

Writing in Two Languages

An Exploratory Case Study of Autobiographic Writings by Japanese-English Bilingual Students

Kyoko Motobayashi

Ph.D. Candidate

Ontario Institute for Studies in Education/University of Toronto

This study reports on an analysis of bilingual autobiographic essays written by Japanese-English speaking junior high school students about their transcultural experiences. It focuses on the relationship between the content of the essays and the language used in writing them. Drawing on the notion of language dependency in bilinguals' linguistic production, an argument which assumes that the language used in an autobiographic narrative may have some impact on the content of the narrative, it reports three phenomena found in the essays of these students: The essays written in the language of experience showed more detailed descriptions; the essays in the language of experience include some information that was not found in the other essay; and the episodes experienced in the language used in writing are referred to first in the essay.

本研究は、英語圏と日本双方での生活経験を持つ日英バイリンガル生徒が日本と海外での生活を比較して日英両言語で書いた「自伝的作文 (autobiographic writing: 自身の経験・体験についての作文)」の分析を通して、バイリンガルの自伝的作文における使用言語と産出作文の内容との関係を探るものである。分析の結果、「経験時使用言語 (language of experience)」で書かれた作文の方により詳細な記述やより多くの情報が含まれている例、また、経験時使用言語で書いた方の作文において当該言語での経験が先に言及されている例が見られた。本稿ではバイリンガルの自伝的言語産出に関する「言語による想起・産出の違い (Language dependency)」の議論に拠ってこれらの現象を論じる。

Introduction

This paper examines bilingual autobiographic essays written by Japanese-English speaking junior high school students studying in a “returnee” class in Japan. In analyzing these essays about their transcultural experiences, the study focuses on the relationship between the content of the essays and the language used in writing them, drawing on the notion of language dependent recall in bilinguals' linguistic production, an argument which assumes that the language used in an autobiographic narrative may have some impact on the content of the narrative.

In this paper I first introduce research into language dependency in bilingual autobiographic narrative, by reporting on it from a variety of different theoretical

perspectives. Next, I analyze three phenomena found in the writing of a group of bilingual students. Finally I discuss some implications for the education of bilingual students, arguing that the content of a bilingual autobiographic essay on the same topic by the same individual can differ between her/his two languages.

Language dependent recall in bilinguals' autobiographic narratives

Autobiographic memory and narrative: Definitions

Before commencing our discussion of language dependent recall in autobiographic narrative by bilinguals, the following concepts may require some clarification: autobiographic memory and narrative, language dependency, and bilingualism. Autobiographic narrative here can be understood most fundamentally as both the process and product of narrating one's autobiographic memory, which is in turn defined as one's memory about her/his own past. The autobiographic memory is a series of episodic memories about the events which have happened to a person, typically containing information about places, actions, persons, objects, thoughts and affect, accompanied by a belief that the remembered event actually occurred and was personally experienced. Autobiographic narrative, i.e., the act of narrating these autobiographic memories, is often times accompanied by "a sense of reliving" (Rubin, 1998, p.49) and these kinds of memories and narratives are fundamental to the constitution of one's self (Fivush & Haden, 2003; Milnes et al.; 2006, Thompson et al., 1998.)

One phenomenon which has been researched in regard to autobiographic memories is its language-dependency, which is most broadly defined as the notion that the language used in the narrative may have some effect on the memories recalled, i.e., the content of the narrative. In theory, this may happen in monolinguals' autobiographic narratives as well. For example, the use of different registers in the language of a monolingual individual might have some influence on the memories to be recalled.¹ However, it is mostly bilingual participants that have drawn the attention of researchers who have explored how the impact of different languages on the content of the narrative being produced.

