

## EFL Learners' Direct vs. Translated Writing in Different Writing Genres

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The present study aimed at exploring the differences in EFL learners' writing performance in two writing modes (direct and translated writing) in two writing genres (argumentation and narration) depending upon their L2 writing proficiency. For this study, 46 college freshmen (43.5% of high level and 56.5% of low level) performed four writing tasks individually. The results of the study are as follows: 1) their writing performance in the direct mode was significantly better regardless of genre and L2 writing proficiency, although there were substantial differences between the two genres in the degree of significance; 2) their writing performance in argumentative prose was significantly better only in the direct mode; and 3) only for low-level learners in the direct mode, there were significant differences in their performance in the writing genre, favoring argumentation. Theoretical and pedagogical relevance of the findings is addressed.

**Key words:** L1 use in L2 writing, direct writing, translated writing, writing genre

### 1. INTRODUCTION

With a new paradigm shifted from the interests in increasing each of language skills to those in developing integrated skills in ESL/EFL context, the importance and necessity of writing has been newly lighted on, now that writing has its own benefit to intensify other skills through complicated thinking process (Choi, 2009; Hardly, 1993; Hedge, 2005;

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Weigle, 2002). In fact, over the past several decades, many researchers and practitioners have made sustained efforts to find out how to help ESL/EFL learners become a better, effective writer. For instance, they have tried to disclose which factors affect learners' writing performance, which one plays more crucial role for writers' products, and/or whether the role is positive or negative in their writing performance (Hinkel, 2011; Hwang & Lee, 2012). Especially, the issue of L1 use has always been in the center of ESL/EFL writing studies, and the increasing interests on the issue have triggered many researchers to produce a large number of findings. Nevertheless, the role and effectiveness of L1 use in L2 writing are still controversial depending upon the related issues of writing topics, learners' writing proficiency, writing process, levels of knowledge demands, task modes, and so forth (Wang, 2003; Wang & Wen, 2002; Woodall, 2002).

Conventionally, L1 use in L2 writing has been perceived to play a negative role, called negative transfer. Chelala (1981) shared her view with this common belief that the native language use might be detrimental to L2 composing rather than helpful (Johnson, 1985; Zamel, 1982), laying out a logical basis of her findings. In her study with two female Spanish-speaking students, it was found that their L1 use brought into more negative than positive effects. On the other hand, many other researches claimed that reducing cognitive burden during L2 writing was one of the most effective roles of L1 for L2 writers to adopt it as a problem-solving strategy (Johnson, 1985; Scott, 1995). It gives a salience to the positive effect of L1 use since it enables them to avoid mental overload during L2 composing process (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Cumming, 1989; Friedlander, 1990; Huh, 2001; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Scott, 1995).

Furthermore, the argument that the effect of L1 use on L2 writing performance can vary in accordance with learner's writing proficiency was provoked by some researches (Gerloff, 1987; Lay 1982, Silva, 1989; Wang, 2003; Woodall, 2002; Zamel, 1982). Silva (1989) argued that the first language use in L2 writing might be necessary and effective for low-level L2 writers, while extensive L1 use seemed to be an unsuccessful strategy for advanced L2 writers, whereas Scott (1995) insisted an opposite view that translating from L1 into the target language could be an effective, natural, and frequent strategy for those with higher language proficiency. Doubtlessly, therefore, learners' writing proficiency is an essential variable that can cause different quality of writing output, considering divergent opinions about the issue.

In order to obtain more reliable evidence on the effect of L1 use in L2 writing, some researchers have paid attention to the possible differences in writing performance in different writing modes of direct writing in target language and translated writing from L1 to L2 in terms of the participants' writing proficiency (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Hwang & Lee, 2012; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992). The results of the studies showed major discrepancy: better performance in the direct writing for advance writers (Cohen &

Brooks-Carson, 2001; Hwang & Lee, 2012); better quality of syntactic complexity in the translation mode (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992); and benefits from translation for the low-level learners (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Uzawa, 1996).

In company with these research issues, writing genre has also been considered as another crucial factor that could make writers produce different quality and quantity of writing (Manchon, Roca de Larios, & Murphy, 2000; Wang, 2003). A genre-orientation, which incorporates discourse and contextual aspects of language, has been widely known to provide learners with affirmative effects on promoting writing skills: increasing the right use of mechanics, perceiving of rhetorical knowledge, or accomplishing specific purposes in social contexts (Badger & White, 2000; Hyland, 2003, Yoon & Lee, 2016). That is, genre is one of the decisive factors that are most likely to help promote L2 learners' writing ability and their performance.

Furthermore, it can also lead for L2 learners to obtain significant authentic writing outcomes (Hudelson, 1989; Huot, 1990; Weigle, 2002). Wang and Wen (2002) mentioned that L1 use was found more in narrative writing task than in argumentative one, and that the more writers' L2 ability developed, the more the use of L1 decreased. Unfortunately, however, even though studies on the use of L1 or translation have been actively researched, few could be found in the issue of L1 use in L2 writing with regard to the combination of different writing genres and modes depending upon learners' L2 writing proficiency.

