The Interference of Native Language on English Writing Syntax Errors of High School Students

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Abstract. This paper discusses the common syntactic errors in Chinese senior high school English writing, explores the causes of their English expression errors, and proposes a writing enhancement plan for senior high school students. Based on the theory of error analysis and the analysis of writing materials, this paper collects relevant data, analyzes the types of transfer errors and interference patterns in writing, and tries to explain the causes of interference syntactic errors in students' English writing. Although the reasons for the negative transfer of senior high school students are complex and diverse, the efforts of teachers and students can still effectively avoid the formation of negative transfer of English thinking reduction. In English teaching, teachers should strengthen students' syntactic discrimination ability and syntactic structure through comparative analysis, encourage students to overcome the interference of mother tongue thinking, and cultivate students' English thinking ability.

1. Introduction

Due to the interference of the mother tongue, the problems caused by the negative transfer of the mother tongue of senior high school students can be directly reflected in their English writing. Therefore, how to help senior high school students reduce the negative transfer errors of their mother tongue in English writing, improve the efficiency of English learning, develop the habit of English thinking, and improve their language expression ability has become one of the main topics gradually explored and concerned in the field of English teaching.[1,2] In the process of writing, learners are influenced by the unconscious of their mother tongue. Speak Chinese instead of English in English class. Nor do they have the opportunity to speak English outside the classroom. When writing in English, most students are mechanically translating words into English according to Chinese ideas. They also translate Chinese grammar into English sentences using Chinese forms, meanings, and conventions of expression. In the teaching process, the imitation paper is the main tool to teach English writing, which is a very simple subject. Writing is a very difficult skill to master when learning English, because it requires both a solid foundation and the ability to organize the text. However, the examination of sentences and speech in teaching is often neglected by teachers. They ignore the problem of students' native language interfering with written English. L1 interference is not the latest development in second language acquisition (SLA) research, but it is a key aspect to be taken into account when guiding English writing.[3]

2. Error Analysis Method

Error analysis, initially proposed by Corder[4], holds that the classification and analysis of errors made by second language learners during the translation of source language to target language should be a primary focus of empirical research. To understand the nature and root causes of language errors and develop strategies to prevent or reduce them, error analysis studies and examines the mistakes made by people learning a second language. He also pointed out that learners' errors can provide researchers with information about the methods and strategies used in language learning; teachers regularly assess students' language errors to determine the extent to which learners have not achieved their goals and what they still need to learn. For scholars and teachers engaged in language teaching research, the development of error analysis theory in the SLA (Second Language Acquisition) field provides a new perspective. The four steps in error analysis are error identification, error description, error interpretation, and error correction.

3. Research Design

3.1. Research Questions

The aim of this study is to investigate the interference of L1 on high school students' writing errors, and explore possible strategies to help them improve their writing level. Specifically, it aims to answer the following questions:

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1) What are the syntactic errors found in the participants' writing output?

2) What are the reasons for L1 interference in the participants' writing output?

3.2. Research Participants

This study selected 150 high school students from a school in Guangdong, as shown in Table 1. They were not randomly chosen. Their English scores were at an intermediate level. Divided by grade, they were grouped into three categories: 50 students in the first grade, 50 students in the second grade, and 50 students in the third grade. The selection of male and female participants was balanced within each grade.

Table 1. Participant Information.

Grade	mm	Male	Female	Age	Length of study
First Grade	50	30	20	15	6
Second Grade	50	18	32	16	7
Third Grade	50	22	28	17	8
Total	150	70	80		

3.3. Research Instruments

In the examination, students were required to complete two types of writing tasks, such as descriptive and narrative. They were advised to write an introduction, body paragraphs, and a conclusion. Additionally, students were given 40 minutes to write a paragraph (minimum of 100 words and maximum of 150 words). The English writing materials were selected from the simulated high school entrance examination questions. The topics were familiar to students, focusing on spending the Chinese New Year holiday and doing housework on weekends. The essay prompts provided writing points, word counts, and specific instructions to be mindful of.

3.4. Research Steps

1) The author conducted error statistics on the 300 essays collected using YouDao software, and analyzed the grammatical errors in the corpus. These essays reflect both common issues in high school students' English writing and the writing level of most ordinary high school students.

2) To analyze the error data, they were checked using YouDao software, errors were classified, and then summarized and analyzed by at least two English teachers to ensure reliability.[5]

3) After analyzing the articles, this study used text analysis to sort and annotate these samples based on different error types and dimensions. Each component was encoded, and each narrative essay was ranked from N1 to N150, while each descriptive essay was ranked from D1 to D150. The data was then analyzed to objectively understand the common types of errors in students' essays and the distribution of errors in students' essays, and examples of some error types were extracted, providing a wealth of material for future analysis of the reasons behind these errors. All data was obtained from student exams and represents accurate and objective data, providing a reliable basis for subsequent analysis.

