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The Influence of Native Language Transfer on Business Letter Writing of Undergraduate Business English Majors

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Abstract: *Against the backdrop of economic globalization, international business exchanges between China and foreign countries have become increasingly frequent. Business English letter, as one of the means of communication in business activities, plays an important role as a medium. Therefore, it is significant to improve the letter writing ability of business English undergraduates. The objectives of this thesis are to examine the influence of native language transfer on the business English letter writing level, and to explore learning strategies that can effectively improve the positive transfer and weaken the negative transfer of native language. According to the objectives of this thesis, two research questions are proposed: How does the native language affect the letter writing level of business English undergraduates? What strategies can students use to improve the positive transfer and weaken the negative transfer of their native language? Through the research methods of questionnaire survey, interview and case study, this thesis finds that the business English majors are greatly influenced by their native language when learning English; factors such as native language proficiency, learning motivation and thinking mode all have a certain effect on the native language transfer; and five kinds of negative transfer phenomena that often occur in students' assignments, which are verb-object collocation errors, wrong use of word class and number, improper use of voice, improper cohesion and coherence of structure and sentence, and mechanical translation. Finally, this thesis summarizes 9 learning strategies that can effectively improve the positive transfer and weaken the negative transfer of native language, which are learning to think in English; developing English-related hobbies; cultivating reading habits; increasing input; learning the culture of English-speaking countries; analyzing the similarities and differences of Chinese and English language rules; increasing output; cultivating the habit of independent study and studying excellent articles.*

Keywords: *Native Language Transfer, Business English, Business Letter Writing*

1. Introduction

Native language transfer is a significant theory in second language acquisition. As an undergraduate student majoring in business English, when learning business letter writing, the author finds that due to the influence of cultural differences, many business English majors' expressions are not authentic and accurate. When writing, most students always unconsciously form Chinese expressions in their minds first, or even write Chinese versions directly, and then translate them into English, which leads to many "neither fish nor fowl" writing works. This phenomenon deeply reflects the influence of native language transfer on second language acquisition. Therefore, through this thesis, the influence of native language transfer on business letter writing of undergraduate business English majors from the perspective of business English learners will be analyzed under the guidance of native language transfer theory, so as to explore ways to improve business English letter writing.

1.1. Research Background

With the acceleration of the global economic integration process, international trades have become increasingly close. After the reform and opening up, China has successfully joined the WTO, and international business exchanges between China and foreign countries have become more and more frequent. Business English is a specialized language for international business activities and an important tool for China's foreign business communication. As one of the fundamental means to convey information, business English letter is an indispensable mean and an important medium of international

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business communication. Based on this, it is increasingly important to improve the letter writing ability of undergraduate business English majors. At present, business English letter writing is one of the courses that business English undergraduates in universities need to learn. However, the current situation of teaching business English letters is not optimistic due to internal and external factors, which includes the influence of the phenomenon of native language transfer.

At present, domestic research on native language transfer mainly focuses on writing, speaking, vocabulary and other fields. Researches topics in spoken field include Chinglish, and the influence of dialects on spoken language, etc. In terms of vocabulary, in addition to the research on Chinese vocabulary, there is also research on the native language transfer of minority language, such as Mongolian. Moreover, the domestic research on native language transfer mainly focuses on the negative language transfer, which is especially obvious in the early stage. However, in second language acquisition, the learning of the second language and the native language are inseparable, and the effects of positive and negative transfer of the native language coexist. Therefore, this thesis takes the language transfer theory as the theoretical basis, takes business English letter writing as the research object, and uses a variety of research methods to seek learning strategies that can effectively promote the positive transfer and weaken the negative transfer of native language. This will be of certain value in improving the letter writing level of undergraduates majoring in business English.

1.2. Research Purpose and Significance

The objective of this thesis is to analyze the theory and phenomenon of native language transfer and investigate the current situation of business letter writing among undergraduate business English majors, so as to explore ways to facilitate business English majors' better use of positive native language transfer and eliminate negative native language transfer, and then to provide help for business English majors to improve their business English letter writing ability through using strategies on their own, not just relying on school learning.

The research significance of this thesis mainly includes theoretical significance and practical significance. The theoretical significance of this thesis is that it applies the theory of native language transfer to the study of business letter writing, which enriches the scope of research on native language transfer. It also enriches the research perspective of native language transfer from the learners' perspective. Through this study, data and cases are collected through surveys to provide data references for subsequent related studies. In regard to its practical significance, this thesis is beneficial to undergraduate business English majors to discover their own writing problems and guide them to improve their business letter writing through various strategies. It provides a methodological reference for undergraduate business English majors' letter writing study, which is also beneficial to the development of business English majors and the improvement of Chinese and foreign business communication.

2. Literature Review

Transfer theory is a significant theory of second language acquisition research in linguistics. The influence of native language on learners in second language acquisition is a widespread phenomenon that has attracted increasing attention and discussion in academic community. The following is the theoretical basis of this thesis and a review of the relevant domestic and foreign research.