Accordingly, the current study aims at exploring the differences, if any, in EFL learners' writing performance in two different modes of writing—writing directly in English and writing in their L1 and then translating—when they write argumentative and narrative essays. In addition, such difference will be investigated regarding the variable of their English writing proficiency. Finally, their perception of writing in the two different modes and two different genres will also be examined to provide qualitative accounts for the quantitative results. For these purposes of the study, the following research questions were posed:

- 1) Are there any differences in EFL writing performance in the two writing modes of directly vs. translated writing and two genres of argumentation vs. narration?
- 2) Are there any differences in EFL writing performance in the two writing modes and genres depending upon learners' English writing proficiency?
- 3) Are there any differences in EFL learners' perception of the two writing modes and genres depending upon learners' English writing proficiency?

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

### 2.1. Roles and Effects of L1 Use in L2 Writing

How L1 use has an effect on L2 writing performance has consistently been a key issue in second/foreign language acquisition for several decades. Although a number of researchers have put forth an effort to prove whether L1 use affects L2 writers positively or negatively, a coherent picture of the relation of them has yet to emerge. Traditionally, the use of L1 in L2 writing has been perceived to precipitate negative transfer, which could interfere L2 writing process. According to some of the recent studies (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Qi, 1998; Woodall, 2002), however, positive effects of L1 use in L2 writing have also been asserted that L1 use might help reduce L2 writers' affective and/or cognitive burden. In other words, L1 can be used as a compensatory strategy when L2 writers encounter difficulties in producing appropriate language in the process of L2 writing (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Cumming, 1989, 1990; Krapels, 1990; Manchon et al., 2000; Qi, 1998; Uzawa & Cumming, 1989).

Since the 1980s, as part of verifying the effect of L1 use in L2 writing, mental process of L2 writers has been traced through "think-aloud protocols" (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Manchon et al., 2000; Qi, 1998; Uzawa, 1996; Wang & Wen, 2002). According to the studies, L2 writers reported frequent use of their L1 either unconsciously or intentionally performing their writing tasks regardless of the task mode: pre-writing, L2 writing, translated writing, or stage of revision. The fact that there was a natural interaction between the two languages while writers produce outputs attracted a keen interest in the necessity of "language switching," which was first coined by Qi (1998), in L2 writing process. As a result, constant efforts to unequivocally identify the roles and effects of L1 use in L2 writing has come to fruition of acknowledging L1 use as a necessary mental behavior in thinking processes of L2 composition.

Due to such a rapid growth of interest in language switching, researchers and practitioners have begun to be concerned about how to make L2 writers use L1 judiciously while writing L2 prose. Empirical studies were carried out in a row to investigate the influence of L1 use on L2 writing performance using the think-aloud protocols (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Manchon et al., 2000; Qi, 1998; Uzawa, 1996; Woodall, 2002); however, they produced slightly different results. According to Woodall (2002), less proficient learners used their L1 more frequently than more proficient ones, and the duration of their L1 use was dependent upon task difficulties. That is, both learners' L2 proficiency and task complexity can be crucial factors concerning the effect of L1 use in L2 learning (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Huh, 2001; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Uzawa, 1996; Wang & Wen, 2002). Qi (1998) also strongly asserted necessity and effectiveness of language

switching in L2 writing process.

In particular, Uzawa (1996) compared L2 learners' performance in their L1 writing, L2 writing, and translation of L1 into L2, placing special focus on writing and translating process and attention patterns. She reported the research findings that the learners produced fairly similar attention patterns in L1 and L2 writing, but quite different patterns in the translation task, showing significantly higher attention in the task than in the others. Besides, she added that the translation task had a significant positive effect on the L2 writers' language use: for instance, they used more varied vocabulary and syntax in the task than in the other L2 writing tasks.

On the contrary, some studies reported rather different findings on the effects of L1 use on L2 writing. Hwang and Lee (2012) conducted a comparative study in which they investigated the effects of direct writing in English and translated writing from Korean to English in Korean high school students' L2 writing performance. They obtained the research findings that the score of direct writing was significantly much higher than that of translated writing for advanced L2 writers, while any significant difference was not found between the two writing tasks for low-level writers. This was corroborated by the interview data in which most of the participants in both high- and low-level of L2 proficiency replied that they had had difficulties in translating L1 into L2 since translation might have functioned as a barrier or cognitive burden when they perform the writing task. Hwang and Lee's (2012) findings are thought provoking in that they go against the general trend of the facilitative role of L1 use in L2 writing (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Qi, 1998; Uzawa, 1996; Woodall, 2002), calling for divergent views on the issue.

## 2.2. Direct vs. Translated Writing and Writing Genres

The use of L1 in L2 writing process—for instance, language switching—varies considerably depending upon learner characteristics such as writer's L2 proficiency, writing task difficulty, writing task mode, to name a few. One of the variables that has invited some researchers' attention is L2 learner's cognitive process in the performance of writing in two different task modes—direct writing in L2 and writing in L1 and then translating it into L2—in order to examine how L2 learners utilize L1 as a function of acquiring L2 writing proficiency (Kim & Yoon, 2014).

