

The Status and Trend of Domestic Research on Second Language Writing Based on Analysis of 8 Core Foreign Language Journals in China from CNKI¹

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Abstract

This paper analyzes the current situation and development trend of second language writing in China from 2011 to 2018. Through the statistical analysis of eight core journals of foreign language on second language writing papers published in the past eight years, this paper summarizes the research field of second language writing mainly from the aspects of the quantity of publication, research content, research category and development trend. It is hoped that can provide some reference for the future research and second language writing teaching in China.

Keywords

Second language writing; research status and trend; core journals.

1. INTRODUCTION

In second language acquisition (SLA), as writing is a crucial way of interaction and output, second language (L2) writing research has increasingly become the focus of researchers. Moreover, L2 writing theory abroad has gradually maturing since the late 20th century, and developed into a relatively perfect system. Our Chinese scholars continuously go deep into every aspect of L2 writing research and yield rich results by drawing lessons and absorbing foreign theory. In the Proceedings of 2012 2nd International Conference on Applied Social Science (ICASS 2012), Chinese scholar Xu (2012) confirmed that imitative writing can promote the ability of English writing through tests and questionnaires based on the analysis of the current situation of Chinese students' English writing. Meanwhile, He(2014) analyzed the main ideas of western English writing theory, summarized China main research direction and achievement in English writing of recent two decades, including the process writing, product writing, the influencing factors of writing, writing teaching mode and so on, and gave some enlightenment of current research on writing teaching. Yang and Zhang (2015) proposed that the research of thinking-aloud in second language writing is scarce and found that thinking-aloud has some interference with L2 writing, but it is not serious.

With the advance of Chinese writing teaching theory and methodology, cognitive linguistics, psycholinguistics, corpus, other related disciplines and technologies, as well as the improvement of foreign language ability of scientific research personnel, domestic research on English writing also presents a new development. Therefore, this paper gathers and makes a statistical analysis from 2011-2018 of 8 kinds of foreign language core journal papers (in China) on L2 writing research to understand the present research situation and development trend of L2 writing, summarizes the domestic research direction and the characteristics of the L2

¹ The literature of statistical analysis was published from January 1, 2011 to May 5, 2018.

writing research. It is expected that this paper can help promote the in-depth development of the research on L2 writing so as to provide some new ideas for the development of the research and L2 writing teaching in China.

2. LITERATURE RESOURCES AND METHODS

This paper selected literature mainly from domestic 8 kinds of foreign language core journals. It respectively is: Journal of PLA University of Foreign Languages, Journal of Foreign Languages, Foreign Language Education, Foreign Language Teaching and Research, Foreign Languages Research, Foreign Languages and Their Teaching, Foreign Language World, Modern Foreign Languages. These journals has certain representativeness and authority in the field of foreign language research, so it can reflect the basic current situation and characteristics of domestic research on L2 writing. The author takes “the second language writing” as the keywords, and retrieves the CNKI from 2011-2018, which published the related articles of L2 writing in the above journals. It is a total of 78 (see figure 1).

Due to the specific time of this research is from 2011.01.01-2018.05.05, apart from Modern Foreign Languages has published articles on L2 writing in this period, other journals may also publish but without display because of time or other reasons. The data in figure 1 for 2018 are also estimated based on the previous data and trends.