2.1. Language Transfer Theory

The term "transfer" was originally used in educational psychology to refer to the influence of prior knowledge, skills, and learning methods on the acquisition of new knowledge and skills[1]. Language transfer was introduced by the American linguist Robert Lado, who believes that through cross-lingual comparative analysis, the difficulties that second language learners will face can be predicted. Positive transfer occurs when there is a certain degree of similarity between the two languages, and negative transfer occurs when the two languages are different[2].

There are various definitions of this term in the field of linguistics. After more than half a century of development, the study of language transfer by scholars around the world has become quite mature. Most of the domestic and foreign researches are written on the theoretical basis of the book Language Transfer, which mentioned a concise and precise definition of language transfer: "Transfer refers to the effects caused by the commonalities and differences between the target language and any other language that

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has been acquired (or not fully acquired)"[3]. According to this theory, we can understand native language transfer as a phenomenon in which, when learning a second language, learners form expressions by drawing on the pronunciation, word meanings, syntactic rules or habits of their native language.

Language transfer can be mainly divided into positive and negative transfer. If linguistic rules of the native language are consistent with the second language, then the transfer of the native language will have a positive effect on the learning of the second language, which is called positive transfer. Negative transfer, on the other hand, is a phenomenon in which the rules of the native language do not match the conventions of the second language and have a negative impact on second language learning.

2.2. Relevant Research

A large amount of research in domestic and international settings is on this topic, which can provide valuable insights into how individuals learn and use language, as well as inform the development of effective language teaching strategies and programs.

2.2.1. Foreign Research

The discussion of language transfer originated mainly in the 1940s with numerous linguists in the United States, such as Charles C. Fries (1887-1967), who is one of the representative figures of American structuralist linguists, and Robert Lado (1915-1995), a famous American Linguist, whose representative theory is "Contrastive Analysis". They were convinced that native language and second language learning were inextricably linked. The theory of language transfer has been controversial in the history of linguistics, and after half a century of ups and downs, the status of language transfer in second language acquisition has been rapidly recognized and a more comprehensive theory has been developed since the 1990s. In recent years, foreign scholars have discussed language transfer in a variety of ways. Khaled Karim and Hossein Nassaji (2013) examined the role of native language transfer in second language writing of current study and made recommendations for second language writing instruction and future research[4]. Altmısdort Gonca (2016) investigated the relationship between the proficiency in second language writing skills and first language writing skills from the perspective of language transfer. He showed experimentally by grouping Turkish students that second language writing skills can be transferred to the first language and suggested that this can improve students' first language writing skills[5]. Mai Thi Phuong Thao (2020) compared views on the role of L1 in L2 acquisition according to Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis and Error Analysis approaches to re-examine how perspectives on L1's contribution to SLA have changed in the early approaches[6]. Michael Sharwood Smith (2020) identified the way in which micro-cues would be constructed. Her analysis in particular will have the effect of undermining the concept underlying the transfer metaphor as a way of characterizing cross-linguistic influence[7].

There is no doubt that they all provide reference data for the study of second language acquisition and have important implications for the study of transfer theory in second language learning. But foreign research mainly focuses on the relationship between English and other foreign languages, the research on the relationship between Chinese and English still needs to be developed and improved in China. Also, foreign research on language transfer is relatively less focused on business English letters, so the research in this dissertation will fill this gap.

2.2.2. Domestic Research

The current domestic research on native language transfer mainly focuses on writing, speaking, and vocabulary. Researches on spoken language include Chinese English, and the influence of dialects on spoken language, etc. In the area of vocabulary, in addition to the study on the language transfer of students from Han ethnic group, there is also the study on the native language transfer of minority students. However, research on native language transfer is mostly focused on writing, and still mostly focuses on negative native language transfer, which is especially obvious in the early years. Su Liuhua (2000) had come to the conclusion through the comparison between English and Chinese that the transfer of Chinese has a great influence on Chinese English learners, especially beginners[8]. Wu Dinge (2001) supposed the native language transfer, especially the negative native language transfer involves every aspect of second language acquisition: from vocabulary to syntax; from sentence to discourse; from thinking to culture, which will have an impact on Chinese students' English writing[9]. Xiong Hui (2005) discussed the negative transfer effect of Chinese on English writing, and pointed out that in the primary stage of college English writing, the intermediary effect of Chinese is unavoidable[10]. Wang Yingying (2012) listed a variety of mistakes caused by negative transfer of native language in the composition of Chinese learners[11]. Recently, scholars have also started to examine positive native language transfer.

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Wang Lifei, and Wen Qiufang (2004) conducted an empirical study and proved that the positive native language transfer from Chinese can be applied to English writing because the writing processes of Chinese and business English are the same[12]. Dong Huining (2012) proposed that recognizing the Chinese proficiency has a positive impact on English learning can not only fundamentally solve some specific problems in the process of English learning, and ensure the quality and effect of English learning, but also have positive practical significance for guiding English learning and teaching[13]. Guo Jia, Yang Lei, Wang Shuang, and Zhang Dan (2022) found that there is a certain negative correlation between vocabulary and syntactic complexity and the degree of positive transfer of native language[14].