Cohen and Brooks-Carson (2001), who conducted a study on French-as-a-foreign-language learners' strategy use in two modes of writing (direct vs. translated writing), found that two-thirds of the learners had performed better on the direct writing task carried out in French, whereas they confessed that they had been often resorting to their L1 when writing in French. This implies that it could be difficult to identify distinctiveness in nature of cognitive process engaged in the two writing modes.

Such hypothesis was clearly confirmed by Hwang and Lee (2012), in which they explored the effects of the two writing modes on Korean high school students' writing performance in terms of their L2 proficiency. As mentioned elsewhere, high-level L2 writers had performed significantly better in the direct writing mode than in the translated one. Interestingly, however, they made a noteworthy report that many of them had preferred the translated writing task to the direct one, low-level learners in particular, who used the strategy of L1 to relieve their cognitive burden in L2 writing (Qi, 1998; Wang, 2003). Although the evidence of cognitive process engaged in the two different writing task modes appears compelling based on the studies above, the issue of L1 use in L2 writing in the two modes still remains inconclusive.

One more variable to be considered in L2 writing studies is writing genre that has been decoded as a conventionally recognized way of language use for specific purposes (Hyland, 2003). Since genre-oriented instruction brings benefits that it can integrate discourse and contextual aspects with structures, functions, or processes while producing results, genre is also considered a crucial feature that could possibly make a change in quality and quantity of L2 writing (Wang, 2003). Accordingly, genre might determine the improvement of L2 learners' writing ability and their goal-oriented writing performance (Yoon & Lee, 2016), and also can affect significantly L2 learners' writing performance and the production of authentic writing outcomes (Hudelson, 1986; Huot, 1990; Weigle, 2002). For better understanding of discourse properties of L2 writing, therefore, it is fairly essential that comparative analyses of language and discourse features employed in L1 and L2 prose be carried out based on similar or proximate genres of writing (Hinkel, 2011).

In accordance with both Wang and Wen (2002) with Chinese students and Manchon, et al. (2000) with three EFL writers, that were conducted to investigate L1 use in L2 composing process in two different writing genres of narration and argumentation, the L2 learners in both studies used L1 more in narrative writing than in argumentative one. While performing the writing tasks, the learners must have used their L1 as a compensatory strategy when running into difficulties in the process of L2 writing, resulting in release of mental burden (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Cumming, 1989, 1990; Qi, 1998; Uzawa & Cumming, 1989; Woodall, 2002).

By the way, outcomes of the two studies above in terms of writing genre turned out quite different from what have been expected. A narrative writing task has usually been considered the least cognitively demanding while argumentative type is seen as the most demanding (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). Given that it has widely been acknowledged that L2 writers' more use of L1 could possibly be a strategic approach to dealing with more cognitively difficult genre, further empirical evidence is called for to validate the issue raised by the two studies.

### 3. RESEARCH DESIGN

#### 3.1. Participants

In this study 46 college freshmen participated who enrolled in *Academic English*, a compulsory course, during spring semester, 2016. The participants consisted of 42 male students (91%) and 4 females (around 9%), all of whom were from three natural science classes (all the freshmen are required to choose either liberal arts or natural science for their majors). Each of the three classes was composed of 18, 17, and 14 students respectively, but three of them were ruled out on account of sick leaves during the experiment period, leaving 46 participants effective for analysis.

A pre-survey was conducted at the beginning of the semester for getting personal information about the participants: their average TOEIC score was 768 ranging from 430 to 980, which signifies approximately an intermediate-high level of English proficiency; many of the students replied that they had never experienced formal writing instruction; and just 10 out of 46 had a little experience of writing compositions before this experiment. For further analysis, the participants were divided into two groups depending upon their pre-writing essay results (20 points in total): 20 (43.5%) high-level students who scored above 16 with an average of 17.53, and 26 (56.5%) low-level students who scored less than 16 with an average of 13.96.

#### 3.2. Instruments

##### 3.2.1. Writing tasks

Each of 46 students wrote 5 times of compositions and among the total of 230 writing samples collected, 184 writing samples were evaluated in an attempt to compare direct and translated writing results, excluding 46 samples of pre-writing. They wrote a narrative writing in two task modes: direct writing and translated writing, and they also wrote an argumentative writings in the same two modes.

The topic of narrative writing was "A Special Day I Have Had," and for argumentative writing, the following prompt was provided: "Nowadays smart phones are indispensable in our life. Some people think they bring us much convenience, while others argue they make more trouble. Which view do you agree on? Choose one view and support your argument in English." With the two genres of writing, they were instructed to write directly in English (direct mode) and write in Korean first and then translated it into English (translated mode). They were also guided to compose their writings in random order, which was aimed at minimizing any order effects.

