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The Use of L1 as a Writing Strategy in L2 Writing Tasks

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ABSTRACT

Numerous studies have investigated how students integrate L1 for the function of acquiring L2 writing proficiency. However, there is still no consensus that relates the degree of L1 use and various writing strategies in L2 writing to student proficiency levels and writing genres or writing tasks. The present study explored these issues over the course of 14 weeks with nine Korean university students of three different proficiency levels performing six writing tasks in two genres. The data were collected from the students' think-aloud protocols and retrospective interviews. The think-aloud and interview data were analyzed to examine the students' use of L1 during the L2 writing. The think-aloud protocols were also coded into their functions for what purposes each language type was used. The results showed that lower level students used their L1 more than the advanced students, but all students used L1 to different degrees depending on each task. In other words, the students reacted differently in accordance with task familiarity and the relative ease or difficulty of the task. The study also found that there was no consistent relationship between language proficiency and the types of writing strategies the students used in L2 composition. On the other hand, this study showed that although the types of writing strategies the students employed were similar, the students of various proficiency levels applied L1 strategies to their writing in different ways. The findings showed that L1 use in L2 writing can play an encouraging role for both the ideational and compensatory purposes, suggesting that the strategic use of L1 can contribute to improvement in L2 composition. The paper discusses that writing instruction should focus more on the topics of how to use writing strategies as well as what writing strategies to use.

Keywords: Second language writing; L1 use; writing strategies; writing genre; writing task

INTRODUCTION

Since the 1980s, research in L2 writing has evolved from the study of writing products to the processes of writing (Raimes, 1983). Among these processes, L1 use was identified as a salient strategy that students employ in writing assignments. L1 use is not considered a debilitating factor, but rather as a kind of compensatory strategy for the difficulties that L2 writers face in L2 composition (Manchón, Roca de Larios, & Murphy, 2007). Reineman (2001) proposed that teachers should employ L1 conditionally, particularly for exercises that require communication of abstract ideas. Furthermore, Stapa and Majid (2012) argued that what is important is when to use L1 as a pedagogical tool to teaching L2 writing rather than whether to use it or not.

Some previous studies have investigated the amount of L1 use during L2 writing based on the writers' L2 proficiency in relation to specific writing tasks (e.g., Wang & Wen, 2002; Woodall, 2002; Wang, 2003; Weijen, Rijlaarsdam, & Sanders, 2009). However, those

studies have reported contradicting results regarding the degree of L1 use according to proficiency level. Also, there has been less comprehensive research regarding how L2 writers of different proficiency levels use their L1 in the various types of L2 composition and for what specific purposes. We would expect to discover additional L1 use patterns and purposes if our research involves learners with various levels of proficiencies and diverse writing tasks. By expanding the scope of inquiry we can elaborate on learners' thought patterns in the process of composition for different tasks.

REVIEW OF PREVIOUS STUDIES

Over the past few decades, numerous studies have revealed that learners use L1 and L2 interactively for various strategic purposes for composition in the L2 (Lally, 2000; Raimes, 1985; Roca de Larios, Murphy & Manchón, 1999; Wang & Wen, 2002; Woodall, 2000). L1 has been used for a variety of purposes, including generating ideas (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Roca de Larios, Murphy & Manchón, 1999; Stapa & Majid, 2012; Wang, 2003; Wolfersberger, 2003; Woodall, 2002), organizing texts (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Sasaki, 2000; Wang, 2003; Wang & Wen, 2002; Woodall, 2002), metacommenting and self-evaluation (Wang, 2003; Wolfersberger, 2003), finding lexical items (Wang, 2003; Woodall, 2002), controlling the writing process (Wang, 2003; Wang & Wen, 2002; Wolfersberger, 2003), backtracking (Murphy &Roca de Larios, 2010; Perl, 1979), translation (Huh, 2001; Uzawa, 1996), and revising the text (Perl, 1979; Raimes, 1985). Those studies have showed that learners use their L1 for demanding cognitive operations in L2 composition.

These studies demonstrated that L1 use can function as a compensatory strategy for reducing overload during L2 composition. Most of these studies investigated the amount of L1 use based on the writers' L2 proficiency, the specific writing tasks given and the quality of the texts produced. For example, Wang and Wen (2002) found thatL1 use in the narrative writing task was significantly higher than in the argumentative writing task. The same study also showed that the amount of L1 use declined in the L2 composing process relative to writer's L2 proficiency. That L2 proficiency may be an independent variable in L2 writing was borne out by Woodall (2002). He also examined task difficulty and language group as other factors. As a result, he found that less proficient learners switched to L1 more frequently than advanced learners. Learners increased the duration of L1 use for more difficult tasks like expository writing in the L2 writing process. In the above two studies, the amount of L1 use differed depending on the writing task, but there was little difference relative to language proficiency. Nonetheless, different studies presented different results relative to learners' proficiencies and specific tasks. For example, Wang (2003) studied how much language switching occurs between languages in composing both an informal letter and an argumentative task. High-proficiency participants switched more frequently to their L1 than low-proficiency participants. Regarding the task difficulty, there was no significant difference in the frequencies of language switching for the high-proficiency participants across the two writing tasks, while the low-proficiency students used more language switching in the argumentative task. In contrast, Van Weijen, Bergh, Rijlaarsdam and Sanders' (2009) study found that L2 proficiency did not influence the writing process and was only directly related to the quality of the text produced by participants. In terms of the effectiveness of L1 use on L2 writing text quality, Stapa and Majid (2012) demonstrated that the use of L1 not only generated a higher quality of ideas for L2 writing but also led to better performance in written work.

