

当代外国语言学与应用语言学博士论丛

# 母语思维与英语写作

——中国大学生英语写作过程研究

王文宇 著

The present study is of both theoretical and pedagogical values.

First of all, findings of this study enrich our knowledge of the unique features of L2 writing, thus promoting the development of L2 writing theories. Previous research (e.g., Guo & Liu, 1997) has found that low- and intermediate-level L2 writers use both their L1 and L2 for cognitive operations when composing in L2. This study examines the L2 writers of relatively higher levels and confirms the bilingual nature of the L2 writing process. Based on these findings, a tentative model is proposed to account for the L2 writing process. This model

contributes to the development of L2 writing theories. Secondly, the current study helps with our understanding of the role of L1 in SLA. The traditional, product-oriented approach to the role of L1 proves inadequate in offering us a full account of how L1 influences L2 learning. With a dynamic, multidimensional perspective on the role of L1, this study explores how L1 influences L2 writing, examining its effects on both process and product levels. A multifaceted role of L1 has been revealed in L2 writing; L1 use in individual composing activities exerts different influences on the writing process and written product.

Discoveries of this kind are more informative of when and where L1 facilitates/hinders L2 learning. Thirdly, this study offers useful suggestions on how to implement the think-aloud method effectively. Thinking aloud is a powerful tool for exploring mental operations, but it has received numerous criticisms since it was borrowed into SLA research as a potential intrusiveness. The current study shows that thinking aloud is an effective technique if it is implemented properly. The detailed descriptions this study has provided of how to select subjects, how to train them to think aloud, how to administer the think-aloud task,

how to control the intruding effect of this method are beneficial for other novice researchers who might consider using the think-aloud method while questioning its reliability.

陕西师范大学出版社

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An Investigation Into L1 Use In The L2  
Writing Process

王文宇 著

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## 导 读

本书研究二语写作过程中的母语思维现象(L1 use in the L2 writing process),旨在深入了解二语写作的特性、揭示母语在二语习得中的作用。研究采用有声思维(the think-aloud method)、回顾(retrospection)、问卷(questionnaire)、访谈(interview)等方法,记录了十六名中国大学生在两次英语写作任务中的思维过程,对该过程中的母语思维进行定量和定性的分析,并就写作任务、英语水平对母语思维的影响展开讨论。

全书分为导论、文献回顾、研究方法、结果与讨论、结论五大部分,共六章。导论简要介绍研究背景并论证此项研究的必要性。文献回顾分为两章(第一章与第二章):第一章回顾近半个世纪以来国内外关于二语习得中母语影响的理论与实证研究,第二章着重介绍二语写作及二语写作中母语影响的研究,并指出此领域中有待回答的问题。研究方法(第三章)描述本项研究的研究问题、研究对象、数据收集与数据分析过程。结果与讨论由第四章与第五章组成。第四章汇报十六名学生在两次英语写作任务中的母语思维量、分析写作任务与二语水平这两个变量对母语思维量的影响,在此基础上,提出具有体现思维语言特征的二语写作过程模型。第五章通过描述母语思维在二语写作过程中的功能、分析母语思维对作文文本的影响、总结学生使用母语思维的原因及对母语思维现象的看法,探讨母语思维在二语写作中的作用。结论(第六章)部分讨论本项研究理论意义与实践价值,同时指出研究设计上的不足之处,从而为未来的研究指明方向。

### 一、文献回顾

近年来,有研究发现初级阶段的二语写作不是一个纯粹的二语思维过程,二语水平较低的学生在二语写作中常常依赖母语思维。然而这些研究大多只指出二语写作过程中存在母语思维这一现象,没有深入探讨学生如何使用母语思维以及母语思维对二语写作的作用。其实,在二语习得领域内母语影响问题已经讨论了近半个世纪,只是至今未有定论。结构主义与