For the total of 184 writing samples gleaned from the participants, an analytical scoring method was chosen in order to measure the students' writing performance including writing features such as content, organization, vocabulary, grammar, and mechanic (Jacobs, Zinkgraf, Wormuth, Hartfiel, & Hughey, 1981; Yoon & Lee, 2014). Two raters took part in the scoring procedure: one was a native speaker from Canada, who has teaching experiences of English conversation and writing for about 15 years in several Korean colleges; and the other was one of the researchers who has almost 20 years of English teaching experiences in universities in Korea as well. The manuals and rubric for scoring were delivered to each rater before starting to score. They were reminded of scoring writing samples in consistency, and they were not allowed to communicate while scoring. Inter-rater reliability was calculated for each writing occasion, and Cronbach  $\alpha$  was .933 for narrative in English, .908 for narrative in translation, .676 for argumentative in English, and .895 for argumentative in translation. The reliability ranged from a moderate-high to high degree, which safely permits further analysis.

### 3.2.2. Questionnaire

After completing the writing tasks, a semi-structured questionnaire was administered to examine their perceptions of the writing task modes and genres. First, their background information was asked (name, age, and gender), followed by additional information of their writing abilities now, before, and after the treatment, using a five-point Likert scale: high, mid-high, mid, mid-low, and low. Next, their thoughts and preferences were examined: which of task modes and genres is easier and which one is more helpful for the improvement of their English writing ability. Finally, they were asked to report about how often they used L1 while writing in English with a four-point scale (never, hardly, a little, much), why they did so, and how useful it was to do so. Along with the questions, open-ended items were followed by for them to state why they thought so (see Appendix).

### 3.3. Procedures

On the first day of the course, the participants were asked to write an essay with the title of "My Best Friend" in English to assess their writing proficiency, and then a pre-survey was conducted for collecting their personal data such as age, English writing experience, and TOEIC score. Any formal English writing instruction or writing treatment was not provided because the mandatory course mostly focused on teaching reading skills including grammar and vocabulary.

During the experiment, the students were engaged in 5 writing tasks, and each of them was completed every other week. They carried out all the compositions in the test situation



with time constraint to heighten their attention to the task, where 30 minutes was given for direct writing and 50 minutes for translated writing (20 minutes in L1 writing and then 30 minutes in translating it into L2). Any reference materials were not allowed to use in the test. Additionally, it was emphasized that their test results would be included in their final credit.

The writing tasks were counterbalanced to keep off biased results from the same sequence of writing. Among the three classes, those in class A ( $n = 18$ ) were asked to write a narrative essay in Korean (L1) and then translate it into English (L2), while those in classes B ( $n = 17$ ) and C ( $n = 14$ ) a narrative essay directly in English. Two weeks later, those in classes B and C were requested to write an argumentative essay in L1 and then translate it into L2, while those in class A were asked to write an argumentative essay directly in L2. Then, they switched their turns to write essays: those in class A were asked to write another narrative essay directly in L2, while those in classes B and C had to write a narrative essay in L1 and then translate it into L2. Another two weeks later, those in classes B and C were asked to write an argumentative essay directly in L2, while those in class A had to write an argumentative essay in L1 and then translate it into L2. To sum up, the students had to write an essay in two genres in two different modes as in Table 1.

At the end of the course, a post-survey was conducted to get information of their opinion and preference about task mode and genre. They were asked to respond to the survey in their L1 in order to eliminate any undesirable effects of the use of English on representing their thoughts and opinions about the experiment .

**TABLE 1**  
**Procedure of the Study**

	Class		
	A	B	C
1	Pre-writing / Pre-survey		
2	Narrative (Translated)	Narrative (Direct)	Narrative (Direct)
3	Argumentative (Direct)	Argumentative (Translated)	Argumentative (Translated)
4	Narrative (Direct)	Narrative (Translated)	Narrative (Translated)
5	Argumentative (Translated)	Argumentative (Direct)	Argumentative (Direct)
6	Post-survey		

### 3.4. Data Analyses

The test results were coded and analyzed using the statistical package of the SPSS 22.0 version. For the tests, first of all, descriptive statistics were calculated. Next *t*-tests were conducted to check for any differences in writing performance and learners' perception of writing in different writing modes and genres depending upon learners' English writing proficiency. Finally, chi-square tests were carried out to examine their preference for a

writing mode and writing genre, and how much they think in Korean while performing the writing tasks.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### 4.1. Comparison of Direct vs. Translated Writing in Different Writing Genres

Table 2 provides the *t*-test results which show all 46 students' L2 writing performance in the two modes of direct and translated writing according to the two writing genres of argumentative and narrative essays. Their writing performance in the direct mode was significantly better than that in the translated mode regardless of the genre (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001), although there were substantial differences between the two genres in the degree of significance. In particular, they performed remarkably better in all scoring criteria when writing an argumentative essay directly in English than when writing the essay in their L1 and then translating it (Manchon et al., 2000; Wang & Wen, 2002).

