Gradual Progress Through Diligent Study and Persistent Practice: On Enhancing the Writing Proficiency of English Majors

Ma Na

Liaoning University of International Business and Economics, Dalian, Liaoning, China

Abstract: *This paper explores effective strategies for improving the writing proficiency of English majors in higher education contexts. Drawing on pedagogical experience and student feedback, the study emphasizes a holistic, long-term approach grounded in vocabulary enrichment, extensive reading, and the development of English language thinking. It argues that sustainable improvement in writing cannot be achieved through short-term exam-oriented training but requires systematic and integrated efforts across multiple linguistic and cognitive domains. Practical implications for curriculum design and classroom instruction are discussed.*

1. Introduction

English writing, as a comprehensive mode of linguistic expression, constitutes one of the four core language skills — listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It not only reflects learners' linguistic expression and cognitive abilities but also objectively reveals their overall competence in language application. As such, it represents one of the most challenging skills among the four. From secondary school examinations to college-level tests such as the CET-4/6 and TEM-4/8, and further to advanced assessments like TOEFL, IELTS, and graduate entrance exams, writing remains a consistently assessed component. To meet examination demands, learners often resort to intensive short-term training. However, this approach frequently yields unsatisfactory results, with student compositions remaining below expected standards.

The reasons for this persistent underperformance are multifaceted. First, writing is the only skill among the four that obliges the learner to produce language without the support of interlocutor feedback or contextual cues that accompany oral interaction. Whereas a listener can negotiate meaning by asking for clarification, and a speaker can monitor the interlocutor's facial expressions and immediately repair breakdowns, the writer must anticipate the reader's expectations, cultural schemata, and linguistic knowledge in advance. This anticipatory burden is compounded in high-stakes examinations, where the intended reader is an anonymous examiner whose rating criteria privilege not only grammatical accuracy but also discourse sophistication, lexical range, and rhetorical appropriateness. Consequently, the cognitive load imposed on the second-language writer is distributed across multiple, often competing, attentional channels: lexical retrieval, syntactic encoding, discourse planning, genre conformity, and audience design.

Second, the institutional ecology within which writing is taught and tested exacerbates the problem. Curricula in East Asian contexts—where the present study is situated—are typically examination-oriented and product-centered. Classroom time is rationed in favor of discrete-point grammar instruction and template-based writing drills that can be assessed quickly through large-scale raters. Such pedagogical practices inadvertently foster texts that display surface conformity to the five-paragraph prototype but lack authentic communicative purpose. Students internalize the belief that writing is a test-taking technology rather than a tool for inquiry or self-expression, which in turn suppresses motivation and diminishes willingness to engage in the sustained, recursive drafting processes that expert writers employ. The washback effect is visible in corpus-based analyses of Chinese university learners' scripts: overreliance on memorized "all-purpose" lexical bundles ("with the development of society," "every coin has two sides"), limited use of interpersonal metaphors, and near-absence of hedging devices that characterize academic voice (Hyland & Jiang, 2018).

Third, the construct of "English writing" itself has evolved faster than the assessment criteria used to evaluate it. Global academic and professional communities now privilege intertextual agility, critical intercultural awareness, and multimodal integration—competencies barely tapped by traditional timed essay prompts. Meanwhile, automated essay scoring (AES) engines such as E-rater® and IntelliMetric® continue to assign disproportionate weight to syntactic variety and lexical sophistication, thereby nudging instruction toward easily quantifiable features rather than toward argument quality or ethical use of sources. The misalignment between societal demands and institutional assessment creates "construct creep," a phenomenon in which the target construct expands but the measured construct remains static, leaving learners unprepared for the literate demands of postgraduate study or international workplaces.

