptations to the content or language of their texts. The senior high school and college groups were able to employ the knowledge-

transforming strategy and made necessary adaptations and transformations to their writing in relation to ideas and rhetorical aspects.

In brief, the junior high school group was significantly different from the senior high school group. But the senior high school and college groups shared more similarities than differences in terms of both product and process. This indicated that significant improvement in English proficiency and English writing ability was achieved in the three senior high school years on the part of Chinese learners of English. Yet, it seemed that no further improvement was made in the two or three college years. The main reason for this, according to the interview data, was that the importance of writing in FL learning did not gain full recognition. Students had negative attitudes toward and seldom engaged in FL writing.

This study shows that a fuller picture can be painted of the developmental features of language production in FL writing when learners of different age groups and FL proficiency levels and different text types are taken into consideration and when product and process analyses are combined. This has important implications for FL writing research and instruction, and for the teaching and learning of English writing to non-English majors in China in particular.

**Keywords:** FL writing, written language production, written product, writing process, development



## List of Acronyms

C/T	Clauses/T-units
CCP	Clause Completion Points
DC/C	Dependent Clauses/Clauses
E/T	Errors/T-units
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
EFT/T	Error-Free T-units/T-units
ICP	Intermediate Constituent Completion Points
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
SCP	Sentence Completion Points
SWT/WT	Sophisticated Word Types/Word Types
WT/ $\sqrt{2}$ W	Word Types/ $\sqrt{2}$ Words
W/T	Words/T-units
W/C	Words/Clauses
WCP	Word Completion Points
XCP	Character Completion Points

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Introduction

Second language (L2) production has always been difficult for second language learners. In first and second language production studies, written language production has received less attention from researchers than spoken language production. But the situation gradually changed since the late 1950s and the early 1960s.

Studies in second language writing began in the 1960s with the continuing increase of international students in U. S. higher education and the creation of the disciplinary division of labor between L1 and L2 writing (Raimes, 1991). In the past five decades, the number of studies in L2 writing has grown rapidly and produced fruitful results. Mastuda (2003) points out that ESL or L2 writing has developed from focus on instructional emphases to focus on theoretical construction, and from a sub-discipline of second language studies to an interdisciplinary field.

L2 writing research covers a wide range of aspects and they have been grouped into three major categories: research on the written product, research on the composing process, and research on the learning and teaching of L2 writing (Archibald & Jeffery, 2000; Atkinson, 2003; Matsuda, 2003; Polio, 2003; Wang & Sun).

This chapter begins with a brief introduction of these three lines of research as a general background against which the present study was conducted, followed by a statement of the scope of the study, and ends with the organization of the book.

## 1.2 The study of L2 writing

### 1.2.1 Written product: L2 writers' texts

This line of research focuses on the analyses of the features of texts produced by L2 writers so that we can have a better understanding of texts produced by L2 learners and