

Comparison of Two Writing Processes:

Direct versus Translated Composition

COMPARAISON DES DEUX PROCESSUS D'ECRITURE :

COMPOSITION DIRECT VERSUS COMPOSITION TRADUITE

英語寫作中英語構思法與漢語翻譯法對比研究

Zhai Lifang

翟立芳

Received 20 December 2007; accepted 15 February 2008

Abstract: To explore the results of two different composing processes, one writing directly in English and the other writing first in Chinese and then translating into English, this study concerns itself with the essays resulting from the two composing processes performed by participants with different levels of proficiency. The results show that the quality the compositions is significantly influenced by the writing modes and this vary with students' L2 proficiency. The lower-level learners benefit most from the translated writing, whereas there is no significant difference for the higher-level learners.

Key words: L2 writing, L1 influence, L2 proficiency, direct writing, translated writing

Résumé: Pour explorer les résultats des deux processus de composition différents, l'un consistant à écrire directement et l'autre à écrire d'abord en chinois et puis traduire en anglais, cette étude traite les essais résultant des deux processus de composition réalisés par des participants de différents niveaux. Les résultats montrent que la qualité de composition est largement influencée par le modèle d'écriture et que cela varie d'après le niveau de maîtrise de L2 des étudiants. Les apprenants de bas niveau bénéficient généralement de l'écriture traduite tandis qu'il n'y pas de différences significatives pour les étudiants de haut niveau.

Mots-Clés: écriture en L2, influence de L1, maîtrise de L2, écriture directe, écriture traduite

摘要: 本文採用寫作測試和問卷的方法，旨在研究受試者的英語寫作品質在直接用英語構思寫作和母語翻譯寫作的兩種模式下是否存在顯著差異。分析結果表明寫作品質受寫作模式顯著影響，並且不同水準學生的受影響程度不同。母語翻譯寫作模式對低水準學生有很大幫助，但高水準學生在兩種模式下產出的作文並沒有明顯差異。

關鍵詞: 二語寫作；母語影響；二語水準；英語構思寫作；母語翻譯寫作

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the past decades, the role of the first language (L1) in second language writing (L2) has been a heated topic. Early studies mainly explored L1 influence over L2 writing on the product level, and the principal form of the impact is the negative transfer of the L1 in rhetorical patterns, structures and vocabularies. However, from the 1980s increasing studies began to pay attention to the L2 writing process. The shift from a product to a process orientation has drawn attention to the more subtle and non-obvious effects of L1 on L2

development. So although the use of L1 by L2 learners has long been criticized primarily due to L1 interference, more positive role of L1 in L2 writing has begun to be acknowledged. The present study aims to investigate the influence of L1 on L2 writing from the perspective of full L1 translation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Empirical studies of L1 use/thinking on L2 essay writing

Serious research interested in L1 use and its role in L2 writing began perhaps with Lay. Lay (1982) found that her Chinese subjects tended to switch to their first language when writing about a topic studied or acquired in their first language background. She also reported that their first language served as an aid but not a hindrance to writing, since her subjects used Chinese when they were stuck in English to find a key word, for instance.

Inspired by Lay's discoveries, many studies were conducted by researchers, attempting to show when and how L1 was used by writers at different levels in L2 writing (Cumming, 1989; Uzawa & Cumming, 1989; Guo & Liu, 1997; Wang & Wen, 2002). Cumming (1989) reported that inexperienced French ESL writers use their first language to generate content, and expert writers, in contrast, use translation not just to generate content but to verify appropriate word choice. In this situation, these writers seem to know that their first language will enhance their writing in English.

Another study on ten Anglo-Canadian students learning Japanese by Uzawa and Cumming (1989) showed that eight learners used English extensively to generate ideas, search for topics, develop concepts, and organize information when composing an essay in Japanese. Six of these students remarked that they actually wrote out rough drafts or notes in English before transposing them into Japanese. Two students said that they prepared their ideas mentally in English before writing them directly in Japanese.

Two more studies at home (Guo & Liu, 1997; Wang & Wen, 2002) also pushed forward the understanding of L1 use and its role in the L2 writing process. Guo and Liu (1997) examined the amount of and the reason for L1 use in L2 students' thinking procedures during L2 writing. The quantitative analysis of the students' think-aloud protocols revealed a large amount of L1 use and the qualitative protocol analysis identified the major functions the L1 thinking had in logic reasoning and in target language output.