Studies on the strategic use of L1 in the L2 writing process have also found that students employ distinctive writing strategies in L1 use relative to their levels of proficiency. Wang and Wen (2002) showed that low-proficiency-level students tended to translate directly

from L1 into L2. Higher-level writers used L1 more strategically for idea-generating, monitoring, and lexical searching. In another study, Roca de Larios, Murphy andManchón. (1999) analyzed students' protocols at two proficiency levels to find the effects of L2 proficiency on their uses of restructuring strategy. They found that low-proficiency students used restructuring as a compensatory strategy to deal with lexical problems, whereas higher-proficiency students used it for ideational and textual purposes. Furthermore, Wang's (2003) study of eight adult Chinese-speaking learners found different reasons for language switching between the high levels of learners and the low levels of learners. The higher level learners switched languages in order to focus on their discourse plan, that is, to make an outline or to organize the content for constructing their global writing goals. Lower-level learners translated words or phrases from English to Chinese to transcribe their thoughts directly onto paper. However, Cumming (1989) found that L2 proficiency was not correlated with writing strategies used by French learners writing in English.

As the extant research shows, there is no overall agreement about the degree of L1 use or the types of writing strategies[i] in L1 use relative to learners' levels, writing genres or writing tasks in L2 writing. In addition, these studies on the use of L1 in L2 writing have mostly involved two genres, informal and formal writing, which are categorized as the easier and the more difficult task, respectively. But most of them have just used one writing task in each genre of informal (mostly narrative) and formal (mostly argumentative) writing (Choi & Lee, 2006; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 2008; Roca de Larios et al., 2008; Murphy & Roca de Larios, 2010; Raimes, 1985; Wang, 2003; Wang & Wen, 2002; Woodall, 2002). To our best knowledge, one exception is the Van Weijen et al. (2009) study in which four topics were assigned to students. But each of the four was variations of argumentative writing. In terms of learners' proficiency, most studies have compared two levels: high proficiency and low proficiency. Therefore, while the previous studies have shed light on the various strategic purposes of L1 use in L2 writing, we still have a limited understanding of how L2 writers of different proficiency levels use their L1 in various types of L2 composition and for what specific purposes.

In order to fill the research gap, this study employs three writing tasks in each genre of narrative and argumentative writing, so a total of six writing tasks will be completed. Furthermore, using elementary, intermediate, and advanced proficiency levels, it will be possible to observe the different levels of students' writing behavior during the L2 writing process generally. That is to say, we are expanding the scope of the research by employing three levels of student proficiencies across the six different writing tasks. Such an analysis will contribute to the better understanding of the nature of L1 use as well as its strategic use in the teaching of L2 writing. To sum, this study addressed the following research questions:

1. How does Korean learners' use of L1 in L2 writing vary with their L2 proficiency, writing genres and writing tasks?
2. How do Korean learners use L1 as strategies in L2 writing, and how do these strategies vary with their L2 proficiency, writing genres and writing tasks?

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

PILOT STUDY

Before the beginning of the main study, a pilot study was carried out with three Korean writers for three weeks. The participants were divided into three groups (elementary, intermediate, and advanced) based on the results of the Oxford Placement Test and a test adopted from TOEFL writing essays. The participants were given two English writing tasks. One was a narrative writing, which was to "write about knowledge on specific and personal information" and the other was an argumentative writing task, which was to "transform

knowledge to develop a problem space that creates the answer to the question" (Woodall, 2002). For each writing session, students were asked to use think-aloud protocol while writing. None of the students in the pilot study participated in the main study.

The experience of the pilot study provided an opportunity to adjust methods for the main study. First, it became apparent an orientation to the think-aloud system needed to be presented before starting the main study. The researchers provided a sample video demonstration so the participants could better understand what they are supposed to do while they write. Second, the pilot study informed some revisions in the coding schemes based on the participants' think-aloud processes. For example, in addition to the cognitive activities, the researcher made a choice about coding the data such that other schemes like Task-examination (TE), Discourse (D), and Back translation (BT) were added on the basis of the students' think-aloud protocols. This modification would become referenced in the main study.

PARTICIPANTS

In order to secure three distinctive levels of students as participants for the main study, we received recommendations from colleagues who were teaching English in different settings. Emails were sent to the recommended students, after which the respondents were interviewed to evaluate their suitability in terms of background, proficiency level, and attitude about this study. As a result, nine Korean-speaking university students of diverse academic majors were accepted into the study. Their age ranged from 20 to 27 years old; four were male and the five were female. Table 1 shows the overall participants' information.

TABLE 1. Overall participants' information

Name	Age (Gender)	Major	English learning (yrs)	English writing training	Language placement test	English writing test scores (0-5)	Level of writing proficiency
Myung	21 (F)	Marketing	8	No	E*	1	Elementary
Chan	20 (M)	Foodservice Cook	12	No	E	1	Elementary
Hee	22 (F)	Engineering	8	No	LI	1	Elementary
Soo	22 (F)	Mathematics	9	No	LI	3	Intermediate
Ho	26 (M)	Engineering	10	No	LI	3	Intermediate
Ro	27 (M)	Computer Science	14	Yes	LI	3	Intermediate
Woon	21 (F)	Human Ecology	11	Yes	UI	4	Advanced
Jeong	20 (F)	Political Science & Diplomacy	8	No	AD	5	Advanced
June	20 (M)	International Studies	12	No	AD	5	Advanced

E: Elementary, LI: Lower Intermediate, UI: Upper Intermediate, AD: Advanced

Concerning previous English learning experience, all participants had learned English for a number of different years in Korean public school from a minimum of eight to a maximum of 14 years. Most of the participants had rarely received any English writing training except for Ro and Woon, who learned writing in English at private institutions.

RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

PRE-TESTS

All participants were given two pre- English level tests. One was a placement test produced by Oxford University Press to determine the general English proficiency; the other was an English pre-writing test adopted from TOEFL writing essays. As the present study focused mostly on students' writing proficiency, the results of the placement test were used referentially.

The English pre-writing test required students to choose one of two writing topics chosen among the 185 Test of Written English (TWE) essays. The researchers and a native speaking rater evaluated the participants' writings based on a writing scale adopted from the TOEFL independent writing rubric (inter-rater agreement: 97%).This Likert-type scale ranges from 0 to 5 points covering content, organization, vocabulary, language use and mechanics. On the basis of this evaluation, the participants were divided into three proficiency groups: elementary, intermediate, and advanced.