This study likewise deals with data from bilingual participants. In particular it employs the concept of "bicultural bilinguals", which I define along with Schrauf and Rubin (2003) as "individuals who, having been 'enculturated' into the culture of origin from infancy, engage later in life in a subsequent process of 'acculturation' into the culture of adoption" (p.121). One drawback of this description of bicultural bilingualism is that it seems to over-rely on a unified or fixed notion of language and culture; nevertheless, this notion of participation in multiple cultures and/or communities with different languages is still informative in considering the experiences of bilinguals, in particular those with transnational experiences such as the students participating in this study. They have experienced multiple school systems, using two very distinct languages which possess quite different orthographic, grammatical and rhetorical systems. Although the border of "culture(s)" are increasingly blurred and questioned, the notion of multiple school cultures is therefore still applicable for them, and hence in this paper I will employ the term "bicultural bilinguals" to refer to these students.

When discussing bicultural bilingual autobiographic memories and narratives, it is essential to distinguish between the language of experience and the language of

¹ Marian and Neisser (2000) give an example of "baby talk" and child-directed speech, which may trigger memories related to early or childhood experiences.

production. “Language of experience” is used here to refer to that language in which a person experiences and encodes her or his life. The “language of production,” on the other hand, is used here for the language in which a person produces the narrative about those experiences, or decodes or reconstructs her or his experiences. In the case of bicultural bilingual individuals who have had transcultural and translingual experiences, the language of experience can vary greatly at different stages of their lives—more so than people who are raised in monolingual settings. For students in particular, transcultural movement involves socializing into different school systems, as well as different systems of literacy practice.

The current study attempts to explore the phenomenon of language-dependent recall in bilinguals’ autobiographic narratives through analyzing a set of narratives written by bicultural bilingual students, focusing on the relationship between the content and the language used. It looks at *what* the bilingual junior high students consciously or unconsciously choose to write about, instead of how correctly they write, in each of their languages.

Although language-dependency in bilingual autobiographic narratives has been reported by researchers, they account for it in a variety of ways. Below I will introduce the main justifications that have been given. My purpose here is not to argue for the best explanation but rather to draw the readers’ attention to this phenomenon.

Research on language dependency: Objective and subjective, theoretical and empirical supports

Linguistic relativity theory, traditional and beyond: The neo-Whorfian perspective on the effects of language on thought

Some researchers apply the linguistic relativity theory, or the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis (Whorf, 1956), to explain the language dependency of autobiographic memories. The central claim of the original hypothesis, which derives from the field of linguistic anthropology, is that the particular language people speak affects their way of thinking about reality (Whorf, 1956). This assumes a reciprocal relationship between the morpho-syntactic systems of a language and the way that its speech communities see, and respond to, the world. While this theory has had considerable impact on fields such as comparative psycholinguistic anthropology and cognitive psychology, it has been controversial and sometimes described as “linguistic determinism” (Lucy, 1997).

Various attempts have been made to overcome this issue. A “weak” version of Whorf’s hypothesis was suggested fairly early in the debate in psycholinguistics (Slobin, 1971). Researchers known as “neo-Whorfians” have tried to understand language relativity theory in a more sophisticated way, making it a testable hypothesis so that researchers can examine the effect without becoming too deterministic (Lucy, 1997). Common to these researchers is that, while they still aim to understand the influence of language on people’s cognition from the linguistic relativity perspective, they are more cautious about the traditional Whorfian approach that limits the scope to the influence of grammar and lexicon, so they attend also to various other possible domains, levels and contexts (Pavlenko, 2005). Thus their more moderate claim is “certain properties of a given *language* have consequences for patterns of *thought* about *reality*” (Lucy, 1997, p. 294, italics in original).

Applying this neo-Whorfian perspective of linguistic relativity to bilingualism research, Pavlenko (2005) points out a new possibility that bilingual participants can add to this discussion. In the traditional approach where monolingualism (one language

spoken by one individual) was taken as the norm, the approach of most researchers was to compare “speakers from the language X group” and “speakers from the language Y group,” in order to analyze the “effect of language on cognition”. Within this paradigm, Pavlenko argues, bilingual participants were eliminated as “messy” subjects who might distract researchers from an accurate investigation of the effects of language, because they represent more than one language system and thus were not considered to be “pure” recipients of the effects of language. However, Pavlenko further argues that bilinguals (in particular “bicultural bilinguals”) can in fact be seen as “the only ones to experience directly the effects of linguistic relativity and to fully understand these effects” (p. 437) through their intimate first-hand knowledge of two systems of languages.