**TABLE 2**  
**Direct vs. Translated Writing Performance in the Two Genres**

Scoring Criteria	Writing Mode	Argumentative			Narrative		
		<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Organization	Direct	4.38(.518)	5.771	.000	4.02(.760)	2.411	.020
	Translated	3.73(.780)			3.80(.711)		
Content	Direct	4.26(.555)	4.337	.000	3.88(.877)	1.907	.063
	Translated	3.83(.790)			3.67(.825)		
Grammar	Direct	3.86(.430)	4.682	.000	3.64(.524)	2.403	.020
	Translated	3.47(.542)			3.44(.655)		
Vocabulary	Direct	4.21(.533)	5.008	.000	3.88(.607)	3.877	.000
	Translated	3.72(.647)			3.62(.560)		
Total	Direct	16.71(1.638)	6.256	.000	15.42(2.424)	3.453	.001
	Translated	14.74(2.458)			14.53(2.448)		

Speaking broadly, the outcome of superiority of the learners' directed writing performance over their translated one attracts profound discussion considering the opposing views on the role of L1 use in L2 writing that L1 use in L2 writing is not a good strategy for L2 learners (Johnson, 1985) on the one hand, and that L1 use functions positively in the development of L2 writing proficiency on the other (Cumming, 1990; Friedlander, 1990; Huh, 2001; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992).

Additionally, examinations of the survey reports, concerning the better performance in direct writing than in translated one, demonstrated that 13 out of 46 students addressed mostly about the use of vocabulary. They think it is sometimes hard to find appropriate

English words corresponding to their Korean counterparts, so it is convenient to write directly in English using the words at their disposal. Moreover, it takes considerable time to write in Korean and then translate it, and while doing that they have to go through complicated cognitive process (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Qi, 1998; Wang, 2003).

Differences in the learners' writing performance in the two modes according to their L2 writing proficiency were also examined using the *t*-test as in Table 3 when they wrote an argumentative essay and Table 4 when they wrote a narrative one. In both genres and writing proficiency groups, significant differences were found in their performance in the writing mode, favoring the direct one. In the argumentative writing, in particular, the low-level learners did perform noticeably better in the direct mode.

**TABLE 3**  
**Direct vs. Translated Writing Performance in the Argumentative Essay**  
**According to L2 Writing Proficiency Levels**

Scoring Criteria	Writing Mode	High-level Students			Low-level Students		
		<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Organization	Direct	4.68(.373)	3.206	.005	4.15(.505)	4.960	.001
	Translated	4.05(.826)			3.48(.656)		
Content	Direct	4.58(.373)	2.268	.035	4.02(.556)	3.759	.000
	Translated	4.23(.716)			3.52(.714)		
Grammar	Direct	3.98(.413)	1.949	.066	3.77(.430)	4.655	.001
	Translated	3.73(.499)			3.27(.495)		
Vocabulary	Direct	4.45(.426)	1.994	.061	4.02(.538)	6.083	.000
	Translated	4.08(.694)			3.44(.455)		
Total	Direct	17.68(1.150)	2.667	.015	15.96(1.581)	7.220	.000
	Translated	16.08(2.467)			13.71(1.930)		

**TABLE 4**  
**Direct vs. Translated Writing Performance in the Narrative Essay**  
**According to L2 Writing Proficiency Levels**

Scoring Criteria	Writing Mode	High-level Students			Low-level Students		
		<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Organization	Direct	4.50(.562)	2.854	.010	3.65(.690)	1.115	.276
	Translated	4.20(.637)			3.50(.616)		
Content	Direct	4.43(.613)	1.756	.095	3.46(.824)	1.154	.259
	Translated	4.20(.637)			3.27(.724)		
Grammar	Direct	3.93(.438)	1.566	.134	3.42(.484)	1.789	.086
	Translated	3.73(.596)			3.21(.619)		
Vocabulary	Direct	4.20(.571)	2.979	.008	3.64(.5210)	2.575	.016
	Translated	3.93(.568)			3.39(.432)		
Total	Direct	17.05(1.870)	2.890	.009	14.17(2.044)	2.146	.042
	Translated	16.05(2.121)			13.37(2.028)		

Such finding is in opposition to Silva's (1989) argument that L1 use in L2 writing would

be beneficial for less proficient L2 writers, and Hwang and Lee's (2012) outcome that high-level writers' writing performance was significantly better in direct writing than translated one, while there were no great differences in low-level writers' performance between the two modes. The effects of L2 learners' writing proficiency on their different writing performance in direct and translated mode could hardly be determined unless more evidence is obtained.

One more thing that deserves mentioning is that high-level students didn't show any significant difference in the category of grammar in both writing genres whether they write directly in English or translate from L1 to English, while there were differences in the categories of content and vocabulary depending upon genre. This can be interpreted that the students with high level of L2 writing proficiency are less likely to be fluctuated in their grammar use in different writing modes when writing in different genres because grammar is known as a main component of writing ability, which assumes that the more grammar knowledge the more proficient in L2 writing (Hughes, 2003; Nunan, 1999), and because they have already obtained a certain amount of grammar knowledge that might not be affected by writing mode or genre (Yoon, 2015; Yoon & Lee, 2016).