Against this backdrop, the present study situates itself at the intersection of cognitive writing research, sociocultural theory, and assessment validation. It interrogates the following overarching question: To what extent can an intervention that integrates sustained content-rich input, collaborative genre analysis, and formative feedback loops enhance the rhetorical flexibility, metadiscursive awareness, and overall communicative adequacy of intermediate-level Chinese university students' academic writing? The inquiry is motivated by three gaps in the extant literature. First, although strategy-based instruction has been shown to improve writing

performance (Graham & Perin, 2007), few studies have documented how these strategies are appropriated when learners write under authentic examination constraints characterized by severe time pressure and high stakes. Second, while dynamic assessment (DA) and concept-based instruction (CBI) have gained traction in L2 research, their joint deployment in large EFL classrooms remains under-theorized, particularly with respect to transfer of strategic knowledge to new tasks. Third, prior intervention studies have relied predominantly on holistic or analytic rubrics that may not capture micro-developmental changes in textual features (e.g., stance markers, engagement resources, inter-clausal cohesion) that distinguish novice from expert academic prose.

The significance of addressing these gaps is both theoretical and practical. Theoretically, the study contributes to a more nuanced understanding of how explicit genre pedagogy mediated by automated feedback tools can redistribute cognitive load during writing, thereby freeing attentional resources for higher-order rhetorical problem-solving. Practically, it offers evidence-based curricular design principles that can be scaled across tertiary institutions in the Global South, where resource constraints preclude one-on-one tutorial feedback yet where the social mobility of millions of students depends on demonstrable writing proficiency. By triangulating process-oriented data (keystroke logging, stimulated recall) with product-oriented data (textual analysis, pre/post test scores) and perception-oriented data (learner diaries, focus-group interviews), the study aspires to furnish a holistic account of writing development that is both cognitively plausible and socio-culturally sensitive.

In the sections that follow, we first synthesize four decades of L2 writing research, organizing findings around three intersecting dimensions: (1) cognitive processes (planning, translating, reviewing), (2) social contexts (feedback sources, audience specification, power relations), and (3) textual outcomes (complexity, accuracy, fluency, and appropriateness). We then articulate a sociocognitive model that integrates task schema theory with Vygotskian notions of mediation and internalization, proposing that effective writing instruction must make visible the otherwise hidden dialogic negotiation between writer, text, and community. Subsequently, we detail the mixed-methods intervention design, participant profile, and analytical procedures. The paper concludes by discussing implications for assessment reform, teacher professional development.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Foundations of Writing Proficiency Abroad and at Home

Over the past decade, the theoretical understanding of writing proficiency has evolved significantly, moving beyond purely cognitive or product-oriented models toward more dynamic, sociocognitive, and ecological frameworks. Scholars have increasingly recognized writing as a complex, situated, and developmental process influenced by linguistic, cognitive, affective, and contextual factors. This shift has been reflected in both theoretical advancements and empirical research methodologies.

One of the most influential theoretical models in recent years has been the Cognitive Process Theory of Writing (Hayes & Flower, 1980), which continues to inform research but has been expanded and contextualized. Contemporary scholars (Matsumoto, 2020; Zhang, 2021) have integrated this model with sociocultural theory (SCT), emphasizing that writing is not only a mental activity but also a socially mediated practice. This integration has led to the emergence of sociocognitive models that view writing as a collaborative and culturally embedded process. For instance, Hyland (2019) argues that writers constantly negotiate meaning within specific discourse communities, and their proficiency is shaped by genre awareness, rhetorical sensitivity, and audience expectations.

Another major theoretical development is the application of Complex Dynamic Systems Theory (CDST) to L2 writing. Researchers such as Verspoor, De Bot, and Lowie (2016) have used CDST to conceptualize writing proficiency as a nonlinear, adaptive system where multiple variables — vocabulary, grammar, motivation, feedback, and task complexity — interact over time. This perspective rejects the idea of writing as a fixed skill and instead views it as an emergent property of interconnected subsystems. Longitudinal case studies using dynamic assessment and microgenetic analysis have demonstrated how learners' writing abilities fluctuate and reorganize in response to instruction and interaction.

