

Writing Bilingually for Mono- and Bilingual Readers

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In this paper I report the results of a study that examined the perceptions about and processes of bilingual writing by Japanese learners of English. Forty-six learners in freshman composition courses wrote a descriptive or opinion composition of 200-400 words in both English and Japanese. They later reflected on what linguistic and textual aspects they attended to when revising their bilingual documents in order to accommodate diverse readers. A careful analysis of the learners' writings and comments revealed that they refined the documents by comparing the two languages and modified syntactic, lexical, and discursive forms by taking into account intelligibility for monolingual and bilingual readers. Moreover, learners' awareness was raised as to the value of bilingual writing.

本論は、日本の英語学習者の二言語を使って書くことについての意識とその学習作業過程を研究した結果を報告するものである。大学一年生向けライティングクラスの46名の学生が、英語と日本語を用いて200~400語の説明文または意見文を書き、その後、多様な読者に読んでもらうために、言語やテキストのどのような点に注意を払い推敲作業を行ったかについて調査用紙に記入した。学習者の作文と編集所感を詳しく分析した結果、学習者は日英二つの文書と比較し、一言語使用の読み手にも二言語使用の読み手にも分かりやすく書くことを考慮に入れながら、文法、語彙、文章構成を修正していったことが分かった。また、この執筆編集作業を通じて二言語で書くことの有用性について学習者の意識が喚起されたことが観察された。

THE USE of English as a lingua franca has produced a larger number of bilingual or multilingual speakers than ever before (Graddol, 1997, 2006); has generated diverse, multilingual communities; and has provided people with numerous chances to use multiple languages for their shared needs and aspirations (Crystal, 2003). Examples include an evacuation directive in a multilingual community that is simultaneously issued in several languages and instruction manuals written in several languages that are included with products made by multinational corporations. Additionally, a number of Japanese companies, such as Rakuten and Uniqlo, have encouraged and required the use of English as an in-house common language among employees (Igarashi, 2010; Nannichi, 2010). In such circumstances, people are expected to provide information in English or local languages, or both, so that the information is accessible to monolingual and bi- and multilingual speakers.



Multicompetence

As greater value is placed on bi- and multilingual ability in society, the notion of multicompetence has been advocated to elucidate the hybrid nature of such speakers. According to Cook (2007a), multicompetence is defined as “the knowledge of two languages in one mind” (p. 17). In his sense, the knowledge of language is not narrowly defined to mean a grammatical system but instead a holistic linguistic competence, including syntax, lexicon, pragmatics, phonology, the writing system, and language-related concepts. He argued that, therefore, examining the language competence of bi- and multilingual speakers should focus on the relationships of the languages in the individual’s mind rather than the separate competences of L1 and L2.

Cook (2010) claimed that the goal of L2 teaching should be to produce successful L2 users rather than imitations of monolingual native speakers because all L2 users are essentially bilingual even though their proficiency levels in the two languages may not be equal. Their language competence, which has been developed with the mutual effects of their L1 and L2, is inherently different from that of monolingual speakers. L2 users’ usage of languages, such as in translating and code switching, is also distinctively different from the language usage of monolingual speakers (Cook, 2006).

Language User Groups

Cook (2009) classified such language users into six groups. Group A are those who use only their L1, a native local language, with each other in the local language area. They are monolingual speakers. Most Japanese people using Japanese in their everyday life belong to this group, and many native speakers of English are in this group as well. Group B consists of people who use an L2 within a larger community. For example,

a lot of non-Japanese residents living in Japan use the Japanese language when shopping or at work, although they speak their L1 at home and in their inner circles. Group C comprises people who use their L2 internationally for specific functions, such as political, economic, academic, cultural, and religious purposes. Group D contains people who use their L2 for a wider range of functions. Those who use English as a lingua franca across countries for all possible functions belong to this group. Group E is composed of people who are historically from a particular community and are acquiring or reacquiring their community language as an L2; for example, returnees who come back to Japan learning Japanese, or Japanese Americans or Japanese Brazilians learning their heritage language, Japanese. Group F is composed of people who use an L2 only in a small circle, say, with a partner or with family.

Of these groups, Groups A and D are relevant to this study because most Japanese university students were born in and have lived in a Japanese speech community and are learning to use English for a variety of purposes domestically and internationally in their future professional and personal lives.