As to how L1 use is affected by L2 proficiency and writing tasks, a study of 16 Chinese English majors (Wang & Wen, 2002) indicated that the participants with low English proficiency tended to translate directly from L1 into L2 throughout their L2 composing processes, whereas the higher-level learners appeared to use their L1 strategically for idea-generating and lexical-searching purposes.

2.2 Empirical studies of translating L1 essay into the L2

Among the bulk of the published studies concerning strategies of L1 thinking in L2 writing and about mental translation from the L1 at the time of L2 writing, there are only a few studies that have explored strategies involved in producing a L2 essay by full translation from a draft written in the L1. These studies have suggested that translating may be beneficial in terms of organization and complexity to the target language essays, especially for students at the lower level of proficiency.

The first comprehensive research involving both translated and direct writing was initiated by Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992). They found that in terms of quality of content, organization, and style, lower-level writers tended to benefit from translation, whereas higher-level writers did not benefit much. Overall, syntactic complexity was greater in translations than in direct writings. In terms of error frequency, higher-level students tended to make more errors that interfered with intended meaning in translation than in direct writing, but lower-level students did not show any difference.

However, an effort at replicating the Kobayashi and Rinnert's study with Arab learners of English (Ali, 1996) produced results that favored direct writing in English rather than translation from Arabic.

Uzawa (1996) conducted a similar study by comparing second language learners' L1 writing, L2 writing, and translation from L1 into L2. He noted that it was students with lower proficiency who benefited most from the translation task. They were forced to use words and expressions slightly beyond their levels when they translated—consistent with Swain's (1985) pushed output hypothesis that the learner needs to have chances to produce words, expressions, and syntax that are a little higher than the learner's present level ("i+1 level output") in order to learn and improve the second language.

Another study was conducted by Cohen and Brook-Carson in 2001 with a much more complex language background. The learners were from different language background, and it turned out that English-speaking writers performed differently from Spanish-speaking writers across the two modes of writing and the former did better in the direct writing than the latter. Two-thirds of the students did better on the direct writing task across all rating scales; one-third, better on the translated task.

Among all those L2 writing studies, there are only a few having explored the effects of full translation of a draft written in L1 on producing a L2 essay (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001). Though inconsistent are their conclusions, there is still evidence indicating that selective translation of the native language may play a positive role for some, if not many, language learners in the writing production.

Among the studies discussed above, some of them did not take the topic effect into consideration, and some of them did not take the proficiency level into consideration, and few of them have taken the gender influence on writing into account.

Furthermore, when talking about the effects of Chinese on English writing, most studies at home mainly focused on analyzing errors which appeared to be a result of negative transfer from Chinese or defining some functions of Chinese and calculating the amount of Chinese using at the time of English writing by means of verbal report or thinking-aloud. There are few having addressed the issue from the perspective of full translation from a rough Chinese draft.

Against such a background and inspired by the related studies, the present research tries to examine what results will be when translation approach is purposely adopted in English writing for Chinese students who learn English as a foreign language, in the hope of searching for ways to facilitate students' writing process, offering ways to enhance their writing, and shedding light on the pedagogy for English writing instruction in China. More specifically, the study addresses the following two research questions:

1st. Is the quality of the compositions significantly influenced by the writing modes (writing directly in English or translating from a Chinese draft)? Does this vary with students' L2 proficiency?

2nd. What do students consider to be the respective advantages and disadvantages of the direct and the translated writing modes?

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Participants

There are 12 participants in the current pilot study, with 4 lower-level learners (Group A), 4 intermediate-level learners (Group B), and 4 higher-level learners (Group C). Their proficiency levels are roughly classified according to their grade and formal years of English learning. The lower-level learners are 4 junior middle school students ranging from 15 to 16 in their third grade, with approximately 6 years of English learning in or out of school. The intermediate-level learners are 4 freshmen who major in chemical engineering in Beijing Institute of Technology (BIT) ranging from 20 to 22. All of them started learning English from primary school, therefore, they have 9 years of contact with English as a foreign language. The 4 higher-level learners are at their second year of post-graduate program in Beijing Foreign Studies University from age of 24 to 29. They are all English majors and have about 12-year experience of English learning. In each level, there are 2 males and 2 females. Different from previous study, this study took gender differences into consideration since males and females may have different cognitive abilities on writing. The even number of male and female can eliminate the effect of gender on writing. The overview of the participants' information is provided in the following table.

