

Table 6.7 Results of the one-way ANOVA on the L2  
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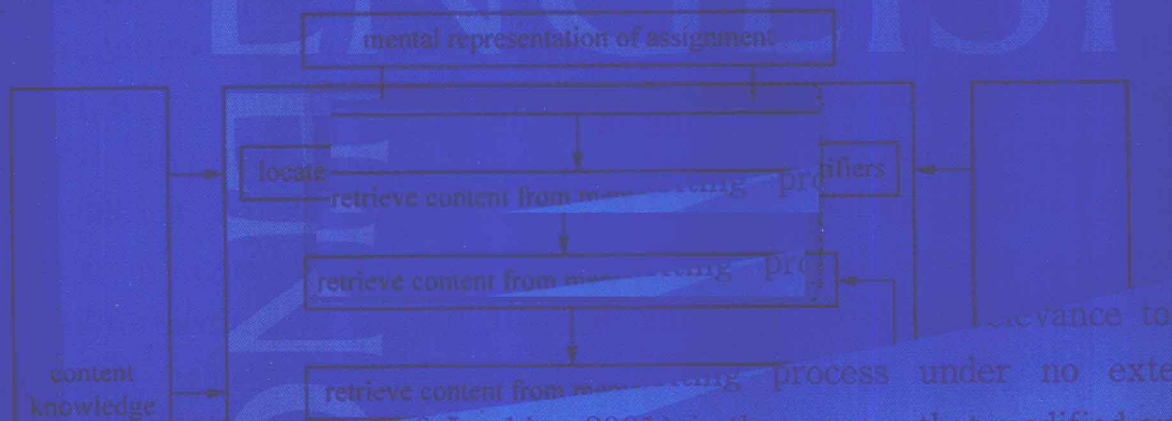
孙鑫◎著

# 英汉写作过程心理语言学研究

A PSYCHOLINGUISTIC STUDY ON ENGLISH AND CHINESE WRITING PROCESSES



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## 内 容 提 要

本书考察不同二语水平的中国高校英语专业学生的二语(英语)写作过程,并与其母语(汉语)写作过程进行对比,藉此来揭示该过程的本质。同时通过对比同一被试者的二语和母语写作过程以及不同二语水平的被试者的二语写作过程,从两个维度,即“注意”的分配和意识程度进行分析。书中运用多种数据收集技术,采用定量与定性分析相结合的手段加以描述分析,对研究二语习得写作的方法有一定的启示作用。

本书可供高等院校语言学专业的研究生、教师和二语习得研究者阅读参考。

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孙 鑫 著

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## 前言

本书以二语习得和外语教学中的热点话题——外语写作为着眼点,结合最新的研究方向,即对比具有不同二语水平但母语写作水平相同的写作者的英语和母语写作过程,以二语习得领域重要的理论和实证研究作为研究框架,对中国英语专业大学生的英语和汉语写作过程进行了深入的对比研究。

母语及二语写作研究中的经典模式认为,写作是包含在中央执行系统控制下的思考,是一个复杂的解决问题的过程。要解决问题,写作者就要运用不同的策略以便写出想要表达的内容。以母语写作理论及母语实证研究成果为基础,二语写作研究者认为具备用于解决问题的策略是写作能力的一个基本特质。由此,大量的研究着力于确定母语和二语写作过程是否有相同之处或者二语写作是否具备其独有的特点。

中国环境下英语学习者的英语写作研究近年来有较大发展,但是这些研究大多局限于对写作结果的研究,而对这一群体学习者的写作过程的少数研究与 ESL 环境下的写作研究相似,主要探讨了二语或母语在二语写作过程中的作用以及二语写作过程中都使用了哪些具体的写作策略。

这些写作研究普遍认可的是,写作这一复杂的、解决问题的本质包含了意义、语言以及修辞方面的多种限制因素的相互影响,因此可能引发对有限的注意资源的竞争。然而,到底中央执行系统是如何工作的,或者说什么成分控制这个使用策略的写作过程,却未能成为写作理论和实证研究的着眼点。事实上,“注意”在二语写作中的分配及其意识程度是二语写作乃至整个二语习得领域极少涉及的研究话题。

二语习得领域的学者普遍认为“注意”在输入信息的选择和记忆过程中起到监控作用,这方面的研究对理解写作过程有着重大意义。因为“注意”是写作原始输入和修正输入两端中不可或缺的一个环节,正是在“注意”的监控下,写作过程才导出最后的写作结果。因此,更多的写作