WRITING TASKS

In order to examine the students'L1 use and writing strategies used during the L2 writing process, the participants were asked to provide concurrent think-aloud protocols while writing. In this study, the think-aloud protocol was a main research tool in which subjects have "verbalized everything that goes through their minds as they write" (Flower & Hayes, 1981, p. 368). The method gives a detailed picture of the writer's composition process. In spite of some critics and limitations about it, think-aloud protocols can reveal a writer's online assumptions, expectations, and composing strategies (Lally, 2000).In this sense, researchers recommend the use of introspective think-aloud protocols in studies on students' use of writing strategies (e.g., Domakani, Roohani, & Akbari, 2012).

The study employed two types of writing genres: narrative writing and argumentative writing. The narrative writing task was considered to be the easier requiring reflection on personal experiences. The argumentative writing was designed to elicit the writer's opinions and was thus regarded as more difficult. For the narrative writing, three writing tasks were chosen. The first topic, adopted from Woodall (2002), was about writing a personal letter to an imaginary Mr. Smith, the activities director of a summer language program. This topic was also used in the pilot study. It was regarded as a good starting point for the participants because writing a self-introduction was considered familiar to them. The second task was to write about something that went wrong in the writer's life (Raimes, 1987). The third topic was to write a story based on a sequence of pictures (Wang & Wen, 2002).

As for the argumentative writing, three essay topics were chosen from the TWE. Participants were to choose one position of the given statement and argue its support by using specific examples. The first topic asked participants to provide a detailed cost comparison of spending money for a vacation or buying a car and to then make recommendations to a friend who had just received some money. This task may not appear to be as formal as the other two tasks, but the researchers regarded it as a good starting point from which the participants would be able to handle the first argumentative writing session comfortably. The second writing task was to compare two different ways of learning about life: listening to the advice of family and friends or learning through personal experience. The third writing task required participants to express their views on the statement that different clothes influence the way people behave.

RETROSPECTIVE INTERVIEWS

Retrospective interviews were conducted immediately after each writing task. The researcher asked each participant about the entire writing process including thinking aloud, the purpose of using their L1, the reason for any pauses while writing, or what he or she thought about during the pauses. These retrospective interviews took about 15 minutes. At the end, the researcher asked about their overall experience during the six writing sessions.

DATA COLLECTION PROCEDURE

The main research took 14 weeks. The first author met the nine participants individually in a quiet room about once a week. At the first meeting, the researcher refreshed their training on thinking aloud by having them practice the method before starting to write. In this warm-up phase, the participants wrote about simple topics such as their hobbies or daily routine. Throughout the study, they were allowed to use their L1 and/or L2 by choice while thinking-aloud. The whole process was audio-recorded. While the nine participants composed the six essays, the researcher observed them without any interruption unless they stopped thinking aloud while writing. They were required to use a pen or pencil to complete the writings, and no dictionaries were allowed. During the six writing processes, they were asked to write no less than 300 words within about 60 minutes. Semi-structured interviews were conducted after each writing task so as to further explore student views as expressed in their own words. The interviews as well as think-aloud protocols were tape-recorded and transcribed for analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS

To analyze each participant's written works, the 54 recordings were transcribed based on the transcription conventions outlined in Table 2, which was adopted from Wang (2003).

TABLE 2. Transcription convention

Convention	Definition
?	A question mark indicates a rising intonation at the end of a phrase
,	A comma indicates a shorter pause or abrupt shift in the flow of an utterance.
.	A period indicates a closure of an utterance with falling intonation.
…	Three dots represent a 3-second pause.
(Number)	Numbers in parentheses indicate the number of seconds of longer pauses.
[ ]	Statements inside square brackets record paralinguistic behaviors.
{ }	Curly brackets are used for the transcriber's comments
Written Production	An underlined written production such as a word, phrase, and statement represents the participant's written text.
Boldface italics	Boldface italics in English indicate translated utterances from Korean.
""	Quotation marks represent reading the assignment instructions or re-reading what one has written.

After the think-aloud protocols were transcribed, the percentage of Korean and English words was measured in order to evaluate the extent to which the L1 was used during the L2 writing process. The number of Korean words was counted by word cluster[ii], while English words were counted individually. The percentage of each instance of language used was then divided by the total number of words in the protocol.

The think-aloud protocols were also coded into their functions for what purposes each language type was used. The number of utterances was counted and analyzed based on transcriptions from the students' think-aloud protocols. As in Woodall (2003), one unit of

writing strategy use was considered to be from the beginning of an utterance in one language to the beginning of an utterance in the other language. The protocols were categorized into 11 activities: discourse (D), idea generation (IG), language use (LU), lexical searching (LS), direct-translation (DT), back-translation (BT), metacomments (MC), self-instruction (SI), revising (RV), repeating (RP), and task-examination (TE).The first seven categories of D, IG, LU, LS, DT, BT, and MC were mostly adopted from Wang (2003). This study expanded upon Wang by adding translation from L1 into L2 (DT) in addition to translation from L2 into L1 (BT). Although this study focused on students' L1 use, both L1 and L2 text were analyzed because it is assumed that switching from one language into another is a way to solve problems in L2 writing. The next four categories, SI, RV, RP and TE, came from Van Weijen et al. (2009), Raimes (1985), and Wang and Wen (2003), while removing other categories used in those studies that either overlapped with ones from Wang (2003) or that were not necessary to analyze our study data. The categories used in the present study for the coding scheme with examples from the protocols are outlined in the Appendix.

The proportion of L1 involved in each cognitive activity category was calculated in order to reveal which writing strategies Korean learners of English employed when using their L1 in L2 writing. For this, the amount of L1 used per cognitive activity type was divided by the total number of words in that activity. To ensure a more exact data analysis, two inter-coders joined this study. Both raters belonged to the TESOL Graduate School, and all together the coders and researcher discussed the few areas of disagreement and made amendments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

AMOUNT OF L1 USE IN L2 WRITING PROCESSES

All the Korean university participants used a considerable amount of L1 in their L2 writing process in both narrative and argumentative writing tasks. Table 3 shows the amount of L1 used in each of the six writing tasks, expressed as a percentage of the total number of L1 and L2 utterances in each writing task.

