

The Manifestation of Chinese-English Thinking Differences in Textual Structures of English Writing and Corresponding Strategies

Feng Yu

School of Foreign Languages, Wuhan City Polytechnic, Wuhan, Hubei, 430070, China

Keywords: Chinese-English Thinking Difference; English Writing; Text Structure; Negative Transfer of Mother Tongue; Cross-Cultural Writing

Abstract: This article focuses on the manifestation of Chinese-English thinking differences in the discourse structure of English writing. The purpose of this article is to analyze the deep-seated causes of structural problems in Chinese students' English writing and give corresponding teaching strategies. Firstly, it analyzes the differences between Chinese holistic, spiral, parataxis and context-dependent thinking mode and English analytical, linear, hypotaxis and explicit expression thinking mode. Then, from the four aspects of introduction paragraph, main paragraph, ending treatment and logical cohesion, this article expounds the influence of these differences on the structural arrangement of English writing. Subsequently, combined with the actual teaching practice, a series of strategies are put forward, such as strengthening text awareness, carrying out comparative teaching, emphasizing imitation training, optimizing feedback mechanism and integrating into cultural teaching. With the help of systematic structural training and cross-cultural guidance, it is helpful for learners to gradually adapt to English writing norms and enhance the logic and organization of expression.

1. Introduction

Under the background of deepening globalization, English, as an international language, plays an increasingly important role. English plays an irreplaceable role in academic communication, business communication and daily life. Writing, as a key part of language competence, is especially critical in cross-cultural communication [1]. However, for Chinese-speaking learners, English writing often faces many difficulties, especially in the aspect of text structure [2]. Although many students have mastered a certain vocabulary and grammar foundation, it is still difficult to write English articles with clear structure and rigorous logic [3]. One of the important reasons is that there are deep differences in Chinese-English way of thinking. Language not only reflects thinking, but also shapes people's cognitive model to some extent.

Chinese and English belong to different language systems, Chinese belongs to analytical language, and English belongs to comprehensive-analytical language. The difference in expression between them stems from the different cultural traditions and thinking habits behind them [4]. Influenced by Confucian culture and oriental philosophy, Chinese pays attention to implication, euphemism, integrity and artistic conception. English, on the other hand, is influenced by western rationalism and logical reasoning tradition, and pays attention to straightforwardness and formal logic [5]. The differences in thinking modes formed in these cultural backgrounds inevitably have an impact on the discourse organization and logical construction of learners in English writing.

Previous studies have shown that the influence of mother tongue thinking on second language writing can not be underestimated, especially in the use of high-level languages such as text organization and argumentation methods [6]. However, at present, the research on the specific performance of Chinese-English thinking differences in English writing structure is scattered and lacks systematic combing. At the same time, there is a lack of effective strategies to deal with this problem in teaching practice, which causes many students to make the same structural mistakes repeatedly in writing training and make slow progress [7].

This article aims to explore the embodiment of Chinese-English thinking differences in English writing discourse structure, and try to put forward practical teaching suggestions. It needs to be

clear that this study is not to deny the unique value of Chinese thinking, nor to advocate copying English writing patterns completely, but to help learners better adapt to the norms and requirements of English writing on the basis of respecting their own cultural background. Language learning is essentially a cross-cultural practice. Only by truly understanding the thinking mode behind different languages can we achieve more efficient and natural communication.

2. Basic differences of Chinese-English thinking mode

Language is the external embodiment of thinking, and the languages of different nationalities reflect their unique cognition and cultural psychology. Chinese-English, as a representative language system, differs from each other in phonetics, vocabulary and grammar. More crucially, the different deep thinking modes greatly affect the expression logic, information organization and text construction [8]. Understanding these differences will help to find out the root of the structural problems in Chinese students' English writing.

From the way of thinking, Chinese thinking is influenced by Confucianism and Taoism, showing a "holistic" tendency. This makes Chinese expression pay attention to the relationship between things and the context as a whole, and attaches great importance to creating artistic conception. Sentences often rely on meaning to achieve natural cohesion [9]. In contrast, English thinking is influenced by ancient Greek rationalism, which tends to be "analytical", pays attention to the relationship between the individual and the part and the rigor of logic, and the sentence structure is rigorous, and the transition of paragraphs depends on connectors.