Generally speaking, although domestic attention to native language transfer research has fluctuated, it is generally stable, and the number of publications on new central issue has increased in recent years[15]. However, there are few studies on native language transfer to business English letter writing in China, and most of researches focus on vocabulary, speaking and writing. In fact, the studies on business English letter writing are mainly related to the field of translation. In addition, most of the research in this area has been conducted from the perspective of educators, exploring teaching methods. There are few studies that look at the learners themselves. Therefore, the research content and object of this thesis is in need.

3. The Present Study

In order to understand the current situation of the influence of native language transfer on the letter writing level of undergraduate business English majors, questionnaire survey method is used. Based on the data from the questionnaire, interviews are conducted in order to explore strategies which is conducive to promoting positive native language transfer and thus improving business English undergraduates' letter writing level. In addition, case study method is used to verify the objectivity of the results of the first two studies and to help students minimize the negative language transfer.

3.1. Questionnaire

A questionnaire method is firstly used to collect data through distributing questionnaires online. Questionnaire survey method is a commonly used research method in academic research. It is not limited by time and place, and has good anonymity. And the questionnaire data is easy to collect and analyze, adding persuasiveness to the argumentation of the thesis. Therefore, this thesis first uses the questionnaire survey method.

3.1.1. Research Objectives

The research objectives of setting up the questionnaire is to understand the current situation of the influence of native language transfer on business English letter writing, and to select suitable volunteers from the final data of the questionnaires for the subsequent interviews.

3.1.2. Research Questions

According to this objective, nine questions are designed that can be divided into three parts. Questions from 1 to 6 were designed to find out the personal English level of the respondents. Questions 7 and 8 were designed to examine the current situation of the influence of native language transfer, which can answer two questions. (1) Does the phenomenon of native language transfer appear frequently in undergraduate business English majors' letter writings?

(2) What is the percentage of positive and negative native language transfer from the subjective perspective of students?

Question 9 investigates the influence of native language on undergraduate business English majors from an objective perspective by setting an error correction question.

In addition, the questionnaire is designed in Chinese in order to avoid the misunderstanding when using English.

3.1.3. Participants

This questionnaire is mainly distributed on the business English majors of Henan Finance University. Most of them are mainly junior and senior students, who have taken business English letter writing courses. In addition, the questionnaire was released online, using the questionnaire star applet in the We Chat. This method of publishing questionnaire is not limited by location, so by posting on Weibo, Little Red Book and other platforms, the data of business English majors from different universities was finally

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collected. The duration of this survey was 20 days, from April 5th to April 25th, and 208 data were finally collected, of which 203 were valid data.

3.2. Interview

Based on the data from the questionnaire, five representative volunteers are selected to conduct the interview work.

3.2.1. Research Objectives

The research objectives of the interviews include exploring the factors affecting positive and negative native language transfer, such as the different learning methods and different learning environments of learners. In addition, exploring effective learning methods to promote positive native language transfer in business English letter writing is the core objective of the interviews.

3.2.2. Research Questions

According to these objectives, the interviews are designed which can be classified into three parts. The first part examined interviewees' personal information, such as their scores on the TEM 4 and TEM 8 tests, and their English writing level. The second part aims to investigate the factors that influence the phenomenon of native language transfer in business English letter writing, such as native language proficiency, learning motivation, thinking style. The third part is to explore the learning methods that are conducive to promoting positive native language transfer and thus improving the ability of undergraduate business English majors' letter writing.

3.2.3. Participants

Through observation in life and solicitation on the Internet, five representative students are selected as interviewees who are divided into two groups. The Group A includes three interviewees. Interviewee I is a graduate student from the University of Manchester, who studied Business English in domestic during her undergraduate studies. Interviewee II is a senior student from Henan Finance University, who is always praised by teachers in college study. He has outstanding oral skills and authentic written expressions. Interviewee III is also a senior student from Henan Finance University, who has a good English foundation. He successfully passed the application for transferring his major through the selection in freshman year. The Group B includes two interviewees. They are selected through the data of their questionnaires which show that they are deeply influenced by the negative native language transfer, such as learning English modal verbs and sentence patterns rely on Chinese excessively, and having difficulty with learning tense.

Due to the geographical restrictions, the form of interviews combines online and offline. Participants in Group A were online interviews. The interviewer I is interviewed through voice calls on April 25, 2023, and interviewed II and III is interviewed through WeChat text communication on April 25, 2023. The interviewees in Group B were interviewed face to face on April 26, 2023.

3.3. Samples of Business English Letter

In addition to these two research methods, a case study is applied to analyze the samples of undergraduate business English majors' business letter assignments.

3.3.1. Research Objectives

Firstly, the case study method can enhance the objectivity of the study and provide material support. The results of questionnaires and interviews are mainly the students' evaluations of themselves, accompanied by subjectivity.

Secondly, the case study can also effectively help undergraduate business English majors to prevent the phenomenon of negative native language transfer. By analyzing the native language transfer phenomenon in the assignment samples, students can understand the phenomenon of native language transfer more clearly and thus better avoid them, and then improve their business English letter writing ability.