Thus, the neo-Whorfian version of linguistic relativity theory and autobiographic narratives, either by monolingual or bilingual writers, link nicely because autobiographic narrative connects all three of the key elements of the language relativity theory—language, thought and reality. Autobiographic memories, which are memories related to everyday and personal experiences throughout an individual’s life, are in many cases encoded and mediated through language (that is, the language of experience). At the same time, in autobiographic narrative, those memories are narrated through language (that is, the language of production). These autobiographic narratives can be considered as linguistic re-constructions of memories related to everyday experiences, namely, of thought related to reality. Hence, the neo-Whorfian linguistic relativity theory can serve as a useful theoretical framework for understanding the language dependency in autobiographic narrative.

However, although there are fewer empirical studies in line with this theory (e.g., Pavlenko, 2005), there are less empirical studies directly investigating bilingual autobiographic narrative within this framework, compared to other domains such as color recognition. This can be complemented with empirical studies in cognitive psychology, as illustrated below.

Context-dependent memory and language as context

Cognitive psychologists investigate language dependent recall within the theoretical framework of context-dependent memory, which assumes that memory retrieval varies depending on the environmental context of retrieval (see Smith & Vela, 2001, for a meta analysis). When language dependency is viewed from this perspective, language is considered as one of the components that constitutes such context of memory retrieval. Schrauf and Durazo-Arvizu (2006) illustrate two sub-frameworks included in the context-dependent memory, which can explain the phenomenon of language dependent recall of autobiographic memory: encoding specificity and state-dependent learning.

Encoding specificity suggests that the recollection of a memory happens when sufficiently similar properties that can trace the event are found in the retrieval situation. In the bilingual context, the language of the cue and/or use can be considered as one of those possible properties. Marian and Neisser (2000) used the framework of encoding specificity to conduct an interview study using a word-prompt technique and found that memories are more successfully recalled when the language of recall matches the language of encoding (i.e., the language of experience).

In a similar vein, state-dependent learning, which supposes that the cognitive state conditions learning and/or information processing, suggests such states include the language spoken at the time of the event. Schrauf (2000), using this framework, argues that language in use and the language-specific self-representations act as linguistically

mediated “states” that can account for qualitative and quantitative differences in memory retrieval.

A common perspective here is that language in use can be considered as a factor that constitutes the environmental context for a person’s cognitive activities, including memory recall. Based on these two frameworks, Schrauf and Durazo-Arvizu (2006) suggest that memories are to some extent “tagged” by language, and thus language-dependent. These theoretical explanations, together with studies in experimental psychology and clinical case reports in psychoanalytic therapy, also support the notion that bilingual individuals tend to retrieve memories more frequently and to report them more vividly and in more detail when reporting in the language of experience than in the other language (Schrauf and Rubin, 1998; Schrauf, 2000).²

These studies in cognitive psychology, following established methodological conventions in the field, attempt to reduce variables as much as possible. These researchers tend to either limit their scope to the lexical level or reduce the narrative aspect of data even when the data were collected in a form of narrative such as interviews. In addition, these studies mostly deal with spoken data, collected in contexts such as word-prompt experiments or clinical counseling. To this point, studies on autobiographic literary work and bilingual writing can offer complementary insights on bilinguals’ subjective perspectives. This issue will be addressed in the next section.

Research on bilinguals’ autobiographic writing/literary work

Studies investigating published autobiographic work by bilingual literary authors provide us with rich insights on bilingual writers’ own thoughts about their writing processes. Such studies include Pavlenko (1998) and Steinman (2004, 2005), which explore the issue of “writing life 1 in language 2” (Steinman, 2005). Citing comments from a variety of authors such as Said, Hoffman and Dorfman, Steinman comments on the fact that many of those second language users noted their struggles as bilingual writers, in particular, “the tension, complexity, and dissonance of writing in one language about events that had happened in another” (2004, p. 100). For Said, “trying to produce a narrative of one in the language of the other has been complicated”; for Hoffman, it is a process which can function as a “translation therapy”; and for Dorfman, the writing process helps her to constitute different selves, “[her] private English language self and [her] public gesticulating Spanish persona” (all cited in Steinman, 2005, p. 71-72).