研究应把二语写作的心理语言过程和二语习得领域中的“注意”方面的理论相结合,以揭示写作者如何使用其注意资源以及“注意”如何影响到策略的使用。

基于此,本书考察了不同二语水平的中国高校英语专业学生的二语(英语)写作过程,并与其母语(汉语)写作过程做对比,希望以此来揭示“注意”对该过程的作用。本书通过对比被试内的二语和母语写作过程以及不同二语水平下被试间的二语写作过程,从两个维度,即“注意”的分配和意识程度进行分析。

经过一系列的严格抽样程序,最终有 18 名来自某外国语大学的英语专业学生参加了本实验。他/她们具有同等母语写作水平但不同的二语水平,反映出目前中国大学生普遍的英语学习状况。他们代表了大学英语专业学生主体,即其母语写作水平处于基本停滞状态,而二语水平和二语写作水平却可能在几年的学习过程中持续上升。实验中,研究者要求这 18 名学生分别以汉语和英语就两个相似的话题写出一篇作文。

本书运用多种数据收集技术,收集到不同类型的数据用于定性分析,其中包括:有声思维材料、研究者即时观察记录、调查报告、即时回溯性访谈和写作成品。定量分析主要是配对样本  $t$  检验、卡方分析和方差分析,用来辅助定性分析。有声思维材料经过转写、切分和编码,作为主要的数据来源。调查问卷中的回答记入数据。

对于“注意”在二语写作过程中作用的详细描述为研究写作过程提供了具体直接的证据。本书的主要发现可以归结为以下几点:

第一,写作者在母语和二语写作过程中表现出不同的注意模式:在英语写作过程中,语言方面得到最多的注意,而在汉语写作过程中,内容排在第一位。在语言方面,写作者在英语写作过程中更多地注意到语言形式,而在汉语写作过程中则更多注意到语言的意思表达。

第二,在二语写作过程中,二语水平影响到二语写作者对内容、组织结构和语言使用的注意分配。随着其二语水平的提高,写作者越来越多地注意内容,而同时减少对语言的注意。此外,随着二语水平的发展,写作者形成一种接近于其母语写作过程的注意模式。

第三,在母语和二语这两种语言的写作过程中,写作者在注意的意识程度方面表现出同样的模式,然而在内容和语言方面仍存在细微差

异。在母语写作过程中,写作者在流利写作时对内容的考虑比在二语写作过程中更加深入。在语言方面,在母语写作过程中,写作者的注意在不同意识程度上都倾向于较高的语言运用目标,即语言的得体性;然而,当用英语写作时,他们对简单的语言问题投入较低意识程度的注意,对有一定难度的语言问题则投入较高意识程度的注意。

第四,二语水平影响到二语写作过程中注意在意识程度不同水平上的分配。二语水平较高的写作者与水平较低的写作者相比能够更加流利地写作,但是当决定解决某些问题时,前者比后者运用更多的策略积极地加以解决,而不是简单地发现问题。相比之下,二语水平较低的写作者发现写作过程中有更多的问题,而采用更多的简单迅速的处理方式。然而,这些写作者同样是积极的策略使用者,尤其在解决内容和结构的问题方面更是如此。在语言使用方面,随着二语水平的提高,流利写作和采用策略解决问题的比例同时上升。

本书是在笔者的博士论文基础上修改而成的,其主要观点和研究思路具有一定的理论和实践意义。通过对二语写作过程中“注意”的描述,本研究丰富了二语习得领域里的相关研究和理论,同时,实证研究结果表明写作过程呈现出既是解决问题也是知识建构的双过程模式。这一发现对现有的以解决问题为写作过程核心的理论提出了深入研究的必要性。本书还对英语外语教学,尤其是在中国环境下的英语教学具有重要的参考意义。

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本书的完成离不开许许多多人的关心和帮助。首先要感谢的是我的博士导师俞理明教授。本书在博士论文阶段得到了导师俞理明教授的悉心指导,他的严谨治学、宽厚待人的师德奠定了本书的基础,也使得我比较顺利地完成学业。他的言传身教使我更加明确如何成为一名令人尊敬的教师。此外,我还得到了许多学者的热情无私的帮助。其中我要特别感谢多伦多大学的 Merril Swain 教授、华东师范大学邹为城教授、同济大学张济华教授、上海外国语大学梅德明教授、郑新民教授、复旦大学曲卫国教授、北京外经贸大学王立非教授、南京师范大学马广惠教授以及上海交通大学周国强教授、卫乃兴教授、王振华教授、朱正才教授等学者的答疑解惑。特别感谢参与实验的大连外国语学院的老