TABLE 3. Overall percentage of L1 use in six writing tasks

Level	Name	Nar.1*	Nar.2	Nar.3	Nar. Mean	Arg.1	Arg.2	Arg.3	Arg. Mean	Total Mean
Elementary	Myung	44.5	43.1	52	46.5	57.1	41.7	54.8	51.2	48.9
	Chan	68.1	69.5	73.4	70.3	70.9	79.2	82.1	77.4	73.9
	Hee	74.5	82.4	77.2	78.0	61.5	76.1	82.8	73.5	75.7
	Mean	62.4	65.0	67.5	**65.0**	63.2	65.7	73.2	**67.4**	**66.2**
Intermediate	Soo	63.7	63.1	50.9	59.2	61.1	77.4	70.8	69.8	64.5
	Ho	50	82.8	73	68.6	45.0	63.3	63.4	57.2	62.9
	Ro	30.1	28.7	19.2	26.0	29.3	43.0	28.0	33.4	29.7
	Mean	47.9	58.2	47.7	**51.3**	45.1	61.2	54.1	**53.5**	**52.4**
Advanced	Woon	51	54.2	47.1	50.8	49.5	60.3	71.9	60.6	55.7
	Jeong	45.1	56.1	60.4	53.9	57.9	49.1	58.9	55.3	54.6
	June	10.7	4.3	4.6	6.5	8.8	29.9	18.5	19.1	12.8
	Mean	35.6	38.2	37.4	**37.1**	38.7	46.4	49.8	**45.0**	**41.0**
	Total mean	**48.6**	**53.8**	**50.9**	**51.1**	**49.0**	**57.8**	**59.0**	**55.3**	**53.2**

* Nar.: Narrative writing; Arg.: Argumentative writing

As shown in Table 3, the students used their L1 more than half of the time on average (53.2%). It implies that the L2 writers frequently relied upon their L1 for coping with the L2

writing tasks. This finding is not surprising as Nor, Hua, and Ibrahim (2012) found that "the use of mother tongue knowledge and thinking in one's native language were often used throughout the writing process, compared to the other composing strategies under the cognitive strategies category" (p. 142).

The amount of L1 used over the six writing tasks was highly dominant for elementary level students (66.2%), while advanced level students showed relatively the least use of L1 (41%). However, there were wide variations between students in their use of L1. To put it concretely, Myung in the elementary group, Ro in the intermediate group, and June in the advanced group exhibited a low percentage of L1 use compared to the other participants in their respective groups. Myung thought that using English rather than Korean is contextual and sounds natural while writing in English, so she tried to use English even though she was a beginning writer. Also, Ro explained that using Korean kept him from thinking in English, especially owing to the difference in the grammatical rules between Korean and English, so he tried his best to restrict his use of Korean. As noted earlier, the students at the advanced level used their L1 the least among all three proficiency levels. However, within the advanced level, students showed different uses of their L1. Both Woon and Jeong used their L1 relatively more than half of the time across the six writing tasks (55.7% and 54.6%, respectively).However, in June's case, the frequency of his L1 use is quite low, and he also expressed his reasons for using L1 less in his post-writing interview.

I think I did not express my thoughts into language. Except for making an outline of the writing task at the beginning, I verbalized mostly in English while writing. [June, advanced level, post-writing interview]

As June mentioned, he usually attempted to compose writing tasks by thinking-aloud in English.

Our overall results show the students employed their L1 more for the argumentative writing genre (55.3%) compared to the narrative writing genre (51.1%). In the narrative writing genre, the second task, i.e. writing about something that went wrong in the writer's life, accounted for a large proportion of L1 use (53.8%), while in the argumentative writing genre, both the second task, i.e. comparing two different ways of learning about life, and the third task, i.e. expressing views on the statement that different clothes influence the way people behave, showed the highest L1 use in almost equal proportions (57.8% and 59%, respectively).

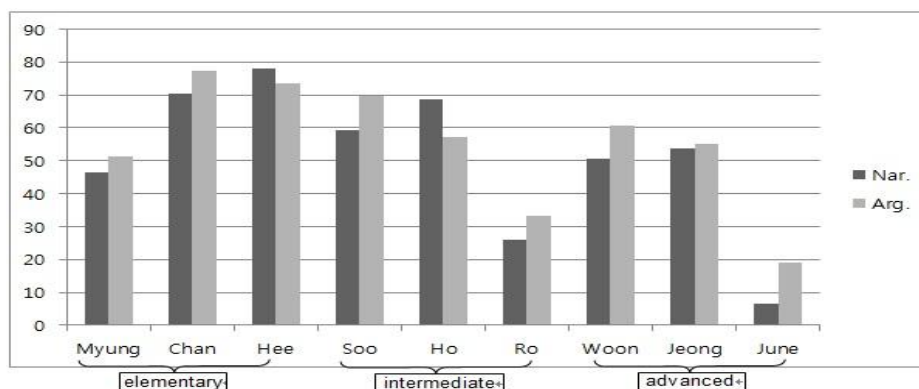Figure 1 displays the average use of L1 in the two writing genres by individual students.

FIGURE 1. Students' average L1 use in two writing genres

Although all students exhibited different amounts of L1 use, all but two students showed more L1 use in the argumentative writings than in the narrative writings. The anomalies were Hee and Ho who showed more L1 use in the narrative genre. These students, elementary and intermediate proficiency levels respectively, both mentioned that it was not easy to generate appropriate examples in the narrative genre, which took time to complete. During the post-writing interview, Hee stated:

> *It's comfortable for me to write argumentative writings. When I compose narrative essays, I sometimes have difficulty thinking and bringing out examples even though they are related to me. Also I felt a slight burden when I made a story based on the pictures in the third narrative task. It's hard to express some ideas in English.* [Hee, elementary level, post-writing interview]

Ho also commented on the reason why he used his L1 in the narrative writing tasks:

> *Concerning the two writing genres, argumentative writing is more comfortable for me. I'm familiar with this type of essay because I've written like this before. Especially, this type of essay can be divided into three parts such as introduction, body, and conclusion, so I think I'm accustomed to this form.* [Ho, intermediate level, post-writing interview]

The above two excerpts may show that the level of difficulty students feel regarding the types of genres is closely related to their previous writing experiences and familiarity with the genres rather than the common beliefs about the difficulty of genres.