行为主义将母语看作二语学习中的主要障碍,心灵主义否认母语对二语习得的作用,而近年来流行的认知理论又重新承认母语对二语学习的影响,并指出其复杂性与多面性。至于母语在什么条件下产生促进作用、什么条件下产生阻碍作用仍旧没有明确的结论。同样,母语如何影响二语写作也是一个有待回答的问题。近二十年来,二语写作的研究日益增多,大多数研究只比较一语写作与二语写作过程的相似之处,强调两者的共性,而对二语写作自身的特性没有给予充分的关注,探讨母语思维与二语写作关系的研究更是寥寥无几。

母语思维是二语写作的独特之处。本项研究就着眼于二语写作的特性,通过描述十六名大学生如何在英语写作过程中使用中英文两种语言思维,探讨写作任务与二语水平对母语思维的影响,界定母语思维在写作过程中的功能,确定母语思维与作文质量的关系,以丰富人们对母语影响的了解,提高人们对二语写作特性的认识,从而有助于建构二语写作理论。

## 二、研究方法

本次研究的十六名受试者来自南京大学英语系四个年级,每个年级各四名,均为女生,平均年龄 20 岁。数据收集分为三个阶段。第一阶段,受试者接受有声思维的培训,通过培训的学生参加第二阶段的两次写作测试:一篇看图作文,一篇议论文。学生作文时自始至终必须说出头脑中闪现的任何想法,想法若以英文出现,就说英文,想法若以汉语出现,就说汉语。研究者对整个过程做了观察记录,进行了全程录音。学生一完成任务,首先填写衡量有声思维干扰度的调查问卷,然后接受回顾性访谈。边听录音,边就写作过程中出现的母语思维,解释其原因及作用。学生完成两次写作任务后,再次接受访谈,汇报对母语思维的看法与态度。

数据分析的资料主要是有声思维记录、访谈记录及学生作文。分析工作分为三部分。第一部分对有声思维记录做定量与定性的分析。首先,数出每篇记录中的中、英文词数,算出中文的比例,作为母语思维量的指数。然后,将写作过程中的思维活动分为五大类(解题、内容构思、结构构思、遣词造句、过程管理),并计算每一类活动中汉语的比例,以了解学生在哪些情况下易于依赖母语思维。接着,用 T 值检验的方法比较两次写作任务中的

母语参与量的差异,推断写作任务对母语思维的影响。同时,通过比较不同年级学生使用母语思维的情况,发掘二语水平对母语思维的影响。第二部分分析工作的目的是确定母语思维与二语写作质量之间的关系。先请两名外籍教师给学生作文打分,将作文排名次。然后,将作文名次与写作过程中的母语思维量进行相关分析。第三部分工作是就学生的访谈记录,归类整理学生使用母语思维的各种原因以及他们对母语思维的看法和态度。

### 三、研究结果

本次研究的结果归纳如下:

(1) 二语写作过程具有双语特征,即母语与二语同时参与思维。其中母语思维量约占 30%。母语在程序管理、内容构思、结构构思三类活动中出现的频率远远高于二语,而在解题、遣词造句活动中出现的频率则低于二语。

(2) 二语写作过程中的母语参与量受写作任务与二语水平的影响。定量分析结果显示看图作文中的母语参与量大于议论文中的母语参与量。定性分析进一步指出引起这一差异的不是两项写作任务的难度而是两次任务提供的不同类型的写作提示。不具语言符号的图画易于引发母语解题及母语构思,而英文文字提示可以引导学生在解题和内容构思时用英文思维。学生二语水平对母语思维的影响较为复杂。总的来说,母语思维量随二语水平的提高而减少。但是,不同思维活动中的母语参与量下降幅度不等:造句活动中的母语参与量下降幅度较大,并有消失的趋势;其他活动中的母语参与量下降到一定程度后速度减慢。部分三、四年级学生进行内容构思、结构构思、过程管理时仍然运用相当多的母语思维。