² Here, it should be emphasized that the linguistic dependency of autobiographic memory does not directly support either the single- or double-storage of memories in a bilingual’s mind; rather, the transferability between these two languages is emphasized in those studies implementing language-dependent recall strategies. Marian and Neisser (2000) maintain that “there are a number of ways to account for language-dependent recall of autobiographical memories from a common memory store” (p. 367). Schrauf and Rubin (1998) offer some anecdotal evidence on transferability, indicating that the participants first “thought in Spanish” in response to the English word cue and then provided an English description (p. 453). They also mention the case of highly competent multilingual persons who “can access personal memories with equal facility in as many languages as they command” (p. 453). Schrauf (2000) states that memories from any period of life may be accessed, retrieved, or reconstructed through the second language, although the retrieval is not the same in both languages. Pavlenko (2005, p. 446) notes both the translatability of autobiographic memories and the difficulty of carrying out a complete translation. Thus, it seems that bilingual autobiographic memories are dynamic systems which, on the one hand, have some relationship with the language of production/recall, and on the other, are transferable and translatable.

Writing is a complex process in itself, including both social and cognitive factors. Writers have an intended audience to whom they have to convey meaning. The content must be recalled and put into words, and then put through the editing process. In applied linguistics, researchers have attempted to capture the processes of writing, both for monolinguals (Hayes & Flower, 1980; Bereiter & Scardamalia, 1987) and bilinguals (Cumming, 1994). However, as Steinman (2005) maintains, the theme of “writing life 1 in language 2” (and vice versa) has been addressed only on the periphery of the field, when compared to the skill- or strategy-related issues. There are some researchers who investigate the relationship between the topic and the language used in writing by comparing the quality of writing (e.g., Friedlander, 1990), but “quality” in this case means the rater’s evaluation and the content aspect of writing remains relatively under-researched.

This paper is in line with Steinman in that it considers the issue of writing about events experienced in one language in the other language. The accounts by the bilingual authors cited above indicate that in the processes of bilingual autobiographic writings they perceive their selves and memories somewhat differently, at least to some extent, depending on the language used. Taken together with the discussions in the previous sections, these perceived differences may have some impact on the products of the writing.

Purpose of the paper

Though from different theoretical perspectives, such research points toward the same phenomenon: bilingual autobiographic narratives tend to differ depending on the language used, and its writing process includes tensions and dissonances felt on the side of writers. The neo-Whorfian linguistic relativity theory and experimental psychology research have contributed to the understanding of this phenomenon, in a more or less objective and generalizable methodology yet they place less focus on capturing the richness of the narrative, particularly written narratives. On the other hand, research on bilinguals’ autobiographic literary work offers rich insights into the authors’ own perspectives about the processes of producing narrative in a language other than the language of experience although the data set comes from published work by established authors. Findings from these different fields suggest that the language used in writing may have some impact on the processes of memory recall and writing, and thus possibly the content of the written product, in bilinguals’ autobiographic writing.

In line with these discussions, this paper explores the relationship between the content and the language used (language of experience or the other language) in bilingual autobiographic essays written by students in a returnee class at a Japanese junior high school. This paper poses the following guiding research question and hypotheses:

Research Question

What do bicultural bilingual students write in autobiographic narrative essays, when they write them on the same topic in their two languages?

Hypothesis

Using the language of experience will facilitate production of content about an event experienced in that language. Namely, writing in Japanese will increase the production of episodes related to the writer’s experiences in Japanese, while writing in English will increase the production of episodes related to the writer’s experiences in English.