Figure 2 illustrates students' L1 use in the six writing tasks by three proficiency levels. In general, all the students used their L1 in the argumentative tasks more than in the narrative tasks regardless of proficiency level. The elementary level students exhibited steady use of their L1 across the six tasks. Their use of L1 was remarkable in the third narrative task and third argumentative task. At the intermediate level, students showed similar use of the L1 in the first and third narrative task, while in the second narrative task, a higher proportion of L1 use was evident. On the other hand, the students employed their L1 the most in the second argumentative task. The advanced level exhibited similar proportion across all narrative tasks at an average rate of 37.1 percent. They also showed an increasing use of L1 in the three argumentative tasks. While it is generally believed that argumentative writing tasks require logical thought and are more cognitively demanding than narrative writing tasks, the results showed that the different writing tasks in one genre caused students to feel differently depending on their amount of familiarity with each topic. Therefore, students reacted differently to the various topics regardless of proficiency level as they reflected on their individual experiences and opinions.
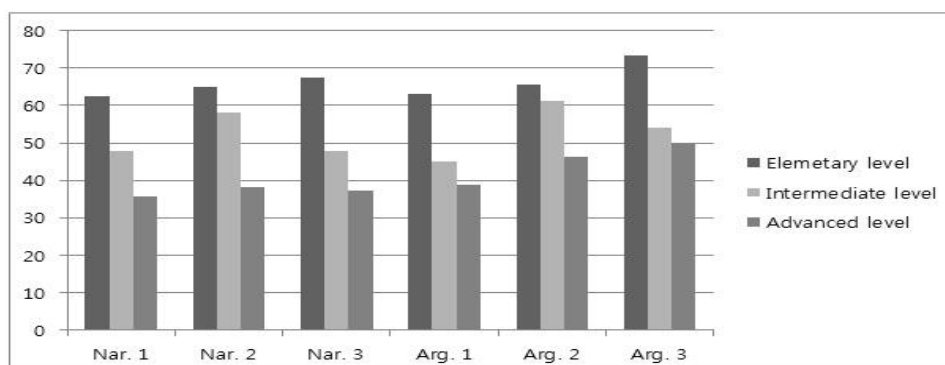

FIGURE 2. L1 use by writing tasks for three proficiency levels

In short, the less proficient students tended to use their L1 more than the higher proficiency students. Also, most students generally employed their L1 more in the argumentative writing tasks, which were regarded as more difficult than the narrative writing tasks. However, the students from all three proficiency levels exhibited different uses of their L1 in different writing genres and tasks, and they employed their L1 for different purposes.

USE OF L1 WRITING STRATEGIES IN L2 WRITING PROCESSES

The number of utterances was counted and analyzed based on transcriptions from the students' think-aloud protocols. The present study also focuses on the purpose for the use of each utterance.

Table 4 shows the frequency of writing strategies in L1 use that were used in the six writing tasks by the nine students. The participants employed various strategies such as Idea generation (31.1%), Direct-translation (16.6%), Back-translation (12.4%), Metacomments (10.9%), and Lexical searching (10.2%). Among these strategies, Idea generation remained most frequent in their think-aloud protocols, which demonstrates that the L2 writers used their L1 dominantly in producing thoughts or ideas. This is in line with Ansarimoghaddam and Tan's (2014) finding that L2 writers had difficulty generating ideas through writing in English.

TABLE 4. Frequency of writing strategies in L1use

Writing strategy	Elementary (%)	Intermediate (%)	Advanced (%)	Total (%)
Discourse (D)	12* (1.1)	9 (1.5)	20 (3.3)	41 (1.8)
Idea generation (IG)	320 (30.2)	191 (32.3)	190 (31.4)	701 (31.1)
Language use (LU)	112 (10.6)	39 (6.6)	22 (3.6)	173 (7.7)
Lexical searching (LS)	119 (11.2)	46 (7.8)	66 (10.9)	231 (10.2)
Direct translation (DT)	118 (11.2)	164 (27.7)	93 (15.4)	375 (16.6)
Back-translation (BT)	110 (10.4)	55 (9.3)	115 (19.0)	280 (12.4)
Metacomments (MC)	153 (14.5)	46 (7.8)	47 (7.8)	246 (10.9)
Self-instruction (SI)	15 (1.4)	5 (0.8)	15 (2.5)	35 (1.6)
Revising (RV)	15 (1.4)	3 (0.5)	16 (2.6)	34 (1.5)
Repeating (RP)	65 (6.1)	15 (2.5)	4 (0.7)	84 (3.7)
Task-examination (TE)	19 (1.8)	18 (3)	17 (2.8)	54 (2.4)
Total (%)	**1058 (100)**	**591 (100)**	**605 (100)**	**2254 (100)**

The numeric values indicate the number of utterances for a specific strategy in think-aloud protocols

The second highest number of utterances is Direct-translation followed by Back-translation. These strategies were prevalent in the students' writings. While they were composing writing tasks, they mostly wrote their ideas into the L2 and often back translated from the L2 into the L1 by reviewing previously written text to generate more content or monitor their written production. The students also used Metacomments as a writing strategy, revealing that they tended mainly to evaluate and monitor their text production for appropriateness or quality, or comment on the writing process as a whole. In addition, the students tried to find appropriate lexical items as well as checked grammar, punctuation, or orthographic conventions for language use. Conversely, Self-instruction and Revising were the least used strategies.