On the way of expression, Chinese has the characteristics of "spiral". When expressing opinions, we don't directly cut into the theme, but guide them by paving the way, and finally point out the core. English, on the other hand, prefers "straight line", emphasizing straight to the point, clarifying the central argument at the beginning, and then demonstrating. If Chinese students write English according to Chinese habits, it is easy to have ambiguous themes.

Furthermore, in terms of language organization, Chinese and English show the difference between parataxis and hypotaxis. Chinese relies on semantic coherence to maintain sentence relations, which has the beauty of flexibility and implication. Expressions such as "He came and I left" are examples. English relies on grammatical means such as conjunctions and clauses to clarify logical relations. For example, the corresponding English expression is "When he came, I left.", which is more organized and standardized.

In addition, in terms of expression style, Chinese has the characteristics of "context dependence" and pursues "endless words and endless meanings". English tends to "express clearly" and attaches importance to direct communication and efficiency. Such differences make it easy for Chinese students to have the problem of "incomplete words" or "vague expressions" in their English writing.

3. Chinese-English thinking differences in English passage structure

The difference of thinking mode directly affects the form and content organization of language expression, especially in writing. Chinese writing is influenced by holistic and spiral thinking, and tends to gradually expand the content through foreshadowing and suggestion; English writing, on the other hand, emphasizes clear logic and clear structure, and advocates straight to the point and progressive step by step. This deep cultural and psychological difference often leads to structural problems in Chinese students' English writing, such as unclear theme, loose paragraphs and unnatural cohesion.

3.1. Opening paragraph

In English argumentative or expository writing, the opening paragraph usually plays an important role in drawing out the topic and pointing out the thesis statement. English writers often put forward their opinions clearly in the first paragraph so that readers can quickly grasp the core of the article. In contrast, Chinese writing is accustomed to "spreading first, then making points", that is, gradually introducing the theme through background introduction or situation description, and

the theme sentence often appears at the end of the paragraph or even in the second half of the full text.

Table 1 Differences in Thesis Presentation between Chinese and English Writing

Dimension	Chinese Writing	English Writing
Thesis Expression	Implicit, gradual	Clear, direct
Introduction Role	Create atmosphere, provide background	Present argument, guide the whole text
Purpose Orientation	Emphasis on artistic expression and emotional resonance	Focus on argumentation and logical progression

As shown in Table 1, Chinese writing pays more attention to the presentation of atmosphere and emotion, while English writing is oriented to clearly convey information. This makes many Chinese students fail to effectively establish the central argument in English writing, resulting in the lack of focus at the beginning of the article and affecting the logical coherence of the whole writing.

3.2. Main paragraph

English writing emphasizes the integrity and functionality of paragraph structure, and the typical model is "topic sentence+supporting sentences+concluding sentence". This structure ensures that each paragraph revolves around a clear point of view and is supported by concrete examples or arguments. However, in Chinese writing, paragraph boundaries are vague, which is often manifested in the interweaving of multiple viewpoints and the dispersion of supporting information, and it is easy to form a "jumping" or "divergent" paragraph organization mode.

Table 2 Paragraph Structure Comparison between Chinese and English Writing

Paragraph Element	Common Features in Chinese Writing	Standards in English Writing
Topic Sentence Position	Often hidden in the middle or at the end of a paragraph	Usually placed at the beginning
Supporting Information Distribution	Scattered, cross-referenced	Focused, developed step by step
Logical Connection Style	Relies on semantic coherence	Requires explicit connectors (e.g., however, therefore)
Paragraph Length Control	Inconsistent, sometimes too long or messy	Generally controlled within 3-5 sentences

As can be seen from Table 2, English writing has higher formal requirements for the internal structure of paragraphs, while Chinese writing is relatively flexible and free. This difference makes it difficult for many students to construct paragraphs with clear levels in English writing, which leads to the reduction of information transmission efficiency and the break of logical chain.