(3) 母语在二语写作中的作用是多层面的。首先,母语思维在写作过程中具有多种功能:母语帮助学生理解写作提示、进行内容和结构构思、控制写作过程等。其次,不同思维活动中母语的作用不同:学生在遣词造句时使用母语会影响语言的正确和通顺,而在其他活动中使用母语对作文没有明显的负面影响。另外,学生使用母语思维的原因各异:一些学生受到二语水平的制约不得不依赖母语,一些学生出于实际情况考虑(如“母语思维更有效”,或“某些情况下没必要用二语思维”)有意识地选择母语思维,还有一

些学生受母语记忆的影响不自觉地使用母语。

(4) 学生对母语思维的看法也是多样的。习惯用二语思维的三名学生坚持认为母语思维是二语写作中的绊脚石,应该尽量避免。而用双语思维的学生则认为除了在遣词造句时应避免使用母语,其他时候可以用母语以保证思维的清晰与连贯。

## 四、结论

本项研究的理论价值和实践意义总结如下:

首先,本次研究描述了中国大学生在英文写作过程中如何使用中英文思维,探讨了写作任务及二语水平对母语思维的影响,从而证实了中、高级阶段二语写作过程的双语性,丰富了我们对于二语写作特性的认识。在此基础上,还构筑了二语写作过程模型,这一模型对建立二语写作理论有一定的推动作用。

其次,本研究对正确认识母语在二语习得中的作用也有一定的启示意义。语言学界对母语影响的认识一直很模糊。有关语言迁移的研究大多是在错误分析(error analysis)的基础上将母语影响简单划分为正迁移(positive transfer)或负迁移(negative transfer)。这种静态的界定只适用于那些浮现在语言输出结果上的母语影响,不能充分描述母语在输出过程中的作用。本次研究以动态的、多层面的视角看待母语影响,描述母语在语言输出过程中的功能,界定不同思维活动中的母语对输出过程及输出结果的不同影响。这种动态的、多层面的视角对全面了解母语对认知过程和认知结果的影响大有裨益。

本项研究为改进二语习得研究方法提供了新的思路。首先,为有效地实施有声思维法提出了建设性意见。有声思维是研究认知过程的常用方法,但是它对受试者的干扰毋庸置疑。本次研究对如何更有效地运用这种方法,减小其干扰程度做了有益的尝试。例如,挑选受试者时考虑其性格因素和表达能力;进行写作测试时保证一个安静的环境,研究者做观察记录时尽量隐蔽;测试结束后让受试者衡量有声思维的干扰度。研究结果表明以上方法能有效地控制影响有声思维质量的不利因素。

另外,本研究还建议结合多种方法研究认知过程。虽然有声思维是挖

掘认知过程的有效工具,但是它所能提供的数据不可能完整。光靠有声思维记录提供的数据不足以反映受试者全部的思维过程,有时研究者不得不加入自己的主观判断,这就影响了数据分析的客观性。为了增强数据分析的客观性,本次研究结合使用有声思维、观察记录、回顾性访谈等多种方法。这样收集的数据较为完整,有利于全面描述受试者的思维过程。

此外,该项研究对二语教学也有所启示。第一,对二语写作教学中如何处理内容与语言形式的关系有参考价值。本次研究发现十六名大学生在二语写作过程中有三分之二的思维活动集中在遣词造句上。这说明在中、高级阶段二语写作中语言仍是难点。由于受到二语水平的制约,学生不得不在语言形式上花费大量的心思,因而影响了对内容和结构的思考。目前流行的交际教学法强调内容忽视形式,这种方法是否适合二语写作教学值得商榷。鉴于语言仍是二语写作的难点,教师在教学中应既重内容又不忽视语言。这样,学生的写作水平才能得到更快、更好的提高。