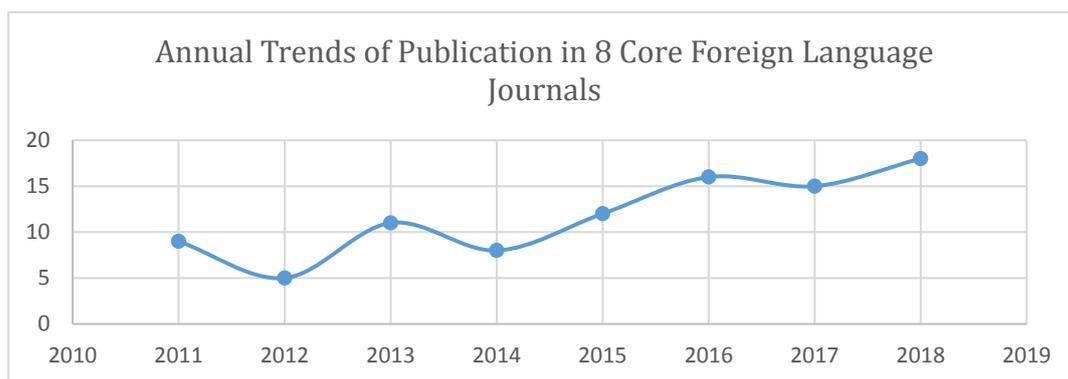


Figure 1. The overall trend of publication of second language writing articles

3. RESEARCH STATUS AND TREND

This paper analyzes the research status and development trend of L2 writing in China from the aspect of the quantity of publication, research content, research category and development trend to comprehend the situation of domestic L2 writing research based on the statistical analysis on L2 writing publication of 8 core foreign language journals.

3.1. The Quantity of Publication

As can be seen from figure 1, the articles published in these eight core journals are basically between 5 and 16 each year from 2011 to 2018. The number of studies has fluctuated over the eight years. During the year 2011-2012, 2013-2014 and 2016-2017, the number of publication falls back, and it is in rapid growth from 2012 to 2013, and then it begins to slowly rise since 2014. At the same time, dozen of papers are published every year. While in figure 1, the number of publication in 2018 is evaluated and expected as 18 according to the past and present number of published articles. Although there is a decline during this period, the overall trend of publication on L2 writing research is steadily increasing, which indicates that the research on L2 writing has been developing steadily in the past eight years, and foreign language scholars in China still pay attention to it.

3.2. Research Category

This paper mainly refers to the classification of writing by Qin (2009). And after carefully reading 78 articles published in these journals from 2011 to 2018, they are finally divided into the following seven categories and the main research content of these categories is given in the table 1.

Table 1. Classification of research content on L2 writing

Category	Content
1	Writing teaching: teaching materials; writing task and teaching introduction; teaching method; teaching; teaching research and development; the application and enlightenment of the theories related to writing teaching
2	Writing product: the analysis of discourse and linguistic features of composition
3	Writing evaluation and testing: grading criteria; reliability and validity of writing proposition, writing testing criteria
4	Writing process: strategies for writing; individual differences
5	Writing context: internal and external factors affecting writing
6	Writing feedback: teacher feedback; peer feedback; automatic feedback
7	Research Review: status and trend of L2 writing research

3.3. Research Content

According to figure 2, it is found that the content of domestic L2 writing research shows a trend of diversification in the past eight years. It is revealed that the writing context (21 papers) and writing teaching (18 papers) are highly concerned, which respectively accounts for 27% and 23% of the total research. Writing feedback and writing process is also the focus of research, accounting for 17% and 14% respectively. Scholars also look into the studies of writing product (nearly 9%). However, research on evaluation and testing is relatively scarce, and the number of studies on writing research review is not sufficient, accounting for only 5%.

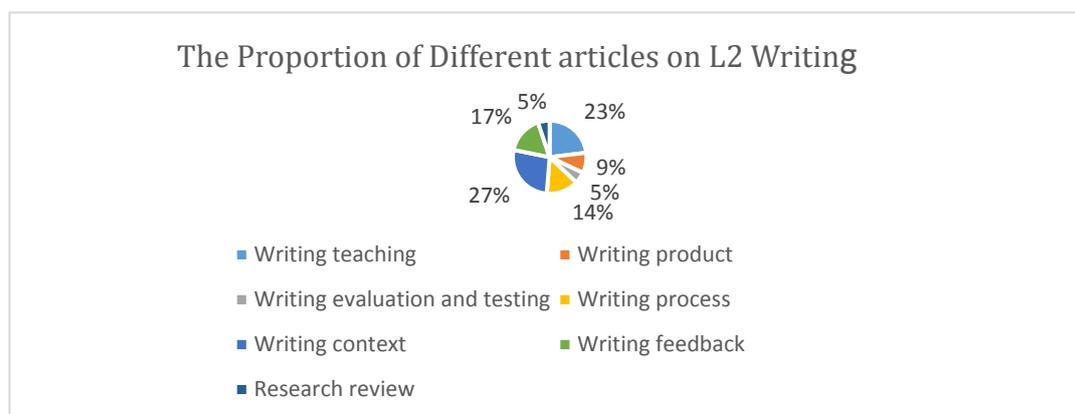


Figure 2. The proportion of different articles on L2 writing

In order to better understand the current research situation and focus of L2 writing in China from 2011 to 2018, this paper mainly analyzes in terms of writing context, writing teaching and feedback.