Figure 3 shows the distribution of L1 writing strategies use relative to the three proficiency levels. The most marked feature across the three levels is the use of Idea generation. It shows a steady use of about 31 percent. In the present study, Idea generation is the most widely used writing strategy in L2 composition. However, though the frequency of using this strategy remained consistent across the three levels, each level of student showed different uses.
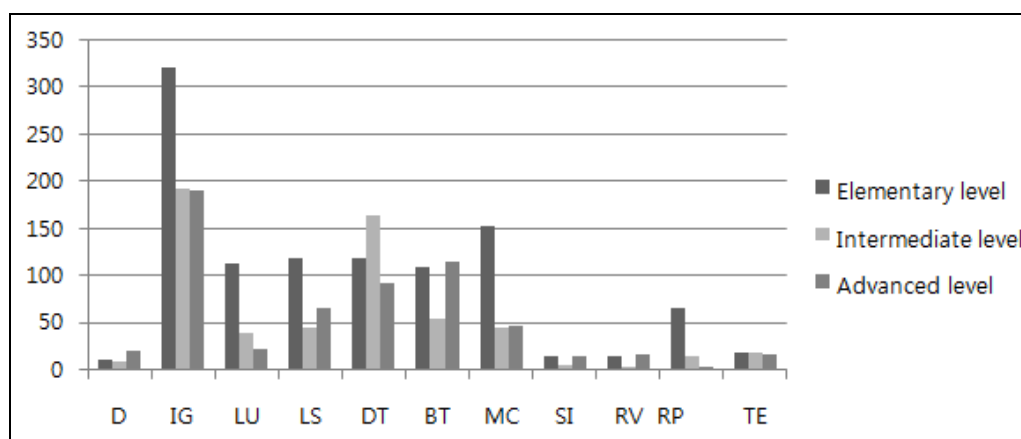
Notes: D: Discourse, IG: Idea generation, LU: Language use, LS: Lexical searching, DT: Direct translation, BT: Back translation, MC: Metacomments, SI: Self-instruction, RV: Revising, RP: Repeating, TE: Task-examination

FIGURE 3. Distribution of writing strategy in L1 use by proficiency level

On one hand, both Chan of the elementary level and Woon of the advanced level produced the dominant 133 and 91 utterances, respectively, but differed in their stated purposes for using this strategy. Woon gave weight mainly to recollecting and planning contents through discourse organization and idea generation. She also tried to produce diverse semantic units. On the other hand, Chan at first read the writing prompt and switched to the L1 to better understand what he wanted to write. Then he wrote down his thoughts in the L2 without any planning. This led him to translate his composition into the L2 during the writing process. He tended to verbalize his ideas as segments, not as full sentences, moving back and forth, and repeating some words or phrases.

> *While I play basketball, I can make many friends…I can make many friends (7-second pause) so playing basketball will help for you,* will help to you…*playing basketball will help to you, in making friends. Making friends, making friends making friends…You will have friends…* [Chan, elementary level, narrative writing 1]

As indicated above, Chan repeated utterances such as *"I can make many friends," "Playing basketball will help for you,"* and *"making friends."*He continued to repeat specific sentences or phrases in order to monitor grammatical points and to generate an impetus to continue composing for the next idea. This explains why the sentences he produced were limited in comparison to other students despite his large quantity of utterances when generating ideas.

Furthermore, in organizing the texts, the low-proficiency students depended on local planning, talking out what idea will come next in their composition. On the other hand, the more proficient students focused on general planning, which is organizing one's thoughts for writing and discussing how one will proceed.

> *I'll mention the disadvantages of buying a car in terms of cost and then provide some supporting advantages such as of traveling for having experience and fun.*[Ho, intermediate level, argumentative writing 2]

The above excerpt display Ho's use of discourse organization in the argumentative writing tasks. Ho usually made a plan for the broad framework about what he would write at the beginning. Then he developed his composition by generating ideas.

In addition, uses of Metacomments and Repeating decreased from

14.5percent(elementary level) to 7.8 percent(advanced level) utterances, and from 6.1 percent(elementary level) to 0.7 percent(advanced level) utterances, respectively, revealing the lower the students' proficiency level was, the more they employed those strategies.

Language use and Lexical searching are distributed from 10.6 percent (elementary level) to 3.6 percent(advanced level) and from 11.2 percent(elementary level) to 10.9 percent (advanced level), respectively. The elementary level students primarily used their L1 to check grammar and orthographic conventions as linguistic code as well as to search for appropriate lexical items. In fact, in the post-writing interview, the students from the elementary proficiency group (Myung, Chan & Hee)frequently mentioned use of L1 strategies of Language use and Lexical searching to compensate for their vocabulary weaknesses, which sometimes limited their ability to express their thoughts in English. In terms of Lexical searching, the advanced level students took an approach that chose the appropriate word between two lexical items. In contrast, the elementary level students spent relatively large amounts of time searching for words compared to students of other levels. They had difficulty coming up with relevant words suitable for their written contexts. Consequently they experimented with decontextualized words. For example, Chan in the elementary group expressed, '*I acquired an illness,*" instead of, '*I became ill,* 'or, *'I got sick.'* Also when they searched for but failed to come up with appropriate lexical items, the elementary level students tended to replace them with other words close in meaning.

As mentioned earlier, another strategy that students used most frequently was Translation, including both Direct-translation and Back-translation. Translation was used prevalently along with Idea generation. Most of the students except June (advanced level) used both translations. Direct-translation was dominant for the elementary and intermediate levels, and Back-translation was used more than twice as much at the elementary level than at the other levels. Back-translation refers to the process of going back over the written text. It is employed as a lexical search or used as a springboard to stimulate the idea generation process (Murphy & Roca de Larios, 2010). In the present study, students mostly thought of the content of the writing in their L1 and then tried to translate these ideas into L2. During this process, some students began by using their L1 to write down ideas on a piece of paper, whereas the remaining students just noted key words about their ideas and then directly translated into the L2. As Huh (2001) explained, "they engage in 'mental translation', in which translation is in writer's minds and not on the paper" (p. 88). Furthermore, when students employed the translation strategy, it was found that some students sometimes mistranslated their L1 into the L2 and occasionally rephrased vocabulary into easier expressions when they had difficulty translating the words from their L1 into the L2.

