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文本产出机制研究

王俊菊 闫秋燕 著

The Mechanism
of Text Production
in L2 Writing

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Preface

In a world that is increasingly dominated by computer-mediated communication, L2 writing has now taken on a new significance. It has become not only an important means for the improvement of language proficiency, but also an essential tool for communication beyond language boundary among people from different disciplinary and cultural contexts. Consequently, the last few decades saw L2 writing studies as a fast growing field. With many firsts devoted exclusively to L2 writing research such as the *Journal of Second Language Writing* and the *Symposium on Second Language Writing*, this field of studies has evolved into an academic discipline covering a range of subfields, and has been widely acknowledged from a disciplinary to an interdisciplinary field of inquiry in second language studies and applied linguistics.

In China, L2 writing is also an active and promising area of studies. Research shows that this area has a history of over 50 years, and has gone through different developmental stages in a general tendency of uprising increase. Ever since the 1980s, there has been a boom of studies in the field of EFL writing with a wide range of research foci. The last 10 years saw several big events of this area, including the establishment of the National Association of EFL Writing Teaching and Research, the biannual International Symposium on EFL Writing Research and Teaching in China, and the launching of the *Journal of EFL Writing Teaching and Research*.

Despite the overall “prosperity” of the L2 writing studies in China, the EFL writing process has remained, to a large extent, under-investigated. First, meta-studies on writing processes are mostly limited to summaries of relevant studies in foreign countries. Although they are helpful for perceptual and methodological upgrade and for a better understanding of Western studies, theories thus introduced to the Chinese context are not specific to Chinese EFL learners. Second, studies on

subprocesses have confirmed the transferability of L1 writing competence and the threshold for the choice of thinking medium. But they are inadequate in many cases when the issues of methodology and originality are taken into account. What is needed is to tailor theories and research design to the characteristics of Chinese EFL learners and examine how they produce L2 text in their writing processes that are not only cognitive and psychological, but also social, contextual and cultural.

To investigate the mechanism of text production in L2 writing of Chinese EFL students, there are a number of angles from which they can be approached in that an immensity of relevant variables and a range of academic disciplines help provide multidimensional perspectives. Given this, the present study thus examines the EFL writing processes of different task types by students at different levels of English proficiency, adopting the methods of think-aloud protocols, interviews, stimulated recalls, questionnaires, and computer-aided methods like Inputlog. Taking into consideration the factors at cognitive, social, and cultural levels, it is focused on the temporal features of planning and generating processes, focuses and effective strategies in the revising process, and discusses the roles of apprehension, reader awareness, thinking media and writing tools for the effectiveness and efficiency of students' text-producing processes.

Multifaceted results have been found in the six individual studies included in the book. In Chapter Five, for example, results of the study on planning show that Chinese EFL writers tend to spend overall stable amount of time on planning processes, in spite of the differences of the writing media and their language proficiency levels. However, the writing media and language proficiency levels are influencing factors of the planning processes since more proficient students have more balanced patterns of planning time allocation and the keyboard writing mode is more likely to bring about prominent recursive features of planning processes.

The study on generating process in Chapter Six found differences in performance by more proficient students and less proficient students in generating time, generating focus, and pausing behaviors. Compared with less proficient students, more proficient students could make good use of the two writing tools, paper-and-pencil and keyboard writing.

The study on revision in Chapter Seven found that the online revision process demonstrated striking features of multi-drafted revisions, score-driven motivation,

writer-software interaction and prompt online feedback. In terms of revision types, substitutions are the most frequently used, and more revisions were done on language form than on content.

The study on writing anxiety in Chapter Eight found that anxiety run throughout the whole writing process soon after students were told of the writing task. Writing apprehension becomes most prominent at the during-writing stage when students have to keep the writing process going by simultaneously playing the roles of planner, transcriber, translator, drafter, evaluator, and editor. Familiarity with the writing task, vocabulary size, self-expectation, self-perception and self-confidence are the most important factors that have had impacts on students' anxiety levels.

The study on reader awareness in Chapter Nine found that most students acknowledged the importance of audience awareness and their perceptions of their own situations were not in consistency with their performance. Despite having varied target audience in their mind, most students took teachers as the most important readers. In addition, their audience awareness is mainly realized in formal aspects including organization, sentence, and vocabulary, even though they used some engagement features in the meantime.

The study on thinking medium in Chapter Ten found that both L1 and L2 are alternately employed as the medium of thought in L2 writing processes, performing their functions in a cooperative, interactive and compensatory way to each other. Reasons for students' choice of thinking media are attributed to educational background, personal experiences, perceptions of L2 writing, English proficiency, and the difficulty level of the text written.

In summary, the studies as presented in this book have confirmed that text-producing processes in L2 writing are unbelievably complex, especially when conducted in a new language. So, understanding the complexities of the writing process in language-specific and culture-specific contexts is crucial to both teachers and applied linguists in the contemporary world. This book has made efforts for a better understanding of the writing processes of EFL learners, providing, as it does, a much needed investigation into the mechanism of text-producing processes in English writing by Chinese learners at different proficiency levels. Hopefully, it could have beneficial effects on the practice of writing teaching in the Chinese context.

List of Abbreviations

AES	Automated Essay Scoring
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
CET	College English Test
EFL	English as a Foreign Language
ENL	English as a Native Language
ESL	English as a Second Language
GMAT	Graduate Management Admission Test
GRE	Graduate Record Examination
IELTS	International English Language Testing System
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
MANONA	Multivariate Analysis of Variance
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
SPSS	Statistical Product and Service Solutions
TAP	Think-aloud Protocol
TEM	Test for English Majors
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language
ZPD	Zone of Proximal Development

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