3.3.1 Writing Context

With the continuous in-depth research and development on writing, the perspective of research has also been extended. Apart from focusing on writing process itself, other factors have also been concerned. Writing context refers to the internal and external factors that affect writing and writing ability, including the intercultural factors, time limit, writers' psychological cognition etc. For example, Wang & Pu (2016) explored the influence of pre-task conception and online conception on L2 writing under the condition of time-limited writing. It is found that pre-task conception and online conception have different effects on the linguistic performance on L2 writing. It is believed by Chen et al. (2016) that providing students with abundant context in the writing task can stimulate students' situational interest in L2 writing through questionnaire and semi-structured interview. Li & Wang (2017) adopted meta-analysis to comprehensively analyze the overall effect of task complexity on L2 writing.

3.3.2 Writing Teaching

It mainly consists of three parts: (1) introduction to the material and writing task; (2) teaching method, teaching, teaching research and development; (3) the application and enlightenment of the theories related to writing teaching.

In the first part, most researchers basically introduce the experience of writing teaching, requirements, writing task and so on into the textbooks. For instance, the research on English writing teaching and critical thinking ability cultivation conducted by Li (2011) mostly discussed how to integrate the cultivation of critical thinking ability into each link of English writing teaching. Shao (2016) introduced some common mistakes in writing on analysis of typical errors in L2 writing to make students pay attention to it and help them improve writing ability. Kang (2017) put forward the influence factors of English writing teaching like objectives, principles, and strategies in the research of English writing teaching theory and practice. However, there are still relatively few research on the investigation of status of writing teaching materials.

In the second part, there are many studies on the experimental teaching, teaching research and so on. In addition, researchers study the writing teaching from various aspects. For example, from the new perspective of translation writing studies, Zhou & Yang (2015), drew lessons from the new teaching model of translation writing so as to provide new ideas for writing teaching methods. A significant trend that more and more researchers have started to use the computer and corpus in the writing teaching broadens the field of L2 writing research. For example, it is Wang & Huang (2011) emphasized that the research and development of the computer-aided business English writing teaching system and its corpus play a positive role in reforming the teaching mode and curriculum of college English writing and improving the writing ability of college students.

In the third part, as for the application and enlightenment of the theories related to writing teaching, Guan (2016) conducted a research and analysis on task-based language teaching and its application in English writing teaching in high school. According to Zhang & Zhou (2017), the writing teaching practice in the traditional foreign language education in China was detailedly discussed through the deep-interview with 8 senior teachers.

3.3.3. Writing Feedback

Writing feedback is mainly a kind of activity that evaluates students' writing achievements, so it is of great significance to improve the writing ability of second language learner. Researchers are increasingly focusing on writing feedback, and most of them pay attention to the effects of different types of feedback on improving writing proficiency. For example, Liu (2015) found that the mode of "peer feedback + teacher feedback" was much more effective than the mode of "teacher feedback", and could improve students' writing motivation and writing performance through the experimental research. Moreover, Wei & Shi (2016) reviewed

the necessity of L2 acquisition and L2 writing interface based on the approach and classification of L2 written feedback at home and abroad.

3.4. Development Trend

With the advent of Internet + era, computer science, internet technology, cloud computing technology and other teaching platforms have brought vitality and challenges to education. Among them, Internet + education is a more prominent feature. In 2012, "Flip class" swept around the world. "Mooc" shocked the traditional cornerstone of higher education in the world. In the past two years, the teaching forms and teaching platforms of small and micro courses have developed rapidly.

L2 writing teaching is increasingly connected with other interdisciplinary fields, such as neurology, psychology, sociology, linguistics, computer science, statistics, and so on. As the content involved in the L2 writing research is not limited to writing, the research from other interdisciplinary perspectives and combined with the L2 writing can often reach different conclusions, which may generate new sparks, broaden the horizon of researchers so as to supplement and develop the theory and practice of second language writing.

4. SUMMARY

This paper aims to understand the research status and development trend of L2 writing in China by statistically analyzing the articles about L2 writing published in 8 core foreign language journals from 2011 to 2018. It is hoped that the domestic L2 writing researchers can proceed from the actual situation of L2 writing in China, promote the further development of L2 writing research in China.

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