3.5. Data Collection

Participants will be required to take a writing test, and writing samples will be collected from the students. The data collected from the test will be organized, categorized, analyzed, and interpreted in written form. Then, the information will be compiled into tables, and charts designed to include error types and performance patterns will be created to calculate the frequency of errors.

4. Data Analysis

Chinese English learners often make syntax and expression-related errors when writing in English due to the organizational style and thinking patterns of their native language.[6, 7] Most of the errors in students' English writing are related to sentence structure and sentence form. Table 2 lists the types of syntactic errors, performance patterns, and frequency.

Table 2. Types, patterns, and frequencies of syntactic errors.

Error Type	Performance Pattern	Frequency
Missing components	Missing subject or predicate in the main or subordinate clause.	486
Predicate misuse	A simple sentence containing two predicate verbs and above sentence pattern.	336
Clause misuse	Omissions, repetitions, or lack of conjunctions, or redundancy.	175
Word order errors	Chinese word order.	112
Improper placement of Attributive and adverbial	Attributive or adverbial placed in an incorrect position relative to the word it decorates.	87

The analysis of syntactic error data is divided into three steps.

Step 1: Calculate the proportion of syntactic errors used in the thinking process of each student's essay, and then identify and classify them. The total number of errors was counted without excluding repeated words.

Step 2: Find examples of each type of sentence in each student's essay to analyze and describe the reasons for the errors. The process of establishing categories is time-consuming and laborious because it requires repeated revision and verification.

Step 3: Analyze the differences between English and Chinese based on the established categories, and infer the reasons for the negative transfer of the mother tongue in the foreign language writing process.

5. Results and Discussion

The results primarily address the following two questions: The first question examines the types of syntactic errors that participants encountered in their writing. The second question explores the patterns of L1 interference observed in the participants' writing output.

5.1. Manifestations of Syntactic Errors

5.1.1. Missing components

D116: Before the festival will clean the room, paste the spring festival couplets and hang lanterns.

D75: When you finish doing laundry, fold the clothes before putting them away.

N108: We all like doing housework because make us relaxed.

N131: I full and warm after doing the housework.

N65: I help my parents do housework, so they happy and rest.

5.1.2. Predicate misuse

N84: Last Friday, my parents was went out shopping.

N57: I help my parents do the housework, which making them very happy and rest.

D124: The older will giving the children red packets.

D141: We watch a program name spring festival gala.

D84: People wear new clothes visit their relatives.

5.1.3. Clause misuse

D33: Because the Spring Festival is the most important festival in China, so it is celebrated by people all over the country.

D46: Before the Spring Festival, we clean the house, stick the couplets, hang all kinds of lanterns .

N63: Because the room is too messy, so I need to clean it.

N58: Although I am tired, but I feel very successful.

N75: I always clean the kitchen, so it is always spotless.

5.1.4. Word order errors

D49: On the first day of the new year, people will wear new clothes, when meeting others will say good wish for others.

D67: Eat the New Year's Eve dinner is a very important tradition of the Spring Festival.

D81: One of the most important activities during the Spring Festival is family reunion, usually a New Year's Eve dinner at night.

N112: A big meal together would have on New Year's Eve.

N13: Before the Spring Festival, cleaning the room is my family always do.

5.1.5. Improper placement of attributive and adverbial

N66: I very much like do housework.

N84: After cleaning, we have been tiredly in the bed.

N56: I told my parents what I perfectly have done.

D24: I'll share interesting something with you.

D46: People wear new clothes cotton during the festival.

5.2. The Reason for the Interference of Native Language in Sentence Pattern Recognition

The influence of the native language on Chinese high school students' English writing is a phenomenon that cannot be ignored.[8] This influence can be explored mainly from two perspectives.

First, we can look at the influence of the native language's expressive habits on high school students' writing. In their native language, students have developed ways of using specific sentence structures and expressions that are deeply ingrained and form their language thinking patterns. When they try to write in English, these native language expressive habits are likely to be transferred to English writing, leading to confusion between native and target languages in understanding and expression. This confusion may sometimes even affect their grammatical structures and expressions, making their English writing show clear traces of the native language.