Table 5 provides the *t*-test results which reveal all 46 students' L2 writing performance in the two genres of argumentative and narrative writing according to the two modes of direct and translated writing. Interestingly, they performed strikingly better when writing an argumentative essay than when writing a narrative one in all scoring criteria in the direct mode of writing (Manchon et al., 2000; Wang & Wen, 2002), whereas no significant differences were found in their writing performance in the two genres when they perform the writing task in the translated mode.

**TABLE 5**  
**Argumentative vs. Narrative Writing Performance in the Two Modes**

Scoring Criteria	Writing Genre	Direct			Translated		
		<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Organization	Argumentative	4.38(.518)	3.812	.000	3.73(.780)	-.722	.474
	Narrative	4.02(.760)			3.80(.711)		
Content	Argumentative	4.26(.555)	3.814	.000	3.83(.790)	1.478	.146
	Narrative	3.88(.877)			3.67(.825)		
Grammar	Argumentative	3.86(.430)	2.448	.018	3.47(.542)	.363	.718
	Narrative	3.64(.524)			3.44(.655)		
Vocabulary	Argumentative	4.21(.533)	4.022	.000	3.72(.647)	1.086	.283
	Narrative	3.88(.607)			3.62(.560)		
Total	Argumentative	16.711(.638)	4.594	.000	14.74(2.458)	.688	.495
	Narrative	15.422(.424)			14.53(2.448)		

In accordance with their survey reports, more than half the students (65.2%) responded that they were very well accustomed to what is argumentative prose and how to write it

because they have learned since young how to write logically in their L1, while they have not had many chances to write narration except the experience of keeping a picture diary in their elementary school days. That is, the unexpected results can be attributed to internalization of the features embedded in argumentative writing through practice and, more importantly, the impact of formal writing instruction (Hinkel, 2011). Given that narration is the least cognitively demanding genre in writing while argumentation is considered most demanding (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996), however, the issue of the influence of rhetorical knowledge and formal instruction versus that of cognitive demand on L2 writing performance in different genres needs further evidence to be clearly settled.

When it comes to the result of no significant differences between the students' writing performance in the two genres performed in the translated mode, they could possibly be affected by negative transfer of discourse structuring conventions and word choice (Qi, 1998). According to the survey reports, insufficient English writing ability including limited lexical variety and sophistication, inconsistent use of grammatical features, and/or different text cohesion appeared to surpass their personal experiences of writing in different genres.

Differences in the students' writing performance in the two genres according to their L2 writing proficiency were also examined using the *t*-test as in Table 6 in the direct mode and Table 7 in the translated one. Only for low-level learners in the direct mode, significant differences were found in their performance in the genre, favoring argumentation, while high-level learners failed to show any significant differences in both writing genres and modes.

It can be assumed that as for high-level learners, their L2 writing ability has reached at a certain point, so they can exert their writing ability consistently irrespective of writing

**TABLE 6**  
**Argumentative vs. Narrative Writing Performance in the Direct Mode**  
**According to Language Proficiency Levels**

Scoring Criteria	Writing Genre	High-level Students			Low-level Students		
		<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Organization	Argumentative	4.68(.373)	1.437	.167	4.15(.505)	3.759	.001
	Narrative	4.50(.562)			3.65(.690)		
Content	Argumentative	4.58(.373)	1.241	.230	4.02(.556)	3.919	.001
	Narrative	4.43(.613)			3.46(.824)		
Grammar	Argumentative	3.98(.413)	.036	.733	3.77(.430)	3.248	.003
	Narrative	3.93(.434)			3.42(.484)		
Vocabulary	Argumentative	4.45(.426)	1.697	.106	4.02(.538)	4.319	.000
	Narrative	4.20(.571)			3.64(.521)		
Total	Argumentative	17.68(1.150)	1.371	.186	15.96(4.581)	5.567	.000
	Narrative	17.05(1.870)			14.17(2.044)		

**TABLE 7**  
**Argumentative vs. Narrative Writing Performance in the Translated Mode**  
**According to Language Proficiency Levels**

Scoring Criteria	Writing Genre	High-level Students			Low-level Students		
		<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Organization	Argumentative	4.05(.826)	-.809	.428	3.48(.656)	-.157	.876
	Narrative	4.20(.637)			3.50(.614)		
Content	Argumentative	4.23(.716)	.170	.867	3.52(.714)	1.759	.091
	Narrative	4.20(.637)			3.27(.724)		
Grammar	Argumentative	3.73(.499)	.000	1.000	3.27(.495)	.450	.656
	Narrative	3.73(.596)			3.21(.619)		
Vocabulary	Argumentative	4.08(.694)	.972	.343	3.44(.455)	.531	.600
	Narrative	3.93(.568)			3.39(.432)		
Total	Argumentative	16.08(2.467)	.050	.961	13.71(1.930)	.931	.361
	Narrative	16.05(2.121)			13.37(2.028)		

genres whether they write in direct or translated mode. Judging from low-level learners' report of some features of argumentation such as prefabricated format, evidence-based content, and topic-related vocabulary use, however, previous learning of rhetorical features of argumentation and intensive practice may conceivably serve them well in their writing performance of argumentative prose (Hinkel, 2011).