Bilingual Writing Ability

Ortega and Carson (2010), in their L2 writing study, criticized a prevailing static view of monolingualism in the realm of SLA. They argued that SLA has wrongly focused on how to add on a monolingual command of an additional language but neglected the complexity of multiple language uses in L2 learners and users. Ortega (2010a) claimed that bi- and multilingual competence should not be separately investigated in each language but be analyzed as the total language repertoire of such users.

Bi- and multilingual ability should not be underestimated in the development of L2 writing. Reviewing L2 writing research, Ortega (2010b) lists the following pivotal topics and findings:

- Language development is a prerequisite for writing development.
- L2 writing supports language development.
- L2 writing supports cognitive development.
- L2 writing is deeply implicated in identity and power.
- Evidence exists for L1 effects on L2 writing and reverse effects of L2 on L1 writing.

In addition to these linguistic, cognitive, and sociocultural findings, Ortega and Carson (2010) call for the need to investigate writing by the same writers across languages and of diverse populations in a variety of social contexts. Writing research needs to consider L2 writing development of multi-competent learners as a dynamic and complex system.

The Study

Research Questions

In today's society, bilingual writing ability is not less important than bilingual speaking ability and cannot be left behind in our L2 education. To better understand the development of the bilingual writing ability of Japanese university students, I set two research questions for this study.

1. How do Japanese university students perceive bilingual writing ability?
2. How do they compose and edit bilingual documents that they write?

Data Collection

Forty-six students, 20 males and 26 females in freshmen composition courses, participated in this study. The composition course was a one-semester, required course for all 1st-year students, with the aim of developing students' English writing

ability. They studied paragraph structure, including topic and supporting sentences, and essay structure (introduction, body, and conclusion). By the end of the semester, they were expected to express themselves freely, have become fluent in writing essays regarding topics of their interest, and have mastered the basics of writing short research papers in English. The activity of bilingual writing was incorporated in the 10th session of the 14-session course. The participants in this study were majoring in psychology, tourism, or welfare, and their English proficiency level was intermediate to high intermediate.

The data were collected in 2011-2012 by asking students to choose one topic out of four and write a composition in English of 200 to 400 words. The topics were (a) an important event that changed my life, (b) a plan of a 1-day tour, (c) three tips for a successful entry to an upper school or the job market, and (d) the most impressive lecture at university. Next, they wrote a Japanese version of the same composition. Third, they formed pairs and had their partner read both the English and Japanese versions and decide which version was easier to understand. Fourth, the students made modifications in their own writings in order to make them more understandable for both monolingual and bilingual readers and marked changes in red. Here, the imagined readers were English monolinguals, Japanese monolinguals, and other language users who know some English or Japanese or both. Lastly, the students filled out a question sheet that asked them what kind of modifications they had made in the revised versions and how important they perceived bilingual writing ability to be.

Results

The Importance of Bilingual Writing Ability

To the question regarding how they perceived the importance of bilingual writing ability, all students responded "very important" or "important" (see Table 1).

Table 1. Is Bilingual Writing Ability Important? (N = 46)

Response	Count
Very important	25
Important	21
Not so important	0
Not important at all	0

There are a variety of reasons why the students considered bilingual writing ability important. According to Cook (2007b), the goals of language learning can be divided into two main types: external and internal goals. External goals relate to the students' use of language outside the classroom; for example, traveling, reading web pages, writing email, chatting online in another language, attending lectures in a different country, and surviving as newcomers in a new world. Internal goals relate to the students' mental development as individuals; for example, they may think differently, approach language in a different way, and better understand different cultures and ideologies by learning a new language.

The students' reasons were categorized into external and internal goals and their sub-goals (see Table 2). A majority of the reasons were external goals, in particular, communication with others. Among the internal goals, importance was placed on approaching language in a different way.

Table 2. Why Is Bilingual Writing Ability Important? (N = 46)

Response	Count
External goals	
Communication with others	27
Career opportunities	7
Internal goals	
Different approach to language	12
Different way of thinking	1
Growth as a person	1

Note: Some students gave more than one reason.