3.3. Ending treatment

In the end, Chinese writing tends to pursue a long aftertaste, and tends to wrap up with questions, rhetorical questions or symbolic language, leaving readers room for thinking; English writing, on the other hand, pays more attention to induction and summary, emphasizing the reaffirmation of arguments, summarizing main points, and even making suggestions or prospects, so that the article has a complete conclusion. This difference makes the ending of some students' English compositions seem vague and weak, which can't effectively echo the previous contents.

3.4. Logical cohesion

Chinese and English thinking differ significantly in logical cohesion, directly affecting textual coherence. Chinese emphasizes "parataxis," where logical connections between sentences are often implied through meaning and context, with implicit linking devices (e.g., "He came, I left"). In contrast, English emphasizes "hypotaxis," requiring explicit logical relationships—such as cause-effect or contrast—to be clearly marked through conjunctions (e.g., however, therefore,

because) and complex sentence structures.

Affected by this, Chinese students' English writing often has the problem of insufficient logical cohesion: lack of explicit connection between sentences and paragraphs, blunt transition, or over-reliance on simple sequential words. This habit of "implicit cohesion" in mother tongue can easily lead to logical jumps and poor coherence in English texts. Therefore, it is necessary to guide students to overcome negative transfer and consciously use explicit cohesive devices to realize the thinking transformation from "emphasizing meaning" to "emphasizing words" in order to construct a text that conforms to English norms and is clear in logic.

4. Corresponding strategies and teaching suggestions

4.1. Strengthen text awareness

Many Chinese students lack clear paragraph awareness and structural arrangement in English writing, resulting in unclear main ideas and loose paragraphs. For this reason, in the teaching process, attention should be paid to guiding students to master the basic structural patterns of English writing, such as a five paragraph argumentative essay (introduction three paragraphs main body conclusion), to help them form clear writing ideas.

Teachers can use methods such as sample essay analysis and outline writing to help students understand the functional positioning of each paragraph: the introduction paragraph points out the thesis statement, the main body paragraph conducts arguments around the topic sentence, and the ending paragraph summarizes the entire text and echoes the beginning. This type of structural training helps students to have rules to follow when writing and avoid confusion in content.

4.2. Carry out comparative teaching

Because there are significant differences in Chinese-English thinking modes, it is difficult to fundamentally solve the structural problems in writing only by grammar and vocabulary accumulation. For this reason, adopting contrastive teaching method is an effective way to improve students' cross-cultural writing ability. Table 3 shows the comparison of Chinese-English writing characteristics.

Teachers can choose typical Chinese and English paragraphs for comparative analysis, so that students can intuitively see the differences in structure, organization and expression between the two languages. For example, Chinese writing often introduces themes through foreshadowing, while English writing prefers to get straight to the point; Chinese paragraphs rely on semantic cohesion, while English emphasizes the use of connectives to achieve logical transition.

Table 3 Comparison of Writing Characteristics between Chinese and English

Comparison Dimension	Chinese Writing Features	English Writing Features
Presentation of Thesis	Indirect and gradual introduction	Clear and straightforward presentation
Paragraph Structure	Multiple ideas intertwined	Single-topic focus with clear development
Logical Connection	Reliance on semantic coherence	Use of explicit connectors (e.g., however, therefore)
Conclusion Style	Open-ended or rhetorical ending	Summary and restatement of the main point

In this way, students can not only master the formal norms of English writing, but also understand the thinking mode behind it, so as to make conscious adjustments in actual writing.

4.3. Emphasize imitation and rewriting exercises

Imitation is one of the important ways of language acquisition, especially for writing, which needs a lot of input support. Teachers can recommend students to read authentic English materials, such as news comments, speeches, academic articles, etc., and select representative paragraphs to

imitate or rewrite.

For example, students can be asked to translate a Chinese discussion paragraph into English and ask them to reorganize the content according to the structural standards of English writing. This process not only trains students' language conversion ability, but also helps them to be familiar with English expression logic and paragraph arrangement.