Participants

The participants in this study are three Japanese returnee students who had spent time abroad. Makoto was born in Japan and spent four years in the United States from the age of eight to twelve, and then moved to Japan. Mei, also born in Japan, spent more than seven years in the United States, from the age of three to eleven, before she moved to Japan. Haruka was born in Britain and lived there until she was eleven, at which time she moved to Japan. While their experiences vary in terms of the birth places and the years spent abroad, they share transcultural experiences across different school systems. Therefore, these students are considered to be bicultural bilinguals as defined in Schrauf and Rubin (2003).

Data

This paper reports on three pairs of essays, written by the three participants introduced above. Each pair consists of two essays written by the same participant, one in Japanese and the other in English. Thus there are six essays in total, all written on the same topic, *My Life in Japan and Abroad*. The data were collected in two in-class writing sessions, which were part of a larger study (Motobayashi, 2003). The purpose of the larger study was to understand the relationship between the first language and the second language in bilinguals' comparative and explanatory writing ("hikaku-setsumeibun"), which entailed quantitative analysis, so the data were collected in two sessions in order to counterbalance the languages used in writing. In the first session, the participants wrote in Japanese for the first 30 minutes and then in English for the next 30 minutes. Then, a week later, they wrote in the opposite order, namely in English then Japanese. Thus the order of writing was different depending on the session in which they wrote the essay.

Makoto and Haruka's essays were written in Japanese first and then English while Mei's were written in English then Japanese. Their first essays were collected once they were done, before they started writing the second essay. Therefore, the participants did not have the first essay in front of them when they were writing the second essay in the other language. In addition, they were instructed that this was not a "translation" task and that they could consider the two essays as separate from each other. For the larger study, four titles were prepared for comparative writing, from which they individually chose one to write on in each session. One of the four titles given was "My life in Japan and abroad" and the essays written on this topic were considered as examples of the students' autobiographic writing.

Method of analysis

The data were analyzed qualitatively through the following process. Each essay was first divided into its constituent thought units and then idea units. This process was informed by Javier, Barroso and Munoz (1993), who define idea units as the smallest unit of available information, while thought units are a larger unit of information chunk that contains a series of related idea units. An idea unit ranges from a word to a single clause, or to a series of clauses, while a thought unit varies significantly in size and complexity (see Javier et al., 1993; Chafe & Danielewicz, 1987; Crookes, 1990; Kroll, 1977, for a discussion of these units). Once each essay was divided into thought units, the Japanese and English versions of each essay pair were compared, identifying the similarities and differences between the two languages.

The number of thought units and idea units as well as the ratio of idea units per thought unit for the participants in this study are outlined in table 1.

Table 1. Number of thought units, idea units and the ratio of idea units per thought unit

Participant	Makoto		Mei		Haruka		AVERAGE
Essay Language	First Japanese	Second English	First English	Second Japanese	First Japanese	Second English	
Thought Unit (TU)	13	15	13	10	8	9	11.33
Idea Unit (IU)	27	30	29	15	19	20	23.33
IU/TU	2.08	2.00	2.23	1.50	2.38	2.22	2.06

Their essays contain eight to fifteen thought units, i.e., chunks of thought or information. Makoto included thirteen thought units in the first essay (Japanese) and added two thought units in the second essay (English). Mei used thirteen thought units in the first essay (English) but wrote three less in the second essay (Japanese). Haruka came up with eight thought units in the first essay (Japanese) and added a thought unit in the second (English) version. Thus, Mei included more chunks of information in the first essay, while Makoto and Haruka included more in their second essays.

The ratio of idea units to thought units (IU/TU) indicates the extent of elaboration of each thought unit in each essay. On average, each thought unit consists of 2.06 idea units. In Makoto's case, in the Japanese version he includes 2.08 idea units per thought unit, but fewer in the English version. This indicates that both in the Japanese version and in the English version, Makoto includes nearly the same details of information for each thought unit, with a difference of 0.08 between the two languages, a little less in the English version. In Haruka's case, the ratio is 2.38 in the Japanese version and 2.22 in the English version. The difference of 0.16 indicates that she also included relatively similar details in both essays but less in the English version. Compared to these two participants, Mei's bilingual essays look somewhat different, with a difference of 0.73 between the two languages; her English essay contains more idea units per thought unit (2.23) than her Japanese essay (1.50), indicating that Mei provided more detailed information for each chunk of thought in the English version.