Students were also asked to comment on communication through writing. The questions were asked bilingually, and the students were free to answer in either Japanese or English. The responses in Japanese have been translated into English and explanatory comments are added in brackets. Some comments included the following:

- I can convey my opinions to more people and receive more information.
- Target readers are not just one kind.
- There are many people who are bilingual. However, some people can understand little English and little Japanese. Therefore, we should do bilingual writing to make everyone understand what we want to tell.
- In the future, we will have to work with people who are from many kinds of countries. Therefore, we must study to read, speak, and write English. We should have the ability to write not only in Japanese but also in English.

- In the globalizing modern society, it is important to speak both Japanese and English, but it is also important to be able to write in both languages.

These comments showed that the students felt that writing for diverse readers or imagined readers is important, and that they understand that communication pertains to not only speaking but also writing.

Another external goal for English language students is learning English for future opportunities, as shown by the following comments:

- I will need to use Japanese as long as I live in Japan, and my job opportunity will increase if I can use English.
- It will not be practical if I learn [advanced writing skills in] only English. When I learn both languages, I can make use of them in my daily life.

The students used Japanese in their daily life, but hoped their English skills would bring them better career opportunities. They seemed to acknowledge the language issues related to bilingual users like themselves and the language environment where they live. They also appeared to recognize that they should practice writing essays and research papers in Japanese just as they were learning to master these skills in English.

As for internal goals, several students pointed out different approaches for language learning:

- When I compared the English and Japanese documents, some parts are easier to understand in English, and others are easier in Japanese. Writing bilingual documents will increase readers' understanding.
- There are some expressions that can be well expressed in English (e.g., adjectives such as *fantastic* and *exotic*) and other expressions that can be expressed only in Japanese (such as detailed explanations). By checking the meaning in Japanese, I can use more appropriate English expressions.

- There are some expressions that cannot be [adequately] understood in Japanese or in English.

As the final student remarked, by passing between two languages, bilinguals can deepen their understandings of the languages and the notions that are expressed in those languages. Furthermore, bilinguals realize the limitations of one language, and, therefore, the value of bilingual ability or biliteracy for both writers and readers. This corresponds with the findings of a previous bilingual education study (Cummins, 2010) that the development of literacy in two languages entails linguistic and cognitive advantages for bilingual students because bilingual students get more practice in learning language, which results in greater intentional control and higher levels of metalinguistic awareness.

Communicative Effects of the Two Documents

The students asked their partners which version was easier to understand, or had more communicative effects, the English or the Japanese. Applying the definition of “communicative effects” by Liberman (2011) to our task, I defined it as the (likely) effects on real or hypothetical readers, including linguistic and textual effects such as the interpretation of the literal meaning and the perception of particular expressions, discursive organizations, and writing styles in relation to sociocultural norms and psychological states.

Seventy percent of the students chose the Japanese versions (see Table 3). This means that 30% preferred the English versions even though their L1 was Japanese. Upon further examination, it seems that the Japanese compositions that were not preferred had a feeling of having been translated from English and needed more naturally sounding expressions in Japanese.

Table 3. Which Document Has More Communicative Effects? (N = 46)

Response	Count
English	14
Japanese	32

Composing and Editing

After revising the bilingual documents, the students reflected on the process of their revisions. The most frequent modification was replacing words or phrases, including corrections in Japanese and English, followed by elaborations and changing titles (see Table 4).

Table 4. How Students Adjusted the Two Documents

Change made	English	Japanese
Rewording	13	31
Elaborating	10	20
Changing the title	3	11
Others	3	5
Totals	29	66

Changing titles

Following are some examples of how titles changed. The first type was a change to a more naturally sounding title in Japanese to accommodate Japanese readers (my own translation into English in brackets). The student in the first example chose the Japanese particle *de* [at] instead of *chuu* [during], and the student in the second example struggled to find the word *kachikan* [values] in Japanese to better express what he meant.

- Important things during an interview → 面接で大切なこと [Important things at an interview]
- Changing my viewpoint → 見解の変化 [Changing views] → 私の価値観の変化 [Changing my values]

The second type of change was making a more specific title than the original one to represent the content of the essay.