3.3.2. Participants

A total of 97 samples of business English letter assignments are collected from undergraduate business English majors in Henan Finance University. These samples include many types of business English letters, such as inquiry letters, reorder letters, claim letters, invitation letters, apology letters,

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cover letters, assignments on letter formats.

4. Results and Discussions

Through the questionnaire, interviews and case study of students' assignment samples in the previous chapter, the impact of native language transfer on business English letter writing is examined, and some strategies to effectively promote the positive transfer and weaken the negative transfer of native language are discovered. The following results and analysis are obtained through the use of the questionnaire star applet and SPSS software.

4.1. Questionnaire

Through online distribute, 208 data were received, among which 203 were valid.

4.1.1. Results from the Questionnaire

According to the results of the questionnaire, 51.72% of the respondents are from senior students, all of whom have taken a business English letter writing course. Next, 26.11% are freshmen, 20.69% are juniors, and 1.48% are sophomores (as shown in Table 1).

Table 1: What grade are you in?

freshmen	sophomore	junior	senior
26.11%	1.48%	20.69%	51.72%

The third question is "Which of the following options is your common way of thinking about writing?". The result shows that more than half of the students are used to writing in Chinese first and then translating the Chinese into English. By cross-analysis with question 1, the result shows that this phenomenon is more common among juniors and seniors, with 61.90% of juniors and 63.81% of seniors having such a habit. A speculation can be made that this phenomenon should be due to the different learning habits between high school and college study. During high school, students rarely rely on electronic devices to study, while college students are more accustomed to using cell phones and computers to complete their daily assignments. The convenience of electronic devices makes college students rely a lot on electronic translation software, which makes their writing skills deteriorate to some extent (as shown in Table 2).

Table 2: Which of the following options is your common way of thinking about writing?

	freshmen	sophomore	junior	senior
Write in English directly.	50.94%	66.67%	38.10%	36.19%
Write in Chinese first and then translate it into English.	49.06%	33.33%	61.90%	63.81%

The fourth question is about "the degree of reliance on Chinese when learning English modal verbs". The result shows that 49.26% of the students rely on Chinese generally, 33.50% rely on Chinese slightly; 13.30% rely on Chinese completely; but only 3.94% do not rely on Chinese at all. The fifth question is about "the degree of reliance on Chinese when learning English sentence patterns", and the results show that 43.35% of the students choose "general dependence"; 38.92% choose "slight dependence"; 12.81% choose "complete dependence"; but only 4.93% of the students choose "complete independence". Thus, from the fourth and fifth questions, a conclusion can be made that most students rely on their native language knowledge when learning English, which means that second language acquisition is closely related to the first language (as shown in Figure 1 and Figure 2).

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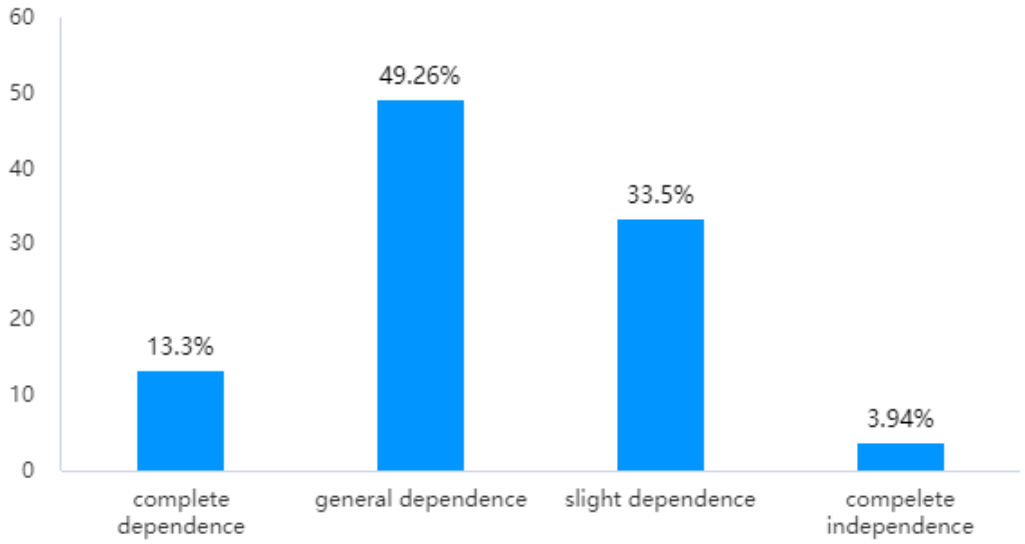


Figure 1: The degree of reliance on Chinese when learning English modal verbs.