In a sense, the use of writing strategies relative to students' proficiency levels might not be a case of 'what strategy to use' but rather 'how to use the most appropriate strategy.' Although students in each of the three levels employed similar kinds of writing strategies, their techniques for developing the written compositions were so different that it leads to a consideration of text fluency. As Raimes (1985) stated, the highest proficiency students "exhibited the most occasions of fluency in their writing" (p. 243). In fact, the more advanced students exhibited sentence progression without interruption compared to the less advanced students, who often displayed hesitation when composing.

Table 5 shows the frequency of L1 writing strategy use relative to writing genres (see also Figure 4). Despite the slight differences, the students generally employed L1 writing strategies more in the narrative writing tasks. Furthermore, in both writing genres, the students used writing strategies most frequently for generating ideas, translating into the L2, metacommenting, and searching for lexical items.

TABLE 5. Frequency of writing strategies in L1 use by writing genres

Writing strategy	Narrative writing (%)	Argumentative writing (%)
Discourse (D)	14 (1.2)	27 (2.5)
Idea generation (IG)	369 (31.7)	332 (30.4)
Language use (LU)	103 (8.9)	70 (6.4)
Lexical searching (LS)	104 (8.9)	127(11.6)
Direct translation (DT)	214(18.4)	161(14.8)
Back-translation (BT)	133(11.4)	147(13.5)
Metacomments(MC)	117(10.1)	129(11.8)
Self-instruction (SI)	21 (1.8)	14(1.3)
Revising (RV)	16 (1.4)	18 (1.6)
Repeating (RP)	45 (5.2)	39 (3.6)
Task-examination (TE)	27(2.3)	27 (2.5)
Total (%)	**1163 (100)**	**1091 (100)**

The L2 student writers devoted varying amounts of attention to Idea generation, Direct-and Back-translation, Metacomments, Lexical searching and Language use in both writing genres. In terms of Idea generation, the number of utterances in the argumentative writing tasks was slightly lower than that in the narrative writing tasks, but the difference is not large. In other words, the students still employed this strategy in both writing genres.
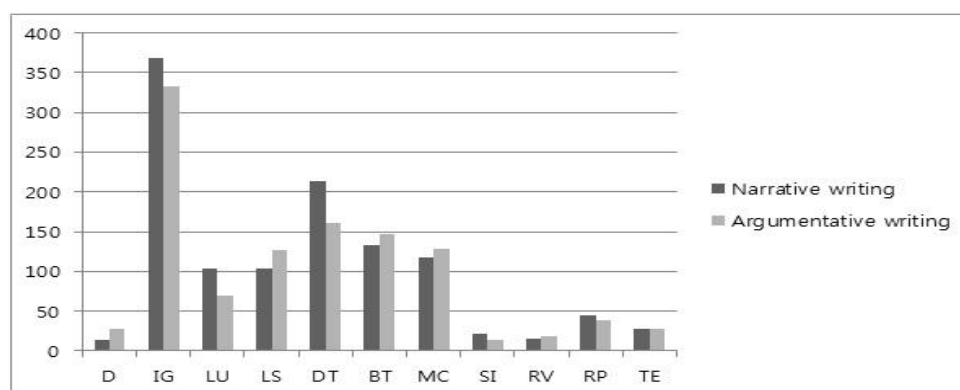

FIGURE 4. Distribution of writing strategies in L1 use by writing genres

On one hand, the number of utterances of Direct-translation is higher in the narrative writing tasks (18.4%) than in the argumentative writing tasks (14.8%). On the other hand, the number of utterances of Back-translation is higher in the argumentative writing tasks (13.5%) than in the narrative writing tasks (11.4%). This demonstrates the difference between two writing genres. Narrative writing is rather informal and is not regarded as difficult as argumentative writing. Therefore, the students commonly recalled personal episodes from their memory and then changed the images from these memories directly into L2. Argumentative writing, however, is persuasive, and must be supported by an elaborate exposition of a position. In this type of writing, the sources of the argument are not easily recalled from memory; it is imperative to generate new ideas. Accordingly, students have to focus on the meaning between the expressions they have already produced and their original intention, as well as whether the context they have created is logical or not.

The number of Metacomments shows a gradual increase from 10.1 percent in narrative writing tasks to 11.8 percent in argumentative writing tasks. This increase demonstrates that students evaluated and paid more attention to the appropriateness or quality of what they had written during the argumentative writing tasks than during narrative

writing tasks.

The number of instances of Language use decreased from 8.9 percent in the narrative writing tasks to 6.4 percent in the argumentative writing tasks, while the number of instances of Lexical searching increased from 8.9 percent to 11.6 percent, demonstrating a progressive increase in the argumentative writing tasks. This reveals that the students searched relatively more for lexical items in the more difficult writing tasks. The use of Discourse also showed a slight increase in the argumentative writing tasks in which students used their L1 mainly for planning and evaluating the organization of the text.

In short, even though there is a difference in number of utterances, the results revealed similarities among the students of all three proficiency levels regarding the type of writing strategies used. Overall, they preferred to use Idea generation, Direct-and Back-translation, Metacomments, and Lexical searching.

CONCLUSION

The present study investigated L1 use in six writing tasks in two genres by nine Korean students of three proficiency levels. Specifically, it focused on the amount of L1 use and students' writing strategies relative to their proficiency levels, writing genres, and task types. The findings are the results of two research questions that guided this study.