Second, the influence of native language thinking is also an important factor in high school students' English writing. There are many differences in syntax between the native language and the target language, which poses a significant challenge for Chinese high school students. When they are learning a second language, they often need to use translation and substitution from their native language to understand the target language. However, this method easily roots deep in their thinking habits, so when writing in English, they may unconsciously use their native language thinking patterns, leading to grammatical interference in the writing process.

Overall, the influence of the native language on Chinese high school students' English writing is multifaceted, including not only the expressive habits of the native language but also the influence of native language thinking. These factors make it difficult for them to write in English, such as confusion between native and target languages, and interference from their native language thinking patterns. Therefore, for English writing teaching, helping students overcome the influence of the native language and improving their English writing skills is a crucial task.

6. Writing Enhancement Plan

English writing is an important reflection of language proficiency in high school English core literacy. Therefore, writing plays a crucial role in high school English teaching. Writing requires students not only to correctly apply the vocabulary and grammar they typically learn, but also to have a higher level of language

organization and expression. With the reform and deepening of education, this reflects the need for continuous innovation in high school English teaching methods, exploring effective strategies to reduce the interference of the mother tongue and promote high school English writing teaching. These teaching strategies require teachers to effectively improve students' English writing literacy and writing abilities.
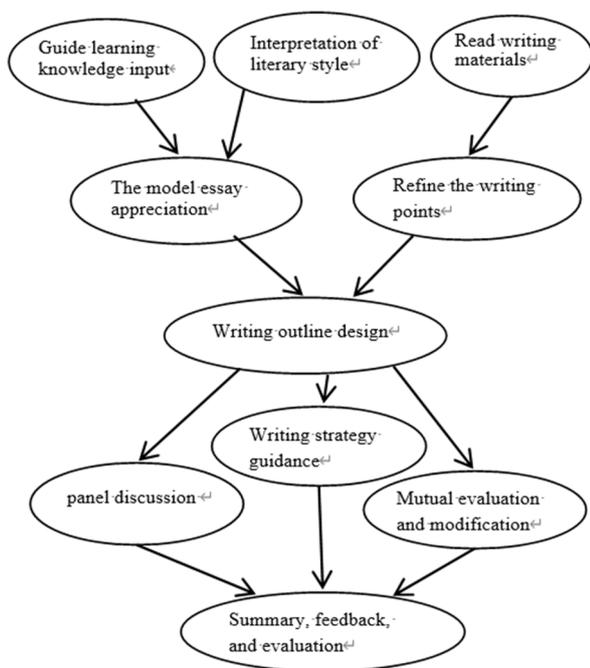

Fig. 1. The design concept of the entire writing teaching reform model

For high school English writing, the learning objectives are aimed at the personal abilities and qualities developed by students during the process of learning English, including language ability, learning ability, thinking quality, and cultural quality. Language differences are an objective reality, and the interference of the mother tongue affects various levels of students' English writing. Teachers can take measures to minimize this interference and guide students to express ideas fluently in English. In practice, teachers can adopt various teaching strategies and methods to help students improve their English writing abilities. Designing high school English writing teaching models as the mainstay, taking students' actual needs as the main reference, and using English writing strategy training as an auxiliary means, fully leveraging the teaching resources and means of modern educational technology, optimizing the writing teaching process, improving the evaluation mechanism for composition, and stimulating students' enthusiasm for participation in writing.

The process-oriented teaching method is a writing teaching method based on communication theory that emerged in the late 20th century. It emphasizes the writing process of students and emphasizes that during the writing process, teachers help them analyze, discover, and solve problems. The key is to guide students through their writing process and writing abilities, fully developing

their thinking abilities. The design concept of the entire writing teaching reform model is illustrated in Figure 1.

The teaching plan in this proposal aims to promote English writing teaching in high school. The baseline data results of this teaching plan are as follows: students' evaluation of the teaching content, strategies, evaluation, and materials; students' ability to solve problems based on the process writing theory through logical processes; teachers' teaching practices; and difficulties, questions, and suggestions raised by both students and teachers to facilitate writing acquisition for high school students.

7. Conclusion

In summary, there is a mother tongue interference phenomenon at the syntax level when students practice English writing. In order to improve students' writing abilities, teachers should consciously compare the differences at various levels of syntax between English and Chinese and help students master the syntactic patterns in English that are formed due to different ways of thinking and cultural backgrounds. It is also important to enhance students' understanding of English cultural background knowledge and cultivate English thinking habits. Additionally, teachers should regularly encourage and guide students to read extensively and memorize English model essays to develop a sense of English language. Only by overcoming mother tongue interference through multiple approaches can students' English writing skills be effectively improved.

Acknowledgment

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