第二,本次研究对二语教学中是否可以使用母语这一问题提出了新的看法。传统的语法翻译法(grammar-translation method)赞成在二语教学中使用母语,而现代教学法,如直接法(direct method)、视听法(audiolingual method)、交际法(communivative approach)等都一致反对这种做法。本次研究显示学生对母语的依赖程度随二语水平的提高而逐渐减小。因此,建议对二语水平不同的学生区别对待。允许初学者适度运用母语帮助学习二语,而处于中级、高级阶段的学生则应尽量避免使用母语。另外,鉴于母语在二语学习中的多重作用,学生在使用母语时应加以选择。同时,教师可以帮助学生了解母语的多重作用,引导学生控制母语的消极作用,发挥其积极作用。

最后,必须指出本次研究的样本较小,所得结果只能作为今后研究的假设。此外,该课题还可以从以下几方面进一步深入探讨:(1)跟踪研究(longitudinal research)二语水平对母语思维的影响;(2)控制写作提示这一变量,研究写作任务对母语思维的影响;(3)采用大样本,定量分析母语思维与写作质量之间的关系;(4)研究学生对母语思维的态度与其实际操作的关系。

## ABSTRACT

The present study investigates the writing processes of sixteen tertiary-level English majors in China by a case-study approach. It aims to find out how these student writers use their L1 (first language) when composing in L2 (second language) and to what extent their use of L1 is affected by their L2 proficiency and writing tasks. Specifically, four questions are addressed in this study:

1. How is L1 used in the L2 writing process of tertiary-level EFL learners in China?
2. Does the bilingual nature of the L2 writing process vary with such factors as the writer's L2 development and the writing task type?
3. What specific roles does L1 play in various activities throughout the L2 writing process?
4. What do L2 learners think of their use of L1 in L2 writing?

This thesis comprises four parts: theoretical background, methodology, results and conclusion.

### Theoretical background

One of the fundamental, self-evident differences between L1 and L2 writers is that L2 writers, especially those of low L2 proficiency, may rely at times or extensively on their L1 for cognitive operations. How do L2 writers use their L1 in the L2 writing process? And what effects will the use of L1 exert on the writing process as well as the written product? These questions are largely unanswered. There are at least two reasons for the lack of answers. In the first place, research into L1 use in L2 writing is sparse. An overview of the L2 writing research shows an overwhelming emphasis on the similarities between L1 and L2 writing processes and behaviors as well as a wholesale borrowing of L1 writing theory to account for L2 writing (Krapels 1991). Consequently, differences between L1 and L2 writers are not adequately addressed. In the second place, studies and discussions on the role of L1 in SLA have long perceived L1 as either positive or negative. Only very recently,

research began to reveal a multifaceted role of L1 in L2 reading comprehension and suggests a dynamic, multidimensional approach to the study of L1 influence (e.g. Kern 1994). As for how L1 facilitates and/or hinders L2 writing, empirical findings are still lacking.

The impact of writers' L1 is an added factor for L2 writing, which is not present in L1 writing (Grabe & Kaplan 1996). Therefore, revelations of how L1 influences L2 writing will promote our understanding of the distinct nature of L2 writing and ultimately contribute to the development of L2 writing theories. The present study makes such an attempt. It addresses the use of L1 in L2 writing, one of the fundamental, unique features of L2 writing. In order to reveal clearly the bilingual nature of the L2 writing process, detailed depictions are made of how the writer's L1 and L2 are used in various composing activities. The study also examines the effects of such factors as writers' L2 development and writing tasks on L1 use to see whether the bilingual nature of the L2 writing process varies with these factors. In addition, it specifies various functions L1 performs in different composing activities and determines the effects of L1 use on various aspects of the composition (i.e. content, organization and language) so as to find out when and where L1 facilitates/hinders L2 writing. It is hoped that findings of this study will contribute to the development of L2 writing theories and a deeper understanding of the role L1 plays in SLA.

## **Methodology**

The subjects for this study were 16 Chinese university EFL learners (4 Year One, 4 Year Two, 4 Year Three, and 4 Year Four). They were all females, with an average age of 20.