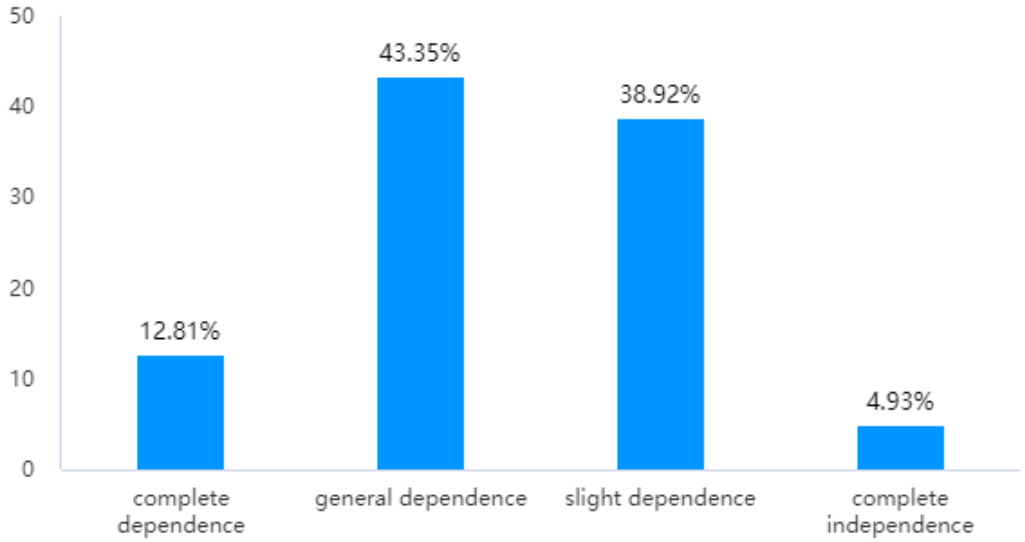


Figure 2: The degree of reliance on Chinese when learning English sentence patterns.

The sixth question is "How difficult it is to learn English tense for you". For this question, 39.90% of the students choose "difficult"; 38.92% choose "not bad"; 12.81% choose "very difficult"; but only 8.37% choose "easy". This shows that tense is not easy knowledge for most students. In fact, most students do not have the habit of thinking in tense because there is little use of tense in their native language. Thus, they need to change their thinking pattern when learning tense, which makes the second acquisition more difficult (as shown in Figure 3).

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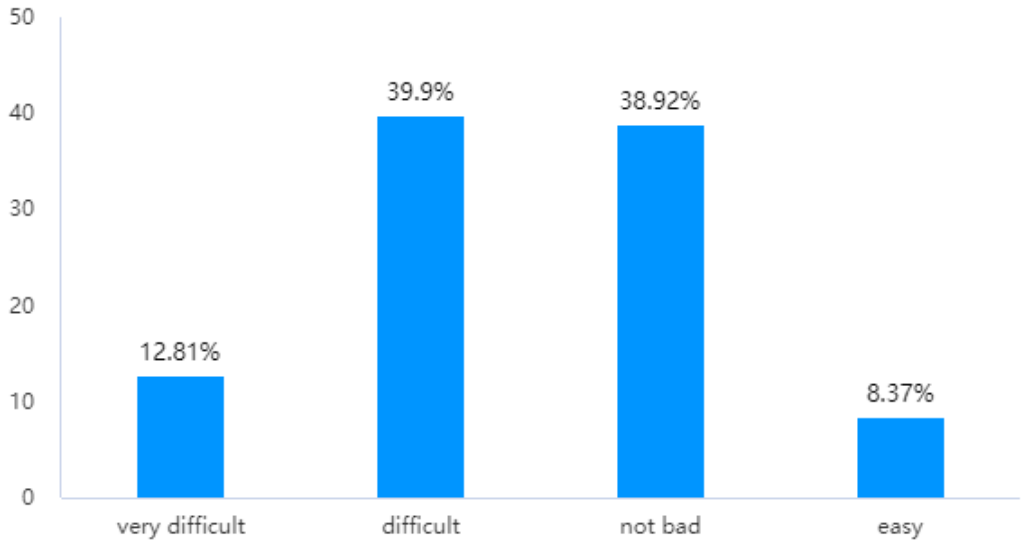


Figure 3: The degree of reliance on Chinese when learning English modal verbs.

The seventh question is "How much do you think the Chinese language affects English writing?". The results show that 58.62% of the students choose "biggish"; 29.56% choose "very big"; 8.37% choose "smallish"; and 3.45% choose "very small". This shows that the majority of students believe that their native language is closely related to English learning. The eighth question is "Which is more obvious, the positive or the negative influence of the native language on your English learning?". The results show that 62.56% of the students think that the positive influence is more obvious, while 37.44% think that the negative influence is more obvious (as shown in Figure 4).