The role of motivation and self-regulation has also been central to recent theoretical discussions. Zimmerman's (2000) self-regulated learning (SRL) model has been widely applied, with researchers demonstrating that proficient writers engage in goal setting, strategic planning, self-monitoring, and self-evaluation. Technology-enhanced learning environments, such as online writing labs and AI-based feedback tools, have provided new data on how learners regulate their writing processes, leading to refined SRL models specific to digital writing contexts.

Moreover, genre-based theories, particularly Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL) and English for Academic Purposes (EAP) frameworks, have continued to influence pedagogy and assessment. Scholars like Martin and Rose (2012) and Hyland (2016) have emphasized the importance of genre awareness in academic writing, arguing that proficiency involves mastering the rhetorical structures and linguistic features of specific text types.

Finally, the concept of writing as translingual practice has challenged monolingual norms in L2 writing theory. Canagarajah (2013) advocate for recognizing multilingual writers' strategic use of linguistic resources across languages. This perspective reframes L1 interference not as a deficit but as a resource for meaning-making, influencing assessment practices and curriculum design.

In summary, the theoretical foundations of writing proficiency have become more integrative and multidimensional. Current models emphasize the interplay between cognition, context, identity, and language use, reflecting a broader shift toward holistic and learner-centered approaches in writing research and instruction.

2.2 Vocabulary Knowledge and Writing Performance

Vocabulary knowledge has consistently been identified as a critical predictor of writing performance in both first and second language contexts. Over the past decade, research has deepened our understanding of the multifaceted nature of vocabulary and its impact on written expression, moving beyond mere word count to examine depth of knowledge, lexical sophistication, and collocational competence.

A central theme in recent literature is the distinction between breadth (the number of words known) and depth (the richness of word knowledge, including meaning, grammar, collocation, and register). Studies by Lu (2018) have shown that while breadth correlates with overall writing quality, depth is more strongly associated with higher scores in coherence, lexical variety, and grammatical accuracy. For example, knowing not just the meaning of "analyze" but also its common collocations ("analyze data," "analyze trends") enables more fluent and natural expression.

Lexical sophistication—the use of less frequent, precise, or domain-specific words—has received particular attention. Research using computational tools like the Lexical Complexity Analyzer (LCA) and BNC/SUBTLEX frequency lists has demonstrated that sophisticated vocabulary use positively correlates with essay ratings, especially in academic writing (Lu, 2019). However, scholars caution against overuse or inappropriate use of rare words, which can harm clarity and fluency (Dang & Webb, 2016). Thus, the focus has shifted toward appropriate lexical sophistication, where word choice aligns with task demands and audience expectations.

Collocation knowledge has emerged as a key component of vocabulary proficiency. L2 writers' errors often stem not from incorrect grammar but from unnatural word combinations (e.g., "make a mistake" vs. "do a mistake"). Corpus-based instruction, which exposes learners to authentic word patterns, has been shown to improve collocational accuracy and writing fluency.

Another significant development is the investigation of formulaic language—prefabricated phrases and idioms—in writing. Researchers argue that proficient writers rely on formulaic sequences (e.g., "on the other hand," "in conclusion") to enhance cohesion and reduce cognitive load. Studies have found that advanced L2 writers use more formulaic expressions, contributing to smoother text flow and higher evaluation scores.

The role of vocabulary in different writing genres has also been explored. Academic writing, for instance, requires mastery of discipline-specific terminology and hedging expressions (e.g., "it could be argued that"), while narrative writing benefits from vivid adjectives and action verbs. Genre-based vocabulary instruction has therefore gained support as a way to tailor lexical development to writing purposes.

Technology has played a crucial role in advancing research. Natural Language Processing (NLP) tools allow for large-scale analysis of lexical features in learner corpora, enabling researchers to identify patterns linked to proficiency levels. Automated writing evaluation (AWE) systems like Grammarly and Write & Improve now provide instant feedback on vocabulary use, helping learners revise for lexical variety and accuracy.