Data in this study were student compositions and verbal protocols of these student writers' composing processes, collected through a combination of research techniques such as thinking aloud, observation, retrospection, and interviews. The subjects, having been trained to think aloud, were asked to compose aloud on two tasks (i.e. narration and argumentation) in two consecutive writing sessions, with one week in between. A retrospective interview was given to each subject once she had finished each task so as to (1) clarify the researcher's notes about the subject's writing behaviors and processes and (2) elicit the writer's self-

reports on the reasons for thinking in L1 or L2. The subject was also interviewed when she finished all the required tasks on her views about L1 use in L2 writing.

Then analyses were made on data provided through various sources such as the verbal protocols, student compositions and interviews. The protocols were analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively. First, L1 and L2 words in each protocol were counted and the proportion of L1 use was computed to measure the amount of L1 in L2 writing. Then, the writer's cognitive operations were categorized into five composing activities (i. e., task examining, idea generating, idea organizing, sentence forming, and process controlling) and the proportion of L1 use in each activity was calculated to show when the writer tends to rely on L1. Moreover, in order to measure the effect of L2 development on L1 use, the 16 writers were grouped according to the year they were in and both inter — and intra-group comparisons were made to see the differences in their use of L1 in L2 writing. Additionally, the paired-samples T test was employed to examine the differences in L1 use in the two writing tasks so as to determine the effect of writing tasks on L1 use.

The composition-based analysis consisted of three steps. First, the student compositions were rated; then, a correlation procedure was applied to explore the relationship between L1 use and L2 writing quality; and finally cases were selected for a closer examination of this relationship. The interview-based analysis was qualitative in nature, focusing on the categorization of various reasons for and opinions about L1 use in L2 composing.

## **Results**

The major findings of this study are summarized as follows:

(1) The L2 writing process is a bilingual event: L2 writers have two languages (i. e., L1 and L2) at their disposal when they are composing in L2. The L1 thinking occupies a considerable proportion (around 30%). The tendency of L1 occurrence varies with individual composing activities. L2 writers are more likely to rely on their L1 when they are managing their writing processes, generating and organizing ideas, whereas they rely more often on their L2 than L1 when undertaking the task-examining and sentence-forming activities.

(2) The amount of L1 use in L2 writing may vary with writing tasks and writers' L2 proficiency. More use of L1 is found in the narrative writing task than the argumentative writing. The disparity, however, results from the different types of writing prompts provided for the two tasks. The L2 prompt in the argument task leads to more use of L2 in both task-examining and idea-generating activities, while the non-linguistic pictures in the narrative writing tend to result in more use of L1 in these two activities. The effect of the writer's L2 development on L1 use is more complicated than expected. Though the proportion of L1 thinking decreases with the writer's L2 development, the extent of the decline of L1 use in individual activities varies. The use of L1 in the sentence-forming activities decreases drastically and will probably disappear as the writer's L2 develops. L1 in other activities, nevertheless, may not necessarily disappear. Some high-level L2 writers still adopt a certain amount of L1 in the idea-generating, idea-organizing and process-controlling activities.

(3) The role of L1 in L2 writing is multifaceted. L1 thinking exhibits a spectrum of functions in the L2 writing process: it is used to comprehend and comment on the writing requirement, retrieve and review conceptual and rhetorical information, trigger L2 sentences, structures and words, and consider various issues pertaining to the writing process. Effects of L1 use in various composing activities on L2 writing are also different: while L1 use interferes with the L2 production in the sentence-forming activities, it does not in the other activities. Reasons for using L1 in L2 composing are more diversified than expected: some writers have to depend on their L1 due to their limited command of L2; some with the ability to think in L2 choose to turn to their L1 for practical purposes; and others, triggered by L1 memories, revert to L1 unconsciously.

(4) L2 learners hold diversified views on L1 use in the L2 composing process. The L2 thinkers (i. e. writers thinking completely in L2) tend to see L1 thinking as an obstacle in L2 writing and believe it necessary to avoid thinking in L1 when composing in L2. The combined thinkers (i. e. writers thinking in both L1 and L2), however, hold a more tolerant view about L1 use. Although they oppose the use of L1 in the sentence-forming activities because they believe it will interfere with the L2 production, they justify L1 use in other composing activities, as they think this use of

L1 enables them to maintain a clear mind and continuous thinking throughout writing.