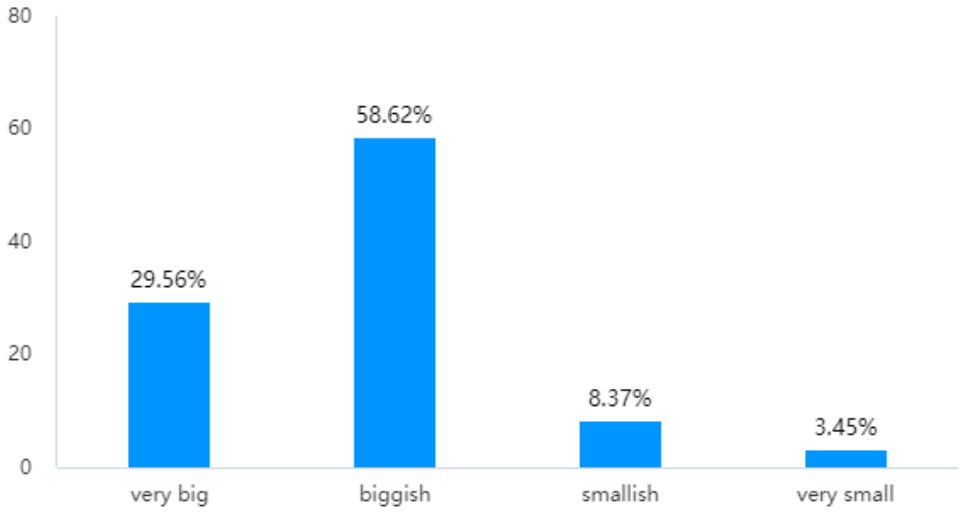


Figure 4: How much do you think the Chinese language affects English writing?

In the ninth question, an error correction question is set, asking students to find out the error in the sentence which is caused by the negative language transfer of Chinese. Among the respondents, 54.68% of them can find out the error, while 45.32% of them can't find out it. In fact, this error correction question is not too difficult. Besides, the respondents are all English majors, whose English foundation should not be poor. Therefore, a conclusion can be received that many students are affected by negative transfer of their native language.

4.1.2. Discussion from the Questionnaire

From the data of the questionnaires, a conclusion on the current situation of the influence of native language transfer on undergraduate business English students can be received.

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By analyzing the whole questionnaire, a conclusion can be made that most students frequently rely on their knowledge of Chinese when learning English. In addition, the percentage of positive and negative native language transfer of undergraduate business English majors is basically evenly divided. In order to improve business English letter writing ability, it is very important to improve positive native language transfer and minimize negative native language transfer. Therefore, the further interviews are conducted to explore the factors that influence native language transfer and strategies to effectively promote positive native language transfer and attenuate negative native language transfer.

4.2. Interview

Due to the geographical limitation, the interviews are conducted through phone call and text communication. The following is the results and discussion of the interviews.

4.2.1. Results from the Interview

The first part of the interview is divided into two questions. In the first question, the interviewees are asked about their English level, such as CET 4 and CET 6 scores, and TEM 4 and TEM 8 scores (as shown in Table 3 and Table 4).

Table 3: English level of Group A

	CET 4	CET 6	TEM 4	TEM 8	IELTS
Interviewee I	pass	pass	pass	pass	pass
Interviewee II	pass	Not attend	pass	Not attend	Not attend
Interviewee III	pass	pass	pass	Not attend	Not attend

Table 4: English level of Group B

	CET 4	CET 6	TEM 4	TEM 8	IELTS
Interviewee I	pass	pass	fail	Not attend	Not attend
Interviewee II	pass	pass	fail	Not attend	Not attend

In the second question, the interviewees are asked about their English writing level, which was divided into four levels: excellent, good, moderate, and bad (as shown in Table 5 and Table 6).

Table 5: English writing level of Group A

	excellent	good	moderate	bad
Interviewee I	√			
Interviewee II		√		
Interviewee III		√		

Table 6: English writing level of Group B

	excellent	good	moderate	bad
Interviewee I			√	
Interviewee II			√	

The second part of the interview is divided into three questions, mainly to explore the factors that influence native language transfer. In the first question, the interviewees are asked about their native language proficiency, which is mainly assessed by their Chinese scores in the NEMT language exam (as shown in Table 7 and Table 8).

Table 7: Chinese level of Group A

	excellent	good	moderate	bad
Interviewee I		√		
Interviewee II	√			
Interviewee III		√		

Table 8: Chinese level of Group B

	excellent	good	moderate	bad
Interviewee I		√		
Interviewee II			√	

The second question is “What are your motivations for learning English?”. In Group A, Interviewee I answered “interest” and “study abroad”; Interviewee II answered “interest”, “communication” and “work”; Interviewee III answered “interest” and “study abroad”; in Group B, Interviewee I answered

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"work"; Interviewee II answered "pass the examination". The third question is about the way of thinking when writing in English. All interviewees in Group A answered "think in English" and all interviewees in Group B answered "think in Chinese".

The third part of the interview is divided into roughly six questions, and the content is adjusted appropriately according to the different interviewees. The first question is about whether or not the interviewees have English-related hobbies. In Group A, Interviewee I answered that she liked to watch American dramas and deliberately avoided relying on subtitles, with a 30% reliance on subtitles; Interviewee II answered that he liked listening to English songs, watching American dramas, dubbing, chatting with native English speakers on international social media, and surfing on twitter. He also deliberately avoided relying on subtitles when watching American dramas, and his reliance on subtitles was about 50%; Interviewee III answered he liked listening and singing English songs; In Group B, Interviewee I said that she liked to listen to English songs but does not sing them; Interviewee II said that she had no English-related hobbies, and she only listened to English songs occasionally.