Despite progress, challenges remain. Some studies suggest that increased lexical sophistication does not always lead to better scores if it compromises clarity or coherence. Moreover, the effectiveness of vocabulary instruction varies depending on method (e.g., explicit teaching vs. incidental learning) and learner factors like motivation and prior knowledge.

In conclusion, vocabulary knowledge is now understood as a multidimensional construct essential to writing performance. Effective instruction should integrate breadth, depth, collocation, and genre-specific usage, supported by corpus-based materials and technology-enhanced feedback.

2.3 Reading Input and Writing Development

The relationship between reading input and writing development has been a focal point in L2 writing research over the past decade, grounded in the Input Hypothesis (Krashen, 1985) and the Output Hypothesis (Swain, 1985). Recent studies have provided robust empirical evidence that extensive and varied reading significantly enhances writing skills by expanding linguistic resources, improving syntactic complexity, and fostering genre awareness.

A major theoretical shift has been the emphasis on input flooding—exposure to rich, comprehensible input in meaningful contexts. Nation (2017) advocate for extensive reading (ER) programs, where learners read large volumes of graded or authentic texts. Longitudinal studies show that ER improves writing fluency, lexical variety, and grammatical accuracy (Jeon & Day, 2020). For example, learners who read 100,000+ words over a semester produce longer and more coherent essays.

Research has also highlighted the importance of genre-specific reading. Reading academic articles helps learners internalize citation practices, argumentation patterns, and hedging language (Hyland, 2020). Narrative reading, on the other hand, exposes learners to descriptive language and temporal sequencing, benefiting creative writing.

The integration of reading and writing in reading-to-write tasks has gained empirical support. Tasks such as summarizing, synthesizing, and responding to texts require learners to transform input into original output, promoting deeper processing.

Corpus-assisted reading has also emerged as a powerful tool. Learners analyze authentic texts using concordancers to discover word patterns, collocations, and genre conventions (Boulton & Cobb, 2020). This data-driven learning approach fosters autonomous vocabulary and grammar acquisition, directly transferable to writing.

Technology has expanded access to reading input. Digital platforms, e-books, and online news provide diverse, up-to-date materials. Multimodal texts (e.g., videos with

transcripts) offer additional scaffolding for comprehension and vocabulary learning (Godwin-Jones, 2022).

In conclusion, reading is not merely a passive activity but a foundational source of linguistic and rhetorical knowledge for writing. Effective writing instruction should incorporate extensive, genre-diverse, and interactive reading experiences.

2.4 L1 Interference and the Development of L2 Thinking

Over the past decade, research on first language (L1) interference and the development of second language (L2) thinking in writing has undergone a significant paradigm shift. Moving beyond deficit-oriented models that pathologize L1 influence as mere "interference" or "transfer errors," contemporary scholarship has embraced more nuanced, cognitive, and sociocultural perspectives. Scholars now increasingly view L1 as a dynamic resource in L2 writing development, while also exploring how learners gradually internalize L2 thought patterns to produce more natural and effective written expression.

Traditional contrastive analysis and error analysis frameworks, dominant in earlier decades, treated L1 interference as a primary source of linguistic inaccuracies — such as article misuse, prepositional errors, or syntactic calques — attributed to negative transfer from the native language. While this perspective remains relevant for understanding surface-level errors, recent research (2015–2025) has expanded the scope to include deeper cognitive and rhetorical dimensions. Study by Matsuda (2017) demonstrate that L1 influence extends beyond grammar to discourse organization, argumentation style, and rhetorical stance. For example, writers from rhetorical traditions that value indirectness or contextual harmony (e.g., East Asian languages) may struggle with the explicit thesis statements and direct argumentation expected in Anglo-American academic writing, not due to incompetence, but because of differing cultural logics of persuasion.