To sum up, Makoto included a few more chunks of thought with slightly less elaboration of each in the second essay in English than in the first in Japanese. Similarly Haruka included more chunks of thought with a little less elaboration of each in her second essay, which was in English. On the other hand, Mei included more chunks of thought with more elaboration of each in the first essay in English than in the second in Japanese.

To be sure, language dependency is not the only factor that could explain the features of their essays. Other possible factors such as the order of the writing and each individual's language proficiency need to be considered as well. However, the data suggest some intriguing elements considered to indicate language dependency in these autobiographic narratives. Below I will illustrate some findings from the data, focusing on differences between the two languages within the same participant in terms of the essay content.

Findings

Three phenomena emerged as indications of language dependency through a comparison of each participant's essay pair: (1) more detailed descriptions were included in the language of experience; (2) certain information was only conveyed in the language of experience; and (3) information was presented in different sequences depending on the

language of experience. A selection of representative examples for each of these phenomena will be illustrated below.

In providing these examples, as far as possible I have left their writing in its original form, including features that may be considered participants' errors or spelling mistakes. Since the purpose of this paper is to look at content rather than linguistic features, such errors will not be taken into consideration.

(1) More detailed descriptions included in the language of experience

The first example is taken from the essays written by Makoto. Overall, his writing in Japanese and English was very similar in terms of the organization and the content. In excerpt 1-1, he writes about his American experience both in English and in Japanese.

Excerpt 1-1. More detailed description of American experience in English (Makoto)

	My translation of Makoto's Japanese essay	Japanese essay by Makoto	English essay by Makoto
1	I made a lot of friends and	友達もたくさんでき、	<i>I made a lot of good friends and</i>
2	we had parties and sleepovers.	パーティーをしたりスリープオーバーもしたりしました。	<i>we had sleepovers and parties.</i>
3			<i>Many of my teachers were nice</i>
4			<i>and so do my neighbors.</i>
5	In a short time, I found my life in America more enjoyable than in Japan.	じきに日本に住んでいた時よりも楽しいと思えるようになりました。	<i>My life in America was very enjoyable</i>
6			<i>and at the time, I thought America's the best place in the world.</i>

Here, he writes about his experience in the United States in more detail in English, which presumably is the language in which he experienced these events. In Japanese he writes about his friends and events such as parties and sleepovers (1, 2), while he adds teachers and neighbors to this in the English version (3, 4). This can be interpreted as an indication of the language-dependency in autobiographic narrative in terms of the extent of elaboration. Due to the order in which he wrote the essays (Japanese, then English), this example alone cannot stand as evidence because it is less clear whether the detailed illustration in the second (English) version was because of the order of writing or of the

language used. However, this is complemented by the next example, from the same pair of Makoto's essays, where he writes about his life after coming back to Japan.

Excerpt 1-2. More detailed description of Japanese experience in Japanese (Makoto)

7	I made a lot of friends [and]	友達もたくさんでき、	<i>I made many friends</i>
8	I was able to get into X-junior high school.	ぼくはX中に入学することもできました。	<i>in X-chu</i>
9	Now, I lead an enjoyable life at X-junior high.	今ではX中で楽しい生活をおくっています。	<i>and now in Japan, you can find me having fun.</i>

In this case he writes in more detail in Japanese, referring to his entrance into Japanese junior high school. The English essay mentions the school (line 8), but nothing about the entrance process into the school, which is arguably something that is more relevant to his experience in the Japanese context than the American one. In addition, in line 9, notice how Makoto refers to "Japan" in the English version but specifies only the name of his school in the Japanese one. This may be related to his experience in each language. It is possible to hear that particular version of the autobiographical account being recalled in each language.

The third example, excerpt 1-3, is from the essays written by Mei, who included relatively different amounts of information in each language. Here, she writes about her life in the United States, comparing the size of the houses there with those in Japan.