The second question is about reading habits. In Group A, Interviewee I answered that she had read about a dozen books in English during her college years; Interviewee II answered that he had read about 20 to 30 books in English during his college years, probably all of them were cultural and philosophical; Interviewee III answered that he had read about 10 books in English during his college years. In Group B, only Interviewee I had read about 3 English books. Interviewee II did not like reading English books because they are too difficult to understand.

The third question is "Besides school learning, what are the ways you learn English on your spare time?" In Group A, Interviewee I answered that she often used online learning bloggers to accumulate authentic English expressions; Interviewee II answered that he often communicated with native English speakers on social networking software to improve his English; Interviewee III said that he often learned some online learning resources about English. In Group B, Interviewee I answered that she occasionally brushed the videos of online learning bloggers; Interviewee II answered that she recited words on her spare time.

The fourth question is "Do you have a lot of contact with native English speakers in your life?" In Group A, Interviewee I had frequent contact with native English speakers due to studying abroad; Interviewee II had relatively more contact with native English speakers due to frequent use of international social networking software; while Interviewee III had relatively less contact with those people. In Group B, interviewees both indicated that they had very little contact with native English speakers. In addition, the interviewees were asked if they had a favorite public figure who is from English-speaking countries. Only Interviewee II and Interviewee III in Group A indicated that they did, and especially the Interviewee II had a very large number of favorite public figures.

The fifth question is "Do you often learn about the culture of native English speakers?" In Group A, the interviewees all said they often learned the culture of English-speaking countries by reading English news and watching American dramas, and they would deliberately compare it with Chinese culture to analyze cross-cultural differences. The interviewees in Group B all said that they only learned about English culture in the intercultural-related courses they took during their undergraduate studies.

The sixth question is an open-ended question in which the interviewees in Group A are asked that, in their opinion, what are the effective ways to learn English? How to minimize the appearance of Chinese-style English? In Group A, Interviewee I suggested several methods.

(1) Watch American and British dramas to imitate the expressions in the dramas and then accumulate authentic expressions.

(2) Practice more hands-on writing and study IELTS model essays carefully.

(3) Watch more English news, browse English websites and so on.

(4) Pay attention to the similarities between Chinese and foreign cultures and make good use of native language.

Interviewee II suggested several methods.

(1) Watch American and British dramas.

(2) Increase contact with native English speakers through many ways, such as using international social media.

Interviewee III also suggested that singing English songs is an effective way to improve English level.

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4.2.2. Discussion from the Interview

Through the interviews, various factors that influence native language transfer are examined, such as native language proficiency, learning motivation, and thinking style. Therefore, in order to promote positive native language transfer, learners should first have a proper motivation for learning, which should be mainly communicative motivation. Secondly, they should try to compose and think in English when writing.

Moreover, through the third part of the interview, some strategies that can effectively promote positive native language transfer and minimize negative native language transfer are summarized.

Firstly, developing some English-related hobbies is a useful strategy. Watching American dramas is a very effective way to learn. And learners should deliberately avoid relying on subtitles when watching American dramas. In addition, English songs can be helpful in reducing negative native language transfer. However, learners should not only listen to English songs, but also learn to sing them.

Secondly, learners should develop the habit of reading. In fact, most students are reluctant to read English reading materials because of the difficulty of reading English materials caused by their limited vocabulary.

Thirdly, except school learning, learners should cultivate the habit of independent study, and not limit themselves to basic ways such as recite words, but try to explore multiple ways, such as browse learning blogger videos, browse English websites, read English news, and read English magazines.

Fourthly, learners should increase their contact with native English speakers in their lives and remember that the ultimate goal of learning a language is to use it and communicate.

Fifthly, to make language expressions more accurate, learners should learn more about the culture of English-speaking countries and pay attention to cultural similarities and differences.

Moreover, focusing on differences between the Chinese and foreign language rules is beneficial to reduce negative transfer of native language. At the same time, we should also pay attention to the similarities instead of separating the two languages. We should find out the similar rules through comparison and then use them to promote the positive native language transfer.

Finally, it is useful to study good English articles carefully and then summarize some writing methods.

4.3. Samples of Business English Letter

In this part, some negative native language transfer phenomena and some effective learning methods are summarized from about 100 assignments.

4.3.1. Results from the Samples of Business English Letter

By analyzing the samples of undergraduate business English students' letter assignments, several common writing errors caused by negative native language transfer are discovered.

Firstly, many students often use the wrong verb-object collocation. For example, many students use the phrase "learn knowledge" in their assignments. But in fact, in English, "knowledge" is often paired with "acquire". In addition, a sentence is discovered in the students' assignment, "which gave me an opportunity to accumulate experience while attending classes." In this sentence, "accumulate experience" is inappropriate. It is more proper to change it to "broaden/gain experience". The third error which happened frequently is repeated translation. For example, a sentence is found in a student's assignment. "Through this work experience, I developed more office skills and improve my communication skills." In fact, in this sentence, only one of "develop" and "improve" should exist. There is some redundancy if using both of them.