#### 4.2. EFL Learners' Perception of the Writing Modes and Genres

An answer to the third research question regarding the students' perception of the two different writing modes and genres is offered by the following statistical analyses. First, the learners were asked to evaluate their own language abilities such as their current English ability, and English writing ability before and after taking the class. As shown in Table 8, many of them perceived their English ability in the level of mid and mid-high, and their English writing ability was perceived to improve after taking the class. The change was statistically significant both in total and in the two language proficiency groups at  $p = .000$ , which indicates that the writing practices carried out during the course served to enhance the learners' perception of their writing ability as well as their writing test scores (Yoon & Lee, 2014).

Next, *t*-test was administered to see if there is any significant difference in the learners' language ability depending upon their L2 writing proficiency levels. According to the results in Table 9, high-level learners' language abilities were significantly higher than their counterparts'. Especially, the gap between the two groups' perception of their writing ability decreased after the treatment, which implies that writing practice conducted in the class must be conducive to improve their writing proficiency, low-level learners in particular (Yoon, 2015), although there is still significant difference between the two

groups' writing ability.

**TABLE 8**  
**Frequency of the Learners' Language Ability**  
**According to their L2 Writing Proficiency Levels**

Perceived Language Level	English Ability			English Writing Ability Before Class			English Writing Ability After Class		
	Total	High	Low	Total	High	Low	Total	High	Low
1. High	4	3	1	1	0	1	2	1	1
2. Mid-high	20	13	7	9	6	3	22	12	10
3. Mid	14	4	10	17	10	7	13	6	7
4. Mid-low	7	0	7	10	3	7	8	1	7
5. Low	1	0	1	9	1	8	1	0	1

**TABLE 9**  
**Difference of the Learners' Language Ability**  
**According to L2 Writing Proficiency Levels**

Language Ability	Level	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
English	High	2.05	.605	3.938	.000
	Low	3.00	.938		
Writing before	High	2.95	.826	2.536	.015
	Low	3.69	1.158		
Writing after	High	2.35	.671	2.069	.044
	Low	2.88	.993		

As for the next questionnaire items of which of the two writing modes (direct or translated writing) is easier to perform and more helpful for the improvement of their English writing skills, almost the same number of the learners chose each mode (24 for direct writing vs. 22 for translated one), which failed to reveal any preference for a certain writing mode. When the results were submitted to statistical analysis, no significant difference was found depending upon the learners' L2 writing proficiency (both "easy to perform" and "more helpful" items:  $\chi^2 = 2.333, p = .127$ ).

They were also asked to respond to the items of how frequently they thought in Korean while writing in English and of how much helpful it was to do so. More than two-thirds answered positively that they thought in Korean in the process of English writing, and low-level learners did significantly more so than their counterparts as shown in Table 10 (Cumming, 1987; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Woodall, 2002). It is quite understandable that the low-level learners do not have English writing proficiency enough to perform the writing process only in English. For the effectiveness of the mental behavior, 33 out of 46 answered positively, and low-level learners responded absolutely positively, whereas the same number of high-level learners responded positively and negatively. Based on the

responses to the open item asking why they think so, low-level learners listed the reasons as follows: difficulty of coming up with ideas in English; lack of vocabulary, logical thinking, and writing ability in English; unfamiliarity with English itself, and the like (Qi, 1998; Wang, 2003; Weigle, 2002).

Unlike conventional belief that translation in L2 writing is one of the most effective writing strategies (Cumming, 1990; Friedlander, 1990; Huh, 2001; Scott, 1995), the learners in the current study didn't show any favoritism toward translated mode of writing, although low-level learners confessed that they thought in L1 in the process of L2 writing, and that the cognitive behavior was effective. Furthermore, their writing performance was proven to be better when performing the writing tasks in the direct mode (see Tables 2, 3, and 4). Substantial explanation of differences in writing performance in direct vs. translated mode seems still to be uncovered with more academic interests.

**TABLE 10**  
**Thinking in Korean while Writing in English**  
**According to Their L2 Writing Proficiency Levels**

Thinking in Korean	Level	Positive	Negative	$\chi^2$	<i>p</i>
Frequency	High	11	9	8.648	.003
	Low	24	2		
Effectiveness	High	10	10	8.248	.004
	Low	23	3		

Finally, they were asked to choose which writing genre was easier to perform, and many of them (30 out of 46) preferred argumentation to narration. Those who preferred argumentation listed some strengths of the genre such that it is easy to write logically according to the prefabricated format and construction, to write their own ideas and thought with a variety of evidence, and to draw easily vocabulary related to the topic of writing. On the other hand, the learners who chose narration mentioned familiarity with the genre based on personal experiences and natural process of writing. Such response is highly likely to support the results of differences in their writing performance in the two genres, preferring argumentation particularly in the direct mode (see Table 5), although no significant difference was found between the L2 writing ability groups ( $\chi^2 = 1.628, p = .202$ ).

## 5. CONCLUSION

In this study, EFL learners' writing performance was examined in two different modes of direct writing in English and writing in their L1 and then translating when they write argumentative and narrative essays depending upon their English writing proficiency. For



this research purpose, 46 college freshmen were asked to write four essays, and the results can be summarized as below.