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由于时间和水平有限,书中疏漏与瑕疵在所难免。其中舛误,盖由笔者负责。

**孙 鑫**

大连外国语学院外国语言学及应用语言学研究基地

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# Chapter 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Context of the problem

Most second language instructors recognize the complexities involved in acquiring native-like writing competency in a second language, given the similar difficulties related to the development of L1 writing competency (Whalen & Ménard, 1995). But L2 writing is a much more demanding task for a majority of ESL/EFL (English as Second Language/English as foreign Language) students at all levels because of various additive variables from the cognitive aspect such as a lack of an appropriate composing process, the affective aspect such as negative experiences from instruction and evaluation of writing (Lee, 2005), and linguistic constraint of L2 proficiency (Kroll, 2003).

Classic models dominating both L1 and L2 writing studies (e.g. Flower & Hayes, 1981; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987; Kellogg, 1996) regard writing as a complex and recursive problem-solving process, which involves thinking under the monitoring of the central executive control. In this problem-solving process, writers are assumed to manipulate the subprocesses and their corresponding mental representations by using various strategies to work out what one wants to achieve with the text and then decide how to do it step by step. As writing is considered a problem-solving activity, these models regard problem-solving strategies as the essential feature of writing expertise.

Research on L2 writing process has developed on the basis of theories and studies on L1 writing process. Accordingly, a majority of empirical studies on L2 writing process attempt to discover the strategies that good and/or poor L2 writers employ (Cumming, 1989; Vann & Abraham, 1990), compare the different strategies used by skilled or unskilled L2 writers (Raimes, 1985; Pennington & So, 1993) or by L1 and L2 writers (Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Whalen & Ménard, 1995), hoping to reveal the similarities and/or differences between the writing processes of the two languages.

Even though the endeavor as to revealing strategy used in writing process is admittedly crucial for understanding the nature of writing, in comparison with the relatively abundant findings on this focus, the central executive or monitor component that supervises and controls the on-line scheduling of them has not received much attention. Questions as to how the central executive monitors the writing process, and what factors influence the monitoring, are beyond the interest of these models and the overwhelming body of empirical studies. To put it another way, they leave some major questions unanswered, for example, that of what happens in the thinking process that causes the writer to determine the use of certain strategies.

In cognitive psychology, it is widely acknowledged that the central executive functions in the thinking process by monitoring the allocation of attentional resources. Paying attention means selectively concentrating on one aspect of the environment while ignoring other things. Relating attention to the writing process, we may suggest that the problem-solving process involves the writer's choice of selecting what aspects of writing to be attended to and how they are to be dealt with. Therefore, one step before the use of strategies is the writer's allocation of attention. However, the role of attention in both L1 and L2 writing processes has been a neglected area of investigation. Therefore, more studies are called for to relate the psycholinguistic process of L2 writing with theories of attention in SLA in order to reveal how writers operate their attentional resources and how their attention causes the use of strategies.

Most of the insights derived from the previous research on L2 writing have been drawn in a context of ESL writers; it is doubtful whether the same will apply in an EFL situation (e. g. Valdes, *et al.*, 1992). One of the differences between ESL and EFL contexts is the different writing instruction under each context. Several studies have proposed the important influence of writing instruction and previous writing experience on L2 writing (Mohan & Lo, 1985; Sasaki & Hirose, 1996; Alfonal, 2003). It is known that ESL learners live and study under the same cultural and educational system as native speakers, so their instructional environment tends to be informal. In contrast, an EFL learner learns how to write in a foreign language mostly in a formal educational context, where writing instruction may be influenced by factors of the writer's native language writing or culture.

Unlike the relatively large body of studies on Chinese EFL writers from the

perspective of written products (e.g. Zh Li, 2008; G Ma, 2002, 2004; L Wang, 2004; G Yin, 1999), the writing process of Chinese EFL writers has been much less investigated. The extant studies have focused on the use of the mother tongue in the EFL writing process (e.g. W Wang, 2004), the writing strategies and behaviors during the L2 writing process (Q Wen & C Guo, 1998; J Wang, 2005; W He, 2007), and a few case studies of comparison of the general writing processes in L1 and L2 (Arndt, 1987; X Sun & Y Zhao, 2008). So far, there has been no comprehensive research on a direct comparison of Chinese EFL writers' L1 and L2 writing processes with consideration of their previous writing experiences and instructional background in the two languages.