Secondly, the wrong use of word class and number occurs frequently. Since Chinese vocabulary has a high uniformity in its rules of distinguishing word class, but the word class and number rules in English are relatively more diverse, learners often make errors in words' class and number when using English. For example, a sentence is discovered in a job application letter written by a student. "And my experience gives me the confident to apply for this position." In this sentence, "confident" is used incorrectly because it is an adjective, and it should be changed to a noun "confidence".

The third error is the improper use of voice. A sentence is found in one student's assignment. "We held the lecture at the auditorium of our university from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m on December 23, 2017." This sentence uses "we" as the subject, which makes the sentence in the active voice. In fact, English is mostly

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written in the passive voice. Thus, it is more proper to change the sentence to "The lecture is held at the auditorium of our university from 2 p.m. to 5 p.m. on December 23, 2017."

The fourth one is the improper cohesion and coherence of structure and sentence. English writing especially emphasizes cohesion and therefore requires a lot of conjunctions. However, the use of conjunctions in Chinese writing is not in a large demand, so most students lack enough cohesion and coherence in their English writing.

Finally, a large number of mechanical translations is found frequently in many students' assignments. For example, in one student's assignment, a sentence is discovered "During the four years of learning, I have taken and successfully passed all of the core courses in my major, as well as many other help courses." By reading through the whole letter, a speculation can be made that the student wants to express "During my four years of study, I completed all the major courses as well as the minor courses." In this sentence, the learner expresses the minor courses as "help course" which is too rigid to use. In addition, many students do not notice the different meanings between similar words when writing. For example, "forward" and "back" have different meanings of time in Chinese and English.

4.3.2. Discussion from the Samples of Business English Letter

Overall, by analyzing the samples of students' assignments, a lot of Chinese-style English can be found. Thus, the influence of native language transfer on undergraduate business English students' letter writing is obvious. Especially, many writing errors are caused by negative native language transfer. Therefore, in order to minimize the negative native language transfer, some methods are summarized that may be helpful to the students.

(1) After writing is completed, read through and check your composition carefully to see if it is accurate to express your ideas.

(2) Pay attention to the differences between Chinese and English writing, and accumulate them to enhance the accuracy of expression.

(3) Increase language output and input, analyze model essays, and use it in contrast to your own writing.

5. Conclusion

In order to help business English learners improve their letter writing ability, this thesis uses questionnaire survey method, interview method, case study method and literature survey method to study the current situation of the influence of native language transfer on business English letter writing, and to explore the effective strategies to improve the positive native language transfer and minimize the negative native language transfer. Finally, the following research conclusions are formed.

5.1. Major Findings

Through the four research methods, this thesis basically obtains two significant conclusions, which achieves the presupposed objectives of this thesis and also answers the three research questions originally set.

To begin with, the current situation of the influence of native language transfer on undergraduate business English majors' letter writing is examined. The results of the questionnaire show that most students believe that English learning and Chinese language are inseparably linked. Through interviews, some factors affecting native language transfer are examined, such as native language level, learning motivation, and writing mindset. Through analyzing the samples of undergraduate business English majors' letter writing assignments, a conclusion can be made that the influence of negative native language transfer on students' letter writing cannot be ignored.

Besides, many methods are explored that are conducive to promoting positive native language transfer and minimizing negative native language transfer and are also helpful for undergraduate business English majors to improve their business English letter writing ability. According to the research results, eight methods are summarized which are useful to some extent.

(1) Most importantly, learn to think in English;

(2) Cultivate English-related hobbies;

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(3) Develop the habit of reading;

(4) Learn to study independently and study online resources in fragmented time;

(5) Increase contact with native English speakers to increase input;

(6) Take the initiative to understand the culture of English-speaking countries and pay attention to the differences between Chinese and foreign cultures;

(7) Do contrastive analysis on the similarities and differences between the Chinese and foreign language rules;

(8) Practice makes perfect. Do more writing to increase language output;

(9) Learn to analyze the model letters, and compare with your own letter.

5.2. Implications for Undergraduate Business English Majors

Through this thesis, some implications are hoped to provide for the undergraduate business English majors.

Firstly, establishing the right motivation for learning is essential. Learners should focus on using the language rather than learning it.

Secondly, language learning requires a high degree of autonomy, and in order to improve language proficiency, learners must learn to learn on their own.

Thirdly, innate limitations should not be the excuse. Learners should actively seek effective learning methods to promote positive native language transfer and reduce the phenomenon of negative native language transfer.

5.3. Limitation and Future Research

However, it is necessary to point out that there are certain limitations in this thesis. Firstly, the number of participants in the questionnaire and interviews was not sufficient due to objective constraints. And the selection of subjects is not diverse enough. Secondly, although native language proficiency is examined that it has an effect on native language transfer, due to time constraints and personal subjective ability limitations, the author is unable to study this connection between the two in depth.

A hope is that there will be more future researches related to native language transfer and letter writing from the learners' perspective, and that they can collect a large amount of data with a wide range and various types of respondents. And future research is expected to explore more strategies that are conducive to promoting positive native language transfer and minimizing negative native language transfer, which will help undergraduate business English majors and promote the development of the field of business English letter writing.

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