Table 1 General Demographic Information of the Participants

Category Group	English proficiency	Years of English learning	Number		Age
			Male	Female	
Group A	Lower-level	6	2	2	15-16
Group B	Intermediate-level	9	2	2	20-22
Group C	Higher-level	12	2	2	24-29

3.2 Design

To study the differences in the quality of students' written essays, a 2×3×3 design (composing process [translated writing vs. direct writing] × proficiency level [lower vs. intermediate vs. higher] × writing component [content, organization and style]) was adopted. In the present study, the process and proficiency factors operated as independent variables, and the holistic rating score for each component of writing was treated as a dependent variable in the analysis.

3.3 Instrumentation and data collection

There are three instruments employed in the current study: pre-writing questionnaire, writing tasks, and post-writing questionnaires.

3.3.1 Pre-writing questionnaire

To ensure the feasibility of the research, a pre-writing questionnaire was specially designed. The survey was used to obtain demographic information on the students' age, gender, and years of English study, their own assessment of their English proficiency, writing habits and their experience of the use of L1 (Chinese) in L2 (English) writing (see Appendix 1).

3.3.2 Writing task

Though the previous studies used two topics for the writing task, the participants were asked to write on one topic directly in the target language and the other through translation (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001). As a result, the quality of the composition may be different due to the interweaving effects of different writing modes and different topics.

In order to eliminate the topic effect, the author of this study also adopted two topics but in a different way of assigning the writing tasks. On the first day, half of the participants in each group wrote on the first topic directly in English, and the other half wrote through Chinese translation. On the second day, they reversed the order of their writing modes, with the first half wrote through translation, and the second half wrote directly in English on the second topic. For example, the writing tasks for the lower-level learners in Group A were assigned in the following way (see Table 2). The writing task assignments for the intermediate and higher-level learners are similar to that of the lower-level learners. The experiments on three groups of learners were conducted on six different days.

Table 2 Writing Task Assignment for Participants in Group A

Topics \ Writing modes	Direct writing mode	Translated writing mode
Compare primary school life and middle school life	M _{A1} , F _{A1}	M _{A2} , F _{A2}
Compare the life of your parents and yourself	M _{A2} , F _{A2}	M _{A1} , F _{A1}

*M_{A1}, F_{A1}, M_{A2}, and F_{A2} stand for the 4 lower-level participants in Group A. M=male, F=female.

As summarized by Silva's (1993) survey, limiting the writing time to 30-60 minutes is common in most related studies. Participants in this study were asked to write on each topic in a timed 40-minute session. As to the writing tasks, in one setting, they wrote first in the L1 (15 minutes) and then translated the essay into English (25 minutes). In the other setting, they wrote on the topic exclusively in English (30 minutes), with the announced time for revision (10 minutes). The time limits for the various activities were determined on the basis of the pilot writing by the author myself and a middle school student who was not included in the present study. The rationale for providing revision time in the direct writing mode was to offset the advantage that may have accrued in the translated writing mode from writing the essay twice, once in the L1 and the other time in the target language. Dictionary use was not allowed in the task and both the final version of the essays and the draft were requested to be handed in.

The selected topics for the present research took several factors into consideration: (1) styles of the topics; (2) students' familiarity to the topics; (3) cultural neutrality of the topics. Based on Cumming's (1989) comment that the level of cognitive demand (e.g. argumentation vs. narration) affects the learner's L2 writing performance. The data collected through pre-writing questionnaire show that narration and exposition are most practiced by lower-level learners,

exposition by intermediate-level learners, and argumentation by higher-level learners. Taking the learners' English proficiency into account, the author devised exposition writing tasks for lower-level learners and intermediate learners, and argumentation writing tasks for higher-level learners, and these two kinds of writing were expected to provoke personal opinions requiring a certain level of target language complexity. The two topics were similar for each group, so the level of cognitive demand in the two writing tasks seemed equivalent.

Furthermore, before the two topics were used, the author held a thorough discussion with the teacher who taught those participants to make sure that they never used such topics in usual exercises and the topics were new to students (see Appendix 4).

Lastly, as indicated and proved in many studies on L2 writing, participants tended to rely more on their L1 if the topic was culture-specific (Krapels, 1991). The topics for the present study were chosen on the ground that they are neutral in culture, thus minimizing the possible cross-culture influence on the writing performance of the participants and consequently the results of the study.