When comparing their L2 writing performance in the two modes according to the two genres, their writing performance in the direct mode was significantly better than that in the translated mode in both genres (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001), in the argumentative prose, in particular. Furthermore, their L2 writing performance was significantly different in the two modes, favoring the direct one, irrespective of their L2 writing proficiency and genre. Given that L1 use functions positively in the development of L2 writing proficiency (Cumming, 1990; Friedlander, 1990; Huh, 2001; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992), the results may well invite a variety of profound discussion.

The outcome of the investigation of the learners' L2 writing performance in the two genres according to the two modes was that they showed a notable difference in their writing performance, favoring argumentation, in the direct mode (Manchon et al., 2000; Wang & Wen, 2002), whereas no significant differences were found in their writing performance in the two genres when they perform the writing task in the translated mode. Upon exploring the results considering their L2 writing proficiency, the significant results in the direct mode stemmed from low-level learners' remarkable outperformance in the argumentative writing task over narrative one. It can be asserted that the impact of formal instruction and practice on rhetorical features of argumentation may seem to be greater than that of cognitive load that the argumentative writing task might bring (Hinkel, 2011).

Finally, as a result of the questionnaire survey, the learners thought that the writing practice performed in the class contributed to the betterment of their English writing proficiency, low-level learners in particular, which reminds us of "practice makes perfect" (Hinkel, 2011; Weigle, 2002; Yoon & Lee, 2016). Regarding the translation-related interests, they failed to show any preference for a certain writing mode, while they reported that thinking in L1 while carrying out L2 writing was effective (Cumming, 1990; Friedlander, 1990; Huh, 2001; Scott, 1995). Accordingly, it can be safely said that L2 writing teachers need to consider how L1 use can be incorporated strategically into their students' L2 writing to advance their writing proficiency (Scott, 1995). In terms of their perception of writing genre in the respect of easiness to perform, many of them preferred argumentation to narration, which was supported by their significantly different writing performance in the two genres, favoring argumentation. This outcome corroborates the positive effects of formal instruction and practice in rhetoric on L2 writing (Hinkel, 2011).

In conclusion, the current study was an attempt to clarify nature and function of L1 use in L2 writing performance in different writing modes and genres according to L2 learners' writing proficiency. As Grabe (2009) pointed out that a single explorative study is not enough to confirm the research questions under investigation, further comparable studies are highly welcome to be carried out regarding different learner variables and experiment

design using a variety of research methods.

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## APPENDIX

### Questionnaire

\* 다음 질문에 성실히 답변해주시기 바랍니다.

#### I. Personal background

1. 이름: \_\_\_\_\_
2. 성별: 남 여
3. 나이: \_\_\_\_\_

#### II. Language abilities

1. 본인의 현재 영어 능력 수준을 어떻게 평가하겠습니까?  
① 상 ② 중상 ③ 중 ④ 중하 ⑤ 하
2. 본 수업을 시작할 때(올해 3월 초) 본인의 영어 쓰기 능력 수준을 어떻게 평가하겠습니까?  
① 상 ② 중상 ③ 중 ④ 중하 ⑤ 하
3. 본 수업을 마친 현재 본인의 영어 쓰기 능력 수준을 어떻게 평가하겠습니까?  
① 상 ② 중상 ③ 중 ④ 중하 ⑤ 하

#### III. Translation of Korean into English vs. English writing

1. 어떤 글쓰기가 더 쉬웠습니까?  
 번역(한국말 → 영어)  영어로 직접 쓰기
- 1-1. 그 이유를 구체적으로 쓰시오.

<p>2. 어떤 글쓰기가 영어 쓰기 능력 향상에 도움이 되었다고 생각합니까?  <input type="checkbox"/> 번역(한국말 → 영어) <input type="checkbox"/> 영어로 직접 쓰기</p> <p>2-1. 그 이유를 구체적으로 쓰시오.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p>3. 영어로 직접 글을 쓰는 활동을 수행하면서 얼마나 우리말로 생각했습니까?          ① 전혀 안 했다 ② 거의 안 했다 ③ 약간 했다 ④ 많이 했다</p> <p>4. 영어로 글을 쓸 때 우리말로 생각하는 이유는 무엇입니까?</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p>5. 영어로 글을 쓸 때 우리말로 생각하는 것이 도움이 된다고 생각합니까?  <input type="checkbox"/> 예 이유: _____  <input type="checkbox"/> 아니오 이유: _____</p> <p>6. 영어로 글을 쓸 때 우리말로 생각하면서 글을 썼던 예를 적어보시오.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>
<p><b>IV. English writing task types</b></p> <p>1. 어떤 글쓰기가 더 쉬웠습니까?  <input type="checkbox"/> Narrative writing(A Special Day I Have Had)  <input type="checkbox"/> Argumentative writing(Write on Smart Phone)</p> <p>1-1. 그 이유를 구체적으로 쓰시오.</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; height: 20px; width: 100%;"></div>

Applicable levels: Tertiary

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