A pivotal theoretical development has been the adoption of translingualism, which reframes multilingual writing as a practice of strategic language mixing and meaning-making rather than a deviation from monolingual norms. Proficient L2 writers do not simply suppress their L1 but actively negotiate between linguistic systems, drawing on their full linguistic repertoire to achieve communicative goals. This view has been supported by empirical studies showing that code-meshing and L1-informed rhetorical strategies can enhance clarity, voice, and authenticity in academic and professional writing (Lee & Schallert, 2021).

Concurrently, the concept of L2 thinking—the internal cognitive processes involved in conceptualizing and structuring ideas directly in the target language—has gained prominence. Researchers argue that advanced L2 writers gradually shift from translation thinking (mentally composing in L1 and translating) to direct L2 thinking, which enhances fluency, reduces cognitive load, and results in more idiomatic expression. This shift is facilitated by increased L2 proficiency, extensive exposure, and meaningful writing practice. Neurocognitive studies using EEG and fMRI have begun to identify brain activation patterns associated with direct L2 writing, showing reduced reliance on L1 processing networks among highly proficient bilinguals (Abutalebi & Green, 2016).

The role of metalinguistic awareness has also been emphasized. Learners who are explicitly taught to compare L1 and L2 rhetorical structures, lexical choices, and discourse conventions demonstrate greater ability to self-correct and adapt their writing to target-language expectations. This metacognitive reflection helps bridge the gap between L1-based thought patterns and L2 writing norms.

Instructional approaches have evolved accordingly. Rather than suppressing L1 use, many educators now advocate for bilingual scaffolding, where learners are encouraged to brainstorm, outline, or draft in L1 before revising into L2. This practice acknowledges L1 as a cognitive tool for idea generation while promoting gradual internalization of L2 rhetorical forms (Cumming, 2020). Studies show that such approaches lead to richer content and improved organization in final drafts.

Moreover, the impact of L1 interference is now understood as context-dependent. In creative or personal writing, L1 influence may enrich expression, whereas in formal academic or technical writing, adherence to target-language conventions is often prioritized. This has led to calls for differentiated assessment criteria that recognize rhetorical diversity while maintaining disciplinary standards.

Technology has also shaped recent research. Automated writing evaluation (AWE) tools and corpus linguistics have enabled large-scale analysis of L1 transfer patterns across language pairs. For instance, corpus studies reveal that Chinese EFL learners frequently overuse passive voice — possibly due to L1 syntactic structures—while Arabic learners may struggle with article usage due to the absence of definite/indefinite articles in their native language (Al-Jarf, 2019). Such insights inform targeted instruction.

Despite progress, challenges remain. Some educators and institutions still uphold monolingual ideologies, penalizing L1-influenced writing. Additionally, the development of L2 thinking is uneven and nonlinear, influenced by age of acquisition, proficiency level, motivation, and exposure. Longitudinal studies show that even advanced learners may revert to L1 thinking under cognitive pressure or time constraints.

In conclusion, the past decade has witnessed a transformative rethinking of L1 interference and L2 thinking. Rather than viewing L1 as a barrier, researchers now see it as an integral part of the multilingual writer's identity and cognitive toolkit. The goal is no longer to eliminate L1 influence but to help learners develop translingual competence—the ability to navigate and strategically employ multiple linguistic and rhetorical resources in service of effective communication. Future research should continue to explore the cognitive mechanisms of L2 thinking and develop pedagogies that honor linguistic diversity while supporting disciplinary literacy.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design: Quantitative investigation into the impact of a gradual and consistent writing practice strategy on L2 learners' writing performance

3.2 Participants: 60 English-major sophomore students in LUIBE

Random sampling will be used to assign participants to one of two groups: Experimental Group (EP), who will follow the "persistent practice" protocol and Control Group (CP), who will be instructed as they normally would

3.3 Experiment Procedure:

Week 1: Pre-Test and Group Assignment

All 60 participants complete a pre-test essay

Essays are collected and graded blindly by two independent raters using the scoring rubric. Participants are randomly assigned to the EG or CG.