It is commonly believed that under the influence of Chinese writing instruction, Chinese students tend to regard beauty of idea-expression in their L2 writing as their goal of writing; thus, they make endeavor on the use of language, adopt abundant famous quotes or *verses* from classical poems, and write with eye-catching styles. It is also argued that writing in certain languages such as Chinese stresses on the revealing of the writer's own emotions instead of objective presentation of one's opinions, causing inadequate attention to audience. Additionally, the English language instruction at the tertiary level is featured with regular nationwide examinations that aim to evaluate the students' development of general English proficiency. These influential examinations may cause the students to form a belief about English writing as a manifestation of their English proficiency. Therefore, they look upon an error-free piece of writing as a sign of good quality. Most importantly, Chinese writing is not a compulsory course for most college students. Even in some universities which offer the course in the curricula, it is only oriented to first-year college students, and the teaching is always in lecture form which makes it impossible for students to practice Chinese writing under the instruction of teachers. This situation has caused certain stagnancy and even a slight downward tendency of the students' writing ability in Chinese (X Sun & L Xiang, 2007). Since it is a widely accepted conception that writing expertise is a central cognitive factor that first develops in L1 writing and can be transferred to L2 writing (Cumming, 1989), it necessitates research on the dynamic relationship between L1 and L2 writing as a result of instructional background in both languages. However, to the best knowledge of the researcher of the present study, there has been no study focusing explicitly on this important issue.

The different ESL and EFL contexts might also trigger differences in L2 writing processes. In an ESL context, where English is the native and dominant language used in and out of school, English proficiency is attached with much more importance in the L2 writer's life and study; whereas in an EFL context, the L2 writer may not have full access to English resources, and the opportunities of practicing the target language in real communication are very rare. Considering that the overall English level that EFL students attain may be lower, cross-linguistic differences may exert more influence on EFL writing than they seem to do on ESL writing. In fact, some contradictory findings in empirical studies (e.g. Sasaki & Hirose, 1996 *vs.* Cumming, 1989) have made the issue more complex, and thus, more research as to the influence of L2 proficiency on L2 writing process is needed.

The distance of English and the mother tongue may also attribute to the importance of L2 proficiency over L2 writing process. In most studies on L2 writing process, the subjects' L1 and L2 (mostly French, Spanish, Dutch as L1 and English as L2) mostly belong to the same language family, for example, the Indo-European family; therefore, the two languages share a similar alphabetic system and certain grammatical rules. The writers from those L1 backgrounds may find L2 proficiency less influential to their L2 writing. In contrast, fewer studies have been conducted by writers with an L1 background that is far from the target language, for instance, Chinese. As a member of the Sino-Tibetan language family, Chinese shows greater difference from English, for example, in writing system and tense markers. Therefore, it is interesting to see if L2 proficiency might exert greater influence over L2 writing for the writer with a much distinct L1.

In fact, even though there is a rising tendency of research on Chinese EFL learners' English writing process, voices from those scholars are still heard as to the complexities and difficulties in L2 writing. Then, more instead of fewer questions are often asked: what is the Chinese students' English writing process like after all? What internal operating mechanism functions in their writing performance? What factors influence the writing process? And how much influence do their previous experiences and instruction have on L1 and L2 writing? ... Answers to these questions deserve exploration so as to understand the nature of L2 writing and its relationship with some major factors, such as L1 writing and L2 proficiency.

## 1.2 Purpose and research questions

In an effort to contribute to an understanding of internal processing in L2 writing, the present study attempts to identify and analyze how L2 learners manage their attentional resources in monitoring their writing process in relation to L1 writing process and L2 proficiency. By systematically applying the concept of attention to writing, the study attempts to explore the nature, specificity and complexity of L2 writing. This research involves eighteen adult Chinese EFL writers with distinctly different levels of English proficiency but with the same level of Chinese writing ability. Two dimensions of attentional behaviors during writing process are examined: allocation of attention to different aspects of writing and degree of awareness in attention paid to these aspects of writing.