## **Conclusion**

The present study is of both theoretical and pedagogical values.

First of all, findings of this study enrich our knowledge of the unique features of L2 writing, thus promoting the development of L2 writing theories. Previous research (e.g. Guo & Liu 1997) has found that low — and intermediate-level L2 writers use both their L1 and L2 for cognitive operations when composing in L2. This study examines the L2 writers of relatively higher levels and confirms the bilingual nature of the L2 writing process. Based on these findings, a tentative model is proposed to account for the L2 writing process. This model contributes to the development of L2 writing theories.

Secondly, the current study helps with our understanding of the role of L1 in SLA. The traditional, product-oriented approach to the role of L1 proves inadequate in offering us a full account of how L1 influences L2 learning. With a dynamic, multidimensional perspective on the role of L1, this study explores how L1 influences L2 writing, examining its effects on both process and product levels. A multifaceted role of L1 has been revealed in L2 writing; L1 use in individual composing activities exerts different influences on the writing process and written product. Discoveries of this kind are more informative of when and where L1 facilitates/hinders L2 learning. Thirdly, this study offers useful suggestions on how to implement the think-aloud method effectively. Thinking aloud is a powerful tool for exploring mental operations, but it has received numerous criticisms since it was borrowed into SLA research for its potential intrusiveness. The current study shows that thinking aloud is an effective technique if it is implemented properly. The detailed descriptions this study has provided of how to select subjects, how to train them to think aloud, how to administer the think-aloud task, and how to control the intruding effect of this method are beneficial for other novice researchers who might consider using the think-aloud method while questioning its reliability. Moreover, the present study shows the power of combining various research techniques for exploring cognitive operations. Data provided by verbal protocols are often criticized for being incomplete. Therefore, researchers sometimes have to bring in their own judgments when analyzing the protocols, and this in turn results in subjectivity

in data analysis. This study employed observation and retrospective interviews in addition to the think-aloud method, and it shows data from these three channels are relatively complete, and this increases the objectivity in analyzing the data. In addition, the present study has some implications for L2 writing instruction. It reveals that L2 text construction is a task more laborious than expected, and limited L2 knowledge may constrain L2 writers from processing ideas and organization. Recognition of the L2 writer's difficulty with linguistic processing entails a change in the prevailing communicative-oriented L2 writing instruction, which stresses idea development while neglects linguistic concerns. It is suggested that equal attention be given to the student's idea development and language improvement. Another pedagogical issue this study enlightens is the use of L1 in the L2 classroom. Many modern teaching methods treat L2 in isolation from L1. The present study, however, challenges the complete rejection of L1 in the L2 classroom. By revealing the decline of L1 use as a gradual process, it suggests that decisions on whether to use or forbid L1 in L2 learning and teaching should be made with considerations about the learners' L2 levels. Teachers should be more tolerant with low-level L2 learners' reliance on their L1 if their L2 fails them for an effective thinking. As for high-level learners, they should be encouraged to think in L2 as much as possible if the ultimate goal for L2 learning and teaching is to achieve a native-like L2 proficiency. Furthermore, this study reveals a multifaceted role of L1 in L2 writing and this suggests that L2 learners be selective when using L1 and L2 educators generate a guideline as to the advantages and disadvantages of L1 use. Finally, it should be indicated that this study, being exploratory in nature, aims not to make generalizations but to generate hypotheses and future research interest. Future research with a longitudinal design is needed to explore the effect of L2 development on L1 use. Equally needed is exploration into the effect of writing tasks on L1 use, controlling the variable of the type of the writing prompt. So is investigation into the correlation between L1 use and L2 writing quality, with a larger sample size. Additionally, studies can be undertaken on the relationship between L2 learners' views about L1 use and their actual practices.

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