3.3.3 Post-writing questionnaires

Two post-writing questionnaires were designed in this study to elicit students' perceptions about the role of L1 in L2 writing and their attitudes towards the direct and translated modes of writing. For the direct writing mode, some questions were raised to elicit students' perception about difficulties of English writing, their opinions about the role of L1 in L2 writing and learning. For the translated writing mode, questions concerned not only perceptions about translated writing mode but also a comparison between direct and translated writing modes (see Appendix 2 and 3). The post-writing questionnaires were done within 10 minutes immediately after they have completed the second writing task.

The instruction for all the writing tasks was in English, but the researcher explained all the requirements in Chinese before the participants wrote on the topics and they were allowed to ask any question in the process of writing. The questionnaires were all in English too, but any question could be raised before and during the completion of the questionnaires to make sure all the question items were well understood.

3.4 Coding

The 24 English essays (12 written directly in English and 12 written first in Chinese and then translated into English) were rated for three major components of the writing: (1) content, (2) organization and (3) style (language use). The ratings consisted of holistic judgments on a 5-point scale (max=5, min=1) for 6 analytical subcomponents, making up the three major components (1) content: specifics of content and idea

development; (2) organization: logical sequence and clarity of point; and (3) style: variety of vocabulary and sentences. The coding criteria was borrowed from Kobayashi & Rinnert (1992) and modified for the purpose of this study. Appendix 5 contains the criteria applied in evaluating each subcomponent.

All 24 English compositions were scored by two researchers (the author and a co-researcher majoring in applied linguistics) after training with the 5-point scale. The criteria stated in Appendix 5 stand for the highest score requirement. The average scores of two raters on each subcomponent were used for statistical calculation. Using Pearson correlation coefficients, inter-rater reliability for the two raters on content, organization and

style in the two writing modes is shown in the following table: that is 0.82, 0.89 for content, 0.79, 0.82 for organization, and 0.96, 0.97 for style. So the reliability of the essay ratings of the two raters was excellent.

4. DISCUSSION

4.1 Proficiency level and the quality of the writing

Table 3 Inter-rater Reliability for Scoring of the Essays

Rater A & Rater B	Direct writing mode	Translated writing mode
Content	0.82*	0.89
Organization	0.79	0.82
Style	0.96	0.97

*Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 4 Means of Dependent Measures for the Three Groups (Content, Organization and Style)

Proficiency	Means of direct writing mode			Means of translated writing mode		
	C	O	S	C	O	S
Higher	3.53	3.59	3.86	3.71	3.72	3.35
Intermediate	2.87	3.01	2.67	3.29	3.20	3.27
Lower	2.17	2.39	2.15	2.86	2.82	2.99
	Total mean=2.79			Total mean=3.19		

*C=content, O=organization, S=style; maximum=5, minimum=1 for each subcomponent

The two major factors of composing process and proficiency level were found to affect the quality of the writing. Overall, translations were rated significantly higher than direct compositions (total mean scores: 2.79 for direct composition and 3.19 for translated composition), with higher scores for each of the three subcomponents. As shown in Table 3, this tendency was particularly strong with the lower-level group, which showed significant increases in the translation scores: 14%, 9%, 17% points higher for content, organization and style, respectively. In relation to proficiency level, higher-level participants outscored lower-level and intermediate participants in the two composing processes. The higher group's score average 60% or above in every category of content, organization, and style, as opposed to the lower-level students' writing scores in the 40% and 50% range for direct writing and translation, respectively. The intermediate-level participants lied in between.

However, there is one exception that the style of direct writing was rated better than translated writing in the higher group. This result is due to their high level of proficiency. They can think and write directly in the

target language after years of training. The translation mode may lead them to word by word translation which exert a negative influence on their style.

4.2 Composing process and the quality of the writing

To further explore the effects of composing process on writing quality, 6 subcomponents writing quality were examined in relation to writing mode (see Table 5).

Table 5 Means of Dependent Measures (Content, Organization and Style)

	Mean	Number of essays
Content (D)	2.86	12
Content (T)	2.95	12
Organization (D)	2.80	12
Organization (T)	3.25	12
Style (D)	2.72	12
Style (T)	3.37	12

*D=direct writing, T=translated writing

Students showed significant improvement in terms of variety of sentences, logical sequence, clarity of ideas, and to a lesser degree, ideas development and specifics of content.