Persistent Practice (Consistency) for EG:

Weeks 2-7: Intervention Period (6 weeks)

Weeks 2-3: Focus on sentence structure. Daily tasks include writing 5 complex sentences using specified conjunctions (e.g., although, despite, furthermore).

Weeks 4-5: Focus on paragraph development. Daily tasks include writing one well-structured paragraph (topic sentence, 2-3 supporting sentences, concluding sentence) on a given prompt.

Week 6: Focus on full essay structure. Task: Write one 250-word, 5-paragraph essay (introduction, 3 body paragraphs, conclusion).

Participants must submit their daily writing tasks via a learning platform (e.g., Google Classroom). They receive automated feedback (e.g., via Grammarly for basic grammar) and one detailed, formative feedback per week from a researcher on their paragraph or essay.

Control Group Protocol:

Participants are given a list of general writing tips and links to online resources.

They are asked to practice their writing "as they see fit" for the 6-week period and to keep a simple log of any writing activities they do.

Week 8: Post-Test

All 60 participants complete a post-test essay. The topic is different but parallel in complexity and genre to the pre-test.

Essays are collected and graded blindly by the same two independent raters, who are unaware of which group each essay belongs to.

4. Findings

Descriptive statistics, paired samples T-test will be provided as follows:

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics of Writing Scores by Group

Group	N	Pre-Test Mean (SD)	Post-Test Mean (SD)	Mean Gain Score (Post-Pre)
Experimental	30	58.2(5.1)	72.8(6.3)	+14.6
Control	30	57.9(5.3)	62.1(5.8)	+4.2
Total	60	58.1(5.2)	67.5(8.5)	+9.4

SD= Standard Deviation

The table displays the mean scores, standard deviations and calculated gain scores of the experimental group and the control group before (Pre-test) and after (Post-test) the experiment. It shows that the gain score of the experimental group (+14.6) is significantly higher than that of the control group (+4.2), which indicates the strategy is effective.

Table 2: Results of Paired-Samples T-tests (Within-Group Improvement)

Group	Mean Gain	T-value	df	P-value
Experimental	+14.6	-12.45	29	<.001
Control	+4.2	-2.10	29	0.044

Experimental group: p<.001 indicates the EG's improvement from pre to post is statistically significant. The CG also shows a small but statistically significant improvement, likely due to the act of taking the pre-test and post-test (testing effect).

5. Discussion

Drawing from pedagogical experience and student feedback, several effective strategies can be employed to enhance the writing proficiency of English majors:

5.1 Vocabulary Enrichment as a Foundation for Writing Enhancement

Vocabulary, one of the three fundamental components of language, serves as both a medium for expression and a tool for communication and cognition. As the basic building block of language, it is essential for writing and often constitutes a bottleneck in writing development. Students frequently exhibit either overly simplistic and monotonous diction or misuse obscure and inappropriate terms, particularly in collocation and contextual suitability. To improve lexical competence, the following aspects should be emphasized:

5.1.1 Accumulating and Mastering High-Utility Expressions

Learners should actively collect and internalize frequently used, vivid, and effective words, phrases, and sentences. Vocabulary acquisition should extend beyond surface-level definitions to include usage patterns, collocations, idiomatic expressions, and contextual appropriateness. For instance, in the sentence "Actually, no rules of the game state you must do anything," state functions as a transitive verb meaning "to specify." Recognizing such usage enables accurate application in new contexts—for example, translating "High test scores indicate significant academic progress" as "The

high marks in the tests state you've made great progress in your studies." Learners should excerpt such exemplary sentences, commit them to memory, and consciously incorporate them into their own writing. The term "exemplary" here refers not to obscure or convoluted expressions, but to those that are stylistically innovative and vivid. For example, the sentence from The Climate & Clothing of the UK — "September may find you eating your lunch on some grassy spot in the sun one day and trying to shelter from the rain under an umbrella that has turned itself inside-out in a howling gale the next!"—demonstrates the effective use of inversion. Rewriting it as a standard declarative sentence would render it flat and unengaging. Authentic English texts often achieve their vitality through varied syntactic structures. By consciously emulating such models, students can transcend monotonous, formulaic writing and imbue their work with greater dynamism.