- Three tips for a success → 採用のための3要素 [Three tips for successful employment]
- Entrance examination → 私にとっての入学試験 [My entrance examination]
- A day in Fukuoka → 福岡を一日で満喫しよう [Enjoy Fukuoka in a day]
- A letter to Prof. Yamamoto → 地球にやさしく [Be kind to the earth]

In the third type, the change in the Japanese title resulted in reforming the English title.

- For you and your partner → 家族の大切さ [Importance of family] → Importance of family
- A day in Tokyo → 東京で過ごす一日 [A day you will spend in Tokyo] → Exciting spots in Tokyo

These revisions indicate that the students did not simply directly translate an English title into a Japanese one or vice versa, but sought the most appropriate title for their communicative intent.

Rewording

In the process of revisions, students noticed grammatical errors, figured out better lexical choices, and made discursive modifications to achieve logical coherence. In one example, a student corrected a parallel construction of riding the *Shinkansen* and “taking” a break. Another student chose “thanks to” in place

of “because of” to better express his feelings. Another student changed a discourse marker from “however” to “after all,” which changed the relational coherence with a previous paragraph.

Students made a variety of revisions in their Japanese versions. They made some grammatical corrections and lexical modifications to employ natural expressions in Japanese rather than direct translations from English. Furthermore, they made use of discourse markers to mark sequence and even changed literary styles from more formal to more colloquial.

Elaboration

Inserting sentences and phrases for detailed descriptions was another editing method. The first instance below (insertion shown in brackets) was taken from an essay in which a student wrote about the day when her father suddenly disappeared and how she felt and reacted to his leaving. The second and third examples were taken from an essay entitled, “One-Day Tour in Tokyo.” The writer realized that a preview of the body in the introduction and a more detailed description of the place were needed after discussing the effects of the English and Japanese documents with his partner.

- I felt remorse. [Why did I behave coldly to him?]
- Here’s a one-day tour of Tokyo’s most exciting spot: Tokyo Sky Tree. [You’ll start the day with a visit to a unique shopping mall, enjoy various kinds of lunch, get an incredible view, and finally end the tour walking around the area.]
- In addition, you can eat a lunch in the Tokyo Soramachi. [The Tokyo Soramachi has various kinds of restaurants. You can enjoy your favorite types of lunch.]

Elaborations in Japanese were more frequently found than elaborations in English. The students tried to write their Japanese versions as close to the English version as they could, but

occasionally, they broke the approximation to accommodate Japanese readers.

- Imagine seeing one of the most beautiful sights of cherry blossoms and the historical castle. → 想像してみてください。歴史情緒あふれる城と桜の最高に美しい景色を。[Imagine it: the most beautiful sights of the castle full of ancient atmosphere together with cherry blossoms.]
- ... and they are selling special products of Ueda City and having a parade of Sanada Yukimura who built the Ueda Castle. → 上田市の特産品の販売や、上田城を建てた真田幸村の仮装をした人々による大規模なパレードが行われています。[... and they are selling local products of Ueda City and having a big parade by people dressed up as Sanada Yukimura who built Ueda Castle (and his samurai warriors).]

Conclusion

This study investigated how Japanese university students considered bilingual writing and how they composed and edited bilingual documents. The results showed that the students perceived the importance of bilingual writing. Their biggest reason for supporting bilingual writing was their belief that bilingual writing ability expands the possibility of communication with others, both Japanese monolinguals and English monolinguals, and bilinguals who use Japanese or English as an additional language or languages. Since these readers are expected to be in various phases of multicompetence, the students attempted to write the identical message so that readers could correctly understand them in Japanese, English, or both, rather than pursuing aesthetic, literary expressions.

Feedback from peer readers led writers to take different approaches when writing in the different languages and when considering different ways of thinking. Writers revised their L1 and L2 documents by correcting errors, choosing more appro-

ropriate expressions for their communicative intent, and elaborating descriptions to fill in gaps between the two languages.

Students' awareness was raised as to the value of bilingual writing through this activity as several of the students who had never previously done such an activity commented that the development of a bilingual writing ability would promote their personal and societal well-being. The environment of learning and using English in a globally networked society is changing (Block & Cameron, 2002; McKay, 2002). The practice of bilingual writing can be useful in preparing students to use English for various functions in a variety of settings. Therefore, incorporating bilingual writing into L2 education is essential.

Bio Data

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