As we can see that students as a group got the most significant improvement in the style of writing in the form of variety of sentences. The reason is that in the translated writing, students were free from the cognitive activities such as generating and organizing ideas, and they were able to concentrate on linguistic activities, stretching their linguistic levels to some extent, while in the direct writing, they could only use syntax they knew very well or which were readily accessible to them. The case is especially true for lower-level learners. The finding is consistent with the result got from studies made by Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) and Uzawa (1996).

Contrary to the study made by Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992), in which participants did significantly better in translation in terms of sophisticated vocabulary use, no better vocabulary use was found in the present study. In fact, the mean score of translated writing was lower than that of direct writing, though no significant difference was found. The reason may be attributed to the different procedure and writing time. In the Kobayashi and Rinnert's study, the students were given an hour of class time to write each of two essays, then on a third day they were given another hour to translate the Japanese version into English. Thus this procedure gave students ample time to assure that their translated essays were of the highest quality writing they could produce. However, the present study only gave altogether 40 minutes for participants to write a Chinese version first and then translate into English. Furthermore, no dictionary was allowed to be used. As a result, the participants in the present study may have the problem of finding pleasant equivalents in the target language under the time pressure, and sometimes they omitted the complex and beautiful wordings in Chinese to finish their writing in English. From another point of view, this result just again reveals that the insufficiency of vocabulary is a big headache for Chinese learners of English, which has been found by other researchers (e.g., Zhang, 1995). And this problem also had been confirmed by the answers in the questionnaire that the biggest difficulty for them to translate is to find the appropriate English equivalents for words in their essays.

4.3 Questionnaires responses

As to which writing mode is much easier for them to complete an English composition, students' perceptions overwhelmingly favored direct writing (75% versus 25%). Reasons given to explain the relative ease for direct writing focus mainly on the limited time to

complete the translation into English, the difficulty of translation and the use of familiar words and structures and simpler ideas in direct writing. Reasons given to explain the relative ease for translation include the notions that ideas are easier to develop, thoughts and opinions can be better expressed and more clearly. Some few respond that it has become a habit for them to write a Chinese draft first and then translate into English owing to their limited writing ability and underdeveloped linguistic skills.

When asked about the relative advantages and disadvantages of both writing modes, all of them agree that direct writing could help them cultivate the sense of language and form a habit of English thinking, while translated writing mode can help them think the ideas clearer and deeper and have a great number of ideas. However, disadvantages of two writing modes are also noticeable, namely, direct English writing may limited their ideas, cause them to use familiar and simpler words and phrases in writing, while translated writing mode is too time-consuming and it is impossible to first write a Chinese draft and then translate into English under time-pressure. According to the researcher's observation, one participant did not finish his Chinese writing and began to write directly in English due to the time limit. What is more, many are afraid that writing first in Chinese will make them rely on Chinese more, and they will easily fall into word for word translation if they have not enough translation skills.

With respect to whether they use Chinese and why they have turned to Chinese in direct writing, all students answered "yes" and their reasons mainly focused on organizing the whole passage, collecting ideas and choosing words. These answers just concord with the reported difficulties they have when writing directly in English, namely, having difficulty to carry ideas on and finding the appropriate words.

5. CONCLUSION

To explore the results of two different composing processes, one writing directly in English and the other writing first in Chinese and then translating into English, this study concerns itself with the essays resulting from the two composing processes performed by participants with different levels of proficiency. The results show that the quality the compositions is significantly influenced by the writing modes and this vary with students' L2 proficiency. The lower-level learners benefit most from the translated writing, whereas there is no significant difference for the higher-level learners.

Responses to questionnaires show that though most students strongly support the direct wiring, and they have many difficulties at both lexical and discourse level in English writing. To overcome those difficulties they revert to Chinese for help from time to time.

Despite that fact that translation may be time-consuming and undoubtedly harmful to language learning in the long term, they still thought of translation as an effective means to practice English essay writing and help English learning as well as enlarge vocabulary and master the grammatical structures if there would be the help of dictionaries and other possible references and helps.

6. LIMITATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

There are two limitations of the present study: sample size and the data collecting method. First, this study is a pilot study, so the sample size is quite small due to the limited time and ability, thus the findings got in the

research cannot be a general conclusion. In the future study a larger student sample could be used to testify the conclusion. Second, the present study only collected data through written compositions and questionnaires. Though all the subjects have been told to think directly in English and the draft were collected to ensure the way of composing, the possibility that they cannot or didn't perform the task as instructed cannot be fully eliminated. And actually the questionnaire show that they did turned to Chinese when required to write directly in English. So in the future studies, verbal data could be collected from students to see their control of language use in order to better describe the writing performance. Though the L1 drafts were collected, they were not carefully evaluated due to the limited time. For future research, evaluation of the original Chinese essays can be done to determine if there is a correlation between first and second language writing abilities and how such correlation might interact with composing process.

REFERENCES

- Ali, N. H. (1996). Translation versus direct composition: Effects of first language on second language Arab writers. Unpublished M.A. thesis. University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.
- Brooks, A. W. (1996). An examination of native language processing in foreign language writing'. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. Vanderbilt University, Nashville.
- Cohen, A. D., & Brooks-Carson, A. (2001). 'Research on direct versus translated writing: Students' strategies and their results', *The Modern Language Journal* 85: 169-188.
- Cumming, A. (1989). 'Writing expertise and second language proficiency', *Language Learning* 39: 81-141.
- Guo, C., & Liu, F. (1997). 'A dynamic research into L1 influence on L2 writing', *Modern Foreign Languages* 4: 30-38.
- Kobayashi, H., & Rinnert, C. (1992). 'Effects of first language on second language writing: Translation versus direct composition', *Language Learning* 42(2): 183-215.
- Krapels, A. R. (1991). 'An overview of second language writing process research'. In Kroll, B. (Ed.), *Second Language Writing: Research Insights for the Classroom* (pp. 24-36). New York: Cambridge University Press.
- Lay, N. (1982). 'Composing process of adult ESL learners: A case study', *TESOL Quarterly* 16: 406-407.
- Sliva, T. (1993). 'Toward an understanding of the distinct nature of L2 writing: ESL research and its implications', *TESOL Quarterly* 27(4): 657-677.
- Swain, M. (1985). 'Communicative competence: Some roles of comprehensible input and comprehensible output in its development'. In Gass, S., & Madden, C. (Eds.), *Input in Second Language Acquisition* (pp. 235-256). New York: Newbury House.
- Uzawa, K. (1996). 'Second language learners' processes of L1 writing, L2 writing, and translation from L1 into L2', *Journal of Second Language Writing* 5(3): 271-294.
- Uzawa, K., & Cumming, A. (1989). 'Writing strategies in Japanese as a foreign language: Lowering or keeping up the standards', *The Canadian Modern Language Review* 46: 178-194.
- Wang, W., & Wen, Q. (2002). 'L1 use in the L2 composing process: An exploratory study of 16 Chinese EFL writers', *Journal of Second Language Writing* 11(3): 225-246.
- Zhang, Z. (1995). 'Major issues in the teaching of English writing in China', *Foreign Language Teaching and Research* 4: 43-49.

APPENDIX 1

PRE-WRITING QUESTIONNAIRE

This survey is only for the research's purpose. All the information you provide will be highly confidential and shall not be disclosed to the third person without your permission. Thank you very much for your efforts.

1. Name:
2. Gender: M __ F
3. Grade: _____ Age:
4. Years of formal English study
5. Please indicate the normal score you have received in the past exams:
6. How do you rate yourself concerning your English proficiency?
(A) Excellent (B) Very good (C) Good (D) Fair (E) Poor
7. How do you usually plot an English composition?
(A) In English in the whole process
(B) In Chinese, then translate into English
(C) English alternates with Chinese, but Chinese is preferred if the English expression is not accessible
(D) Other methods _____ (please write here)
8. Do you think that translation is inevitable in English writing?
(A) Yes (B) No
9. If yes, what percentage of your writing may contain translation?
(A) 100% (B) 50% + (C) 50% (D) 50% - (E) 0
10. What kinds of essays have you written (narration, exposition and argumentation)? Which kind is the most practiced? Please name a few topics of the compositions that you have written. (You can answer in Chinese if you like)

APPENDIX 2

POST-WRITING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR DIRECT WRITING

Name: _____ age:

1. Do you feel it is easy for you to write directly in English?
2. When you wrote directly in English, you had trouble with:
(A) Getting ideas to write on
(B) Organizing my ideas in a clear way
(C) Finding right words to express ideas
(D) Using correct grammar
(E) Using complex grammatical structures
(F) No trouble with writing directly in English
3. Have you ever thought in Chinese in the direct writing task? If yes, please list the reasons you turned to Chinese (You can write in Chinese if you like).
4. Do you think that writing directly in English helps you learn the language? If yes, please specify how it may help you (You can write in Chinese if you like).
5. What did you see as the advantages or disadvantages of the direct writing in English?