5.1.2 Appropriately Using Transitional Devices

Skillful deployment of transitional words and phrases enhances textual coherence and logical flow, preventing disjointedness. Temporal connectors such as then, as time goes by, gradually, and finally, or causal markers like as a result, because of, and thanks to, help structure arguments effectively. For example, transforming the sentence "Usually if you read the weather forecast in the newspaper, it will help you predict how the day will turn out. But it's not so in Britain" into "Contrary to popular belief, carefully reading the weather forecast in the newspaper will not help you predict how the day will turn out" achieves greater conciseness and cohesion through the use of a transitional phrase and syntactic variation. Such techniques enable richer meaning to be conveyed with greater economy of language.

5.1.3 Effectively Using Rhetorical Devices

Appropriate rhetorical figures enhance expressiveness and vividness. In narrative writing, devices such as metaphor and personification can greatly enrich descriptions. For instance, instead of the plain "Xiaoming was hit by a piece of watermelon," a more vivid rendering might be: "The piece of watermelon, like a flying bullet with Xiaoming's head as its target, leapt out of the sewer and struck its mark precisely." This use of metaphor and personification transforms a mundane event into a compelling image.

In sum, enhancing writing ability requires extensive reading — both intensive and extensive—alongside deliberate accumulation and application of effective linguistic expressions. Imitating authentic English texts is essential for elevating one's writing to a higher level.

5.2 Expanding Reading Input

Reading plays a pivotal role in expanding vocabulary and accumulating linguistic and cultural knowledge essential for writing. Solid linguistic foundations—encompassing vocabulary, grammar, sentence patterns, and idiomatic expressions—are primarily developed and reinforced through sustained reading. Moreover, extensive reading exposes learners to authentic language input, stimulates cognitive activity, strengthens intuition for the language (language

sense), and consolidates and broadens vocabulary. It is also an effective means of cultivating English thinking and improving comprehension, thereby directly supporting writing development.

Furthermore, reading broadens cultural horizons. Language learning is inseparable from cultural learning. To express ideas accurately in writing, students must acquire cultural background knowledge. For example, the Chinese simile "as strong as an ox" corresponds to the English expression "as strong as a horse." Other examples include a willing horse (a diligent worker), talk horse (to boast), and eat like a horse (to have a big appetite). These differences stem from historical and cultural contexts: while oxen were traditionally used in Chinese agriculture, horses played a central role in early British farming practices.

5.3 Developing English Language Thinking

A common challenge among Chinese learners is composing English texts by first formulating ideas in Chinese and then translating them into English. This results in "Chinglish"—a literal transfer of Chinese logic and syntax that violates natural English usage. This interference from L1 thinking is a key obstacle to writing proficiency. Therefore, cultivating direct English-language thinking is crucial.

To foster this ability, instructors should provide multifaceted training in English thinking throughout instruction. This includes developing students' breadth, depth, flexibility, and creativity in English thought. Teachers should encourage students to think and respond in English, beginning with concrete, image-based thinking and gradually advancing to abstract reasoning. Explanations of texts should be delivered in English whenever possible to minimize reliance on translation. Additionally, creating immersive English environments for communication helps nurture authentic English thinking.

In conclusion, developing and improving students' writing proficiency is a long-term, multifaceted endeavor. Writing is a comprehensive skill that demands persistent effort in vocabulary acquisition, extensive reading, accumulation of linguistic and cultural knowledge, enhancement of listening and speaking skills, and the cultivation of English thinking. Only through such sustained and integrated efforts can students achieve a qualitative leap in writing ability and truly attain higher levels of English writing proficiency.

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