The first research question explored the extent to which Korean learners of English use their L1 in L2 writing tasks and how this use varies according to their L2 proficiency, the specific writing genres, and writing tasks. The results revealed that the students from each of the three proficiency levels used their L1 more than half of the time spent, on average, on composition. Lower level students used their L1 much more than the advanced students. Most students, except for Hee (elementary) and Ho (intermediate), showed more liberal use of their L1 in the argumentative writing tasks. This finding is consistent with Woodall (2002), in which less proficient learners switched to their L1 frequently, and their duration of L1 use increased with task difficulty. However, this finding differs somewhat from Wang and Wen (2002), in which narrative topics generated more L1 use even though they found that L1 use decreased as L2 proficiency increased. For both writing genres in the current study, L1 use increased with the demands of the task, but it is important to note that students' use of their L1 in six writing tasks was different depending on each task. In other words, students reacted differently in accordance with task familiarity, and the relative ease or difficulty of the task.

The second research question explored the kinds of writing strategies in L1 use that Korean learners of English used in L2 writing and how the strategies vary relative to L2 proficiency, writing genres and writing tasks. The results showed that the students of all three proficiency levels employed Idea generation, Direct-and Back translation, Metacomments, and Lexical searching although the frequencies are different. Concerning the frequency with which each strategy was used, the three levels of proficiencies showed a steady use of their L1 in generating ideas. Also, the low-proficiency students employed Metacomments, Language use, and Repeating more than high-proficiency students. However, despite differences in the number of utterances, the present study revealed that there was no consistent relationship between L2 proficiency and the type of writing strategies students used in L2 composition. This finding is consistent with one in study of Cumming (1989) in which proficiency in the L2 did not affect the type of writing strategies used by the writers. Van Weijen et al. (2009) also supported the same position that L2 proficiency did not influence the writing process. On the other hand, this study showed that although the types of writing strategies that the students employed in L2 composition were similar, the ways in which they applied them to their own composition was quite different depending on proficiency level. In other words, each proficiency level differed in terms of how they used

each strategy. These differences were often found among the low-proficiency students and high-proficiency students. This finding is also supported by Roca de Larios, Murphy and Manchón (1999) and Wang (2003). In their studies, the different levels lead to the different purposes in writing strategies.

Given all the above, it can now be concluded that students' L1 use in L2 writing is both for ideational purposes in order to generate or elaborate ideas and for compensatory purposes in order to make up for linguistic deficiencies. The writing strategies students employed in their L2 compositions were not significantly different regardless of proficiency, writing genres, and writing tasks. However, the ways in which they applied them to their own compositions were quite different depending on proficiency level. What stands out most from these findings is the need to focus on the way in which writing strategies are used rather than on just the types of strategies themselves. In other words, writing classes and instruction should focus more on the topics of 'how to use writing strategies' as well as 'what writing strategies to use.'

IfL2 writers know how to employ their L1 strategically during the writing process, then L1 use can be beneficial to L2 writing. As seen from the elementary-level students in the present study, less-skilled writers tend to translate their L1 into the L2 literally, resulting in mistranslation at times. Thus it is particularly necessary to teach less-skilled learners how to use their L1 strategically in order to develop their L2 proficiency. L1 use during the L2 writing process needs to focus on content concerns as well as linguistic concerns. This study showed that, before or while writing, participants constantly generated ideas to make more sense in the writing. In this way, they need to consider L1 use as a means of solving problems in writing. Accordingly, teachers can help language learners develop techniques associated with strategies for content-based idea generation. Thinking in the L1 during the process of idea generation will make it easier for students to get closer to translating into the L2.

While this study adds important insights to the literature on the L2 writers' L1 use, a limitation is the lack of the assessment of the text quality in the students' written production. It may be worthwhile to consider students' final written drafts, incorporating an assessment of text quality, and therefore lending insight into the relationship between using writing strategies and the quality of final written drafts. This would demonstrate the effectiveness between using writing strategies and writing quality, covering the accuracy, fluency and complexity of the text.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

ENDNOTES

[i] The definition of writing strategies in this study follows the learner-internal perspective from the narrow categorization that sees strategies as problem-solving mechanisms (Manchón, Roca de Larios, & Murphy, 2007). See Manchón et al. (2007) for a detailed review about the conceptualization of the strategy construct.
[ii] A word cluster represents either a group of words that form a sentence or that function as a unit in the constituent of a sentence.

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APPENDIX: CATEGORIES FOR CODING SCHEME

Category	Description	Example
Discourse (D)	Verbalization made for planning and evaluating the organization of the text	*First I'll write merits and demerits about it and second I'll express my opinions*
Idea generation (IG)	Verbalization made for planning, writing, and revising the content of the writing. Writers are formulating, considering, reconsidering or searching for content in their writing.	*You can meet new people and experience valuable things. Also you can fully relax.*
Language use (LU)	Verbalization related to grammar orthographic conventions or punctuation	*'Help' is transitive verb, so what is the form behind that verb? To or ing?*
Lexical searching (LS)	Verbalization for finding an appropriate lexical item	*License? It is not proper here. Then, diploma? Certificate?*
Direct translation (DT)	Direct translation from L1 into L2	*I want to speak English very well…* I want to speak English very well
Back translation (BT)	Back translation from L2 into L1 by going back over the already written text in order to generate content, monitor written production or get an idea of the match between intention and expression	Buying a car has many benefits… *Buying a car has many benefits.* When I was a high school student… *When I was a high school student*
Metacomments (MC)	Self-evaluation and metaconcerns about the appropriateness or qualities of one single element or text production. Reflections on the writing process as a whole	*No, it's not correct.* *It sounds strange* *I'm not sure whether it is right or not.*
Self-instruction (SI)	Instructions participants give themselves regarding the next step in the writing process	*Let's start to write!* *I need to close here.*
Revising (RV)	Revising the text produced so far at the word, sentence, or text level in order to clarify meaning	*Erases 'them' and writes 'people'*
Repeating (RP)	Repeating a word, phrase, or part of sentence to provide impetus to continue composing, monitor ideas, or gain time to think	Reading a book..*reading a book…reading a book…*is boring…*boring…boring…*
Task-examination (TE)	Analyzing the writing prompt by reading it or commenting on the task	Compare your friend's two choices and explain which one you think your friend should choose. *Travel or buying a car? My advice is to go on vacation!*

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