4.4. Optimize feedback and modify guidance

Effective writing teaching is inseparable from timely and concrete feedback. When correcting a composition, teachers should not only pay attention to grammar and vocabulary errors, but also strengthen their comments on the structure of the article, pointing out which paragraphs lack topic sentence, where the transition is unnatural, and which conclusions fail to effectively echo the previous ones.

At the same time, students are encouraged to make many revisions, especially after the first draft is completed, and they are guided to check their structural integrity and logical coherence by comparing the outline and the model essay. This will not only help to improve the quality of writing, but also cultivate students' critical thinking and autonomous learning ability.

4.5. Integrate into cultural teaching

Language is the carrier of culture, and writing is the embodiment of cultural thinking. For this reason, it is very necessary to integrate culture teaching into English writing teaching. Teachers can help students understand why English writing emphasizes directness, clarity and logic by explaining western philosophy, logical reasoning tradition and common writing paradigms in English-speaking countries.

In addition, it can also guide students to compare Chinese and western news reports, political papers, academic papers and other stylistic styles, and further deepen their understanding of English writing logic. The introduction of this cross-cultural perspective can not only broaden students' horizons, but also help them to switch their thinking modes more freely in writing.

5. Conclusion

This article systematically sorts out the relationship between Chinese-English thinking differences and English writing structure, and reveals the common structural problems and their causes in Chinese students' English writing. Research shows that language is the product of culture, and the way of thinking has a far-reaching influence on the form of language organization. Chinese has the characteristics of wholeness, implication and parataxis, which leads many learners to be accustomed to introducing, unclear topics and loose paragraphs in English writing, and it is difficult to meet the writing norms of straightforward, clear logic and clear structure in English.

In teaching practice, these problems cannot be fundamentally solved simply by relying on grammar correction or vocabulary expansion. Teachers should stand on a higher level, guide students to establish the frame consciousness of English writing, and help them understand and adapt to English expression logic. The effective combination of comparative teaching, imitation practice, structural training and cultural introduction can not only improve the quality of students' language output, but also help them form the consciousness of cross-cultural writing.

In addition, the improvement of writing ability is a gradual process, which is inseparable from continuous language input, repeated revision practice and targeted feedback and guidance from teachers. Future research can be further extended to the comparative analysis of writers with different styles and levels, and the deep-seated influence of mother tongue thinking on second language writing can be deeply explored from the perspective of psycholinguistics or cognitive linguistics.

References

- [1] Teng F. Tertiary-level students' English writing performance and metacognitive awareness: A

- group metacognitive support perspective[J]. *Scandinavian Journal of Educational Research*, 2020, 64(4): 551-568.
- [2] Yu S, Jiang L. L2 university students' motivational self system in English writing: A sociocultural inquiry[J]. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 2023, 14(3): 553-578.
- [3] Zhang X, McEneaney J E. What is the influence of peer feedback and author response on Chinese University students' English writing performance?[J]. *Reading Research Quarterly*, 2020, 55(1): 123-146.
- [4] Shen Xiaoyang. Cultural Motivations for the Differences in Conceptualization of Sino-English Double Object Constructions[J]. *Foreign Languages and Cultures*, 2020, 4(03):127-135.
- [5] Zhang X, Hadjioannou X. Chinese graduate students' translanguaging practice in the context of academic writing in English[J]. *Applied Linguistics Review*, 2022, 13(3): 373-388.
- [6] Tsai S C. Chinese students' perceptions of using Google Translate as a translingual CALL tool in EFL writing[J]. *Computer assisted language learning*, 2022, 35(5-6): 1250-1272.
- [7] Zheng Shuai. The Transformation of Differences between Sino-English Subjects in Sino-English Translation[J]. *Journal of Puyang Vocational and Technical College*, 2021, 34(05): 84-86+95.
- [8] Sun Y C, Yang F Y. Exploring the process and strategies of Chinese-English abstract writing using machine translation tools[J]. *Journal of scholarly publishing*, 2023, 54(2): 260-289.
- [9] Jiang Junlan. A Cognitive Contrastive Study on Zero Anaphora in Modern and Contemporary Sino-English Poetry[J]. *Journal of Kaifeng Vocational College of Culture and Art*, 2022, 42(9): 33-35.