APPENDIX 3

POST-WRITING QUESTIONNAIRE FOR TRANSLATED WRITING

Name: _____ age:

1. Compared with direct writing, do you think translated writing is easier for you to complete an English composition?
2. When I translated the Chinese version into English, I had trouble with:
(A) Finding appropriate English equivalents for words in my essay
(B) Finding appropriate English grammatical structures for sentences in my essay
(C) Completing translation in limited time

3. Do you think translated writing helps you to learn English as well as English writing? In what way do you think it can help you?
4. What did you see as the advantages or disadvantages of writing in Chinese first and then translating?
5. Compared with direct writing, do you think translated writing is better or not? Why?

APPENDIX 4

Instructions for direct writing:

Please write about 150 words essay on the following topic within 40 minutes (Notice: please think and compose directly in English. 30 minutes for essay writing and 10 minutes for revision). Both the draft and the final English version should be handed in.

The essay will be awarded from three aspects: content; organization and style.

Instructions for translated writing:

Please write about 150 words essay on the following topic within 40 minutes (Notice: write first in Chinese on the other piece of paper, then translate into English here. 15 minutes for Chinese draft and 25 minutes for translating). Both the Chinese draft and the English version should be handed in.

The essay will be awarded from three aspects: content; organization and style.

Topics for different levels of learners:

For higher-level participants

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Sometimes it is better not to tell the truth. Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? People should sometimes do things that they do *not* enjoy doing. Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

For intermediate-level participants

Compare high school and college life

Compare life in the city and life in the country

For lower-level participants

Compare primary school and middle school life

Compare the life of your parents and yourself

APPENDIX 5

CODING CRITERIA FOR EVALUATING 6 SUBCOMPONENTS OF THE WRITING

Categories	Criteria
Content	
1. Specifics	Supporting details are closely relevant, effectively contribute to the whole
2. Idea development	Ideas are explicitly connected to the topic
Organization	
3. Logical sequence	Sequencing of ideas and details are logical and effective
4. Clarity of point	Ideas are clearly stated
Style	
5. Vocabulary	Sophisticated range, effective word choice and usage, and appropriate register
6. Sentences	Variety of sentence beginnings, phrases, subordinate clauses and discourse markers

APPENDIX 6

ONE SAMPLE WRITING ESSAY BY A STUDENT

English Name: Jean Gender: female Age: 24 Years of English Learning: 12

Please write about 150 words essay on the following topic within 40 minutes (Notice: write first in Chinese on the other piece of paper, then translate into English here. 15 minutes for Chinese draft and 25 minutes for translating). Both the Chinese draft and the English version should be handed in.

Do you agree or disagree with the following statement? Sometimes it is better not to tell the truth. Use specific reasons and details to support your answer.

The essay will be awarded from three aspects; content; organization and style.

IT IS BETTER NOT TO TELL THE TRUTH

Sometimes it's better not to tell the truth, but it doesn't mean you are not frank enough. Why? The reasons are listed below to demonstrate my point.

First, the truth will make people anxious and lost confidence. For example, in the hospital, a patient turns out to get cancer after detailed examinations, but he isn't told by doctors of his actual situation, instead, he is told that if he keeps a good mood and stick to taking medicines, he will be recovery soon. That means a psychological treatment and situation of a patient is more important to a cancer patient and help his take his heart, which is good for his health. However, if he is told that he get cancer which will lead to anxiety of the patient and makes him lost confidence about himself, which is harmful for his medical and psychological treatment.

Second, truth never easily accepted by people. People prefer to good comments than bad ones, because the former is easily accepted, while the latter is not. If your friend ask how about my new shirt, What will you say? Pretty or it is not suitable for your, or it does not go well with your personality.

All in all, consistently telling truth is not a good idea, it hurt others and make others anxious and lost confidence. Therefore, sometimes it is better not to tell the truth.

THE AUTHOR

Zhai Lifang(翟立芳) · female, Grade 2006, majoring in Linguistics and Applied Linguistics in the School o English and International, Studies in Beijing Foreign Studies University.