Specifically, the present study addresses the following questions:

1. How do L1 writing ability and L2 proficiency bear on the L2 writing ability of the participants with the same competence in L1 writing?
2. Does the allocation of attention vary with the language of the task assignment, that is, Chinese and English?
3. How is attention allocated in the English writing process by the English majors at different L2 proficiency levels in China?
4. Does the degree of awareness in attention vary with the language of the task assignment, that is, English and Chinese?
5. What is the degree of awareness in attention to the English writing process of these English majors with varying L2 proficiency?

Answers to the first research question might present a bird's-eye view of the relations of L2 writing to L1 writing and L2 proficiency from the perspective of written product. It is hoped that under the general understanding of their relationship, specific questions as to the writing process will be better addressed in the following sections of this book. Research questions 2 and 3 deal with the attentional allocation over specific aspects of writing in L2 writing process, in comparison with L1 writing process and among different L2 proficiency groups. The last major part of research questions, Question 4 and 5, address the degree of awareness in attention in L2 writing process, also in comparison with L1 writing process and among different L2 proficiency groups.

### 1.3 Significance of the study

The present study investigates the role of the L2 writer's attentional resources in the central executive on monitoring the writing process. It is the first systematical and comprehensive empirical study that applies the key terms of attention and awareness in SLA to L2 writing. In addition, by comparing the writing processes of Chinese and English of the same writer and by comparing the English writing process of Chinese writers at different L2 proficiency levels, the study attempts to offer direct and detailed evidence as to L2 writing process in relation to the crucial constraining factors, that is, L1 writing ability and L2 proficiency.

Adopting a psychological approach to the investigation of L2 writing has potential for illuminating two areas of second language acquisition research. First, it can advance our knowledge of the psycholinguistic processes of L2 written production and provide some evidence for the significance of attention in SLA from the perspective of written output. Studies on L2 acquisition have gone from input (e.g. Krashen, 1985), to intake (e.g. Schmidt, 1990), and to output (e.g. Swain, 1985; Swain & Lapkin, 1995). The role of attention (and "noticing" in Schmidt's term) is to show the relationship between intake and output, by way of which the nature of language acquisition can be clarified. Research on attention/noticing in L2 acquisition has focused largely on input, whereas it is not just intake that stems from an input source that can become part of the learning process, but also intake generated in output (Swain, 1985) that is worthy of study for L2 acquisition.

As L2 acquisition in its broad sense includes both language learning and language use/production, research is also needed into the way attention operates in L2 learning and performance. But most of the extant studies have dealt with the role of attention in the learning area, much fewer in the language performance aspect. Since the function of attention in input has been acknowledged in the SLA field, the study of it in language use, especially in L2 writing, should yield peculiar contribution to it. Given the great paucity of relevant studies, the present study makes an attempt to uncover the role of attention in monitoring the L2 writing process. Hopefully, the results of the study will bring some new light to



the study of attention in L2 acquisition.

The study of the role of attention in the L2 writing process can also contribute to the discovery of the nature of writing, and to deepening the understanding of extant theories of writing through the integration of writing processing with cognitive theories of attention and awareness in SLA. Different from most studies on L2 writing process which describe occurrences based on raw data without psychological or cognitive foundations, the present study attempts to find out the complexity and specificity of L2 writing and the nature of writing through investigating the role of attention in the writing process.

Writing being a strongly integrative activity, understanding how writers compose a text consists not only in descriptions of the process underlying written production but also in explaining how their activation is orchestrated and monitored in the cognitive system, whose main characteristic is its limited capacity in simultaneously processing information of different aspects of writing. In other words, one objective of writing research is to analyze the on-line management of working memory characterized by a limited capacity of attentional resources.

As suggested by Olive (2004, p. 35):

... taking into account the great number of processes required to compose a text and the limited capacity of working memory, the role of working memory in written production can be investigated by studying the attentional and management functions of the central executive.

It remains an issue rarely touched upon as to how attention is allocated in monitoring L2 writing, and very little is known about the underlying psycholinguistic, pedagogical, and developmental aspects of the findings obtained in previous studies. Thus, the aim of the present study is to examine how L2 writers who are at the same level of L1 writing competence but at various levels of L2 proficiency manage their attentional resources in monitoring for grammatical and lexical accuracy, the informational content of their message, and the contextual features of discourse. It is hoped that the study will contribute to expanding or reassessing previous understandings of perennial issues in process-oriented writing studies.

The study is also of significance in pedagogy. English writing instruction