Excerpt 1-3. More detailed description of the American experience in English (Mei)

	English essay by Mei	Japanese essay by Mei	My translation of Mei's Japanese essay
1	<i>The size of everything is very big in America.</i>	そして、何より日本とアメリカは、広さがちがいます。	And, above all, the size is different between Japan and America.
2	<i>The house was cheap and every big.</i>	家も庭もとても広くて、	My house and garden were very large,
3	<i>Wow!</i>		
4	<i>It was alsome!</i>		
5	<i>At the grosory store very food was very cheap like " 1 pack 98</i>		

	☪” and the food was very big and great!		
6	Also in Japan you can travel to the store or something		
7	but in America you have to travel buy car even to a grocery store!	スーパーに行くのも車がないと行けませんでした。	And we could not go to a grocery store without a car.

In excerpt 1-3, she writes in English in greater detail and in a more emotional way than she does in Japanese. She gives more detailed descriptions about the grocery store in the English version (5), providing an example of price and the amount of food in American supermarkets, both of which are not mentioned in the Japanese version. In addition, in her English writing she conveys more of a sense of animation about her experience in the United States (3, 4, & 7), using the exclamation point and vernacular assessments to mark her descriptions as noteworthy.

These examples from Makoto and Mei serve as examples of their elaboration of the content in greater detail in the language of experience, retrieving more information about the experience than in the other language.

(2) Certain information only found in the language of experience

Not only do the participants write in more detail, but they also add completely new information (thought units) which is only found in the language of experience. Excerpt 2-1 is from the same two pieces of writing by Mei as mentioned above.

Excerpt 2-1. Japanese specific topic only found in Japanese (Mei)

	Japanese essay by Mei	My translation of Mei’s Japanese essay
1	日本では、そうじの時間があります が、	In Japan, we have ‘a cleaning time’, but
2	アメリカは、みんなようむ員の人たち がやります。	in America, it is done by the custodian.

The “*Souji no jikan* (cleaning time)” is a cultural practice at most Japanese schools, in which the students themselves clean the classroom. In this essay, while Mei refers to the American custom for comparison, the sentence begins with this Japanese cleaning time. As mentioned earlier, Mei included more chunks of thought with more elaboration in

English. Therefore, it is worth noting that she wrote about it only in the Japanese version, in which she used a total of three thought units less than the English version.

On the other hand, as can be seen in Excerpt 2-2, Mei refers to the diversity in the United States only in English.

Excerpt 2-2. Diversity issue only written in English (Mei)

English essay by Mei	
1	Also the people in the U.S. is very different than Japan.
2	There are a lot of kinds of people in the U.S. Americans, Eueopeans, Koreas, Asian, Italian, Japanese and more.
3	But in Japan it is mostly Japanese.

Here, Mei writes about her observations on the difference in the degree of cultural diversity between the United States and Japan. As in excerpt 2-1, although Mei refers to the Japanese context for comparison, the topic starts with a reference to American diversity, followed by a comment about Japanese homogeneity.

With regard to the information found only in each language in these two examples by Mei, the details only found in Japanese are about a Japanese specific issue which is assumed that Mei experienced in Japanese, and the information found in English is about an American issue, which would likely have been experienced at her school in the United States in English. Although in both cases she compares one culture to another, she starts the sentence in excerpt 2-1 (where the content is only found in Japanese) with the Japanese issue (i.e., *sooji no jikan*) and she starts the sentence in excerpt 2-2 (where the content is only found in English) with the description of American people. It can be assumed that the use of English might trigger the content in the United States and the use of Japanese might do so for the content in Japan, as discussed by researchers using a word-prompt such as Marian and Neisser (2000) or Schrauf and Rubin (1998).

In fact, these sequential characteristics can also be found in a larger scale in the other students' writing, as explained in the next section.

(3) Different sequences of information depending on the language of experience

Some participants wrote differently in terms of the sequential and structural organization of the essay. Haruka is a case in point. In her bilingual essays, she compares her experiences in the United Kingdom and Japan. She starts her essays, in both languages, by describing her life in England. However, the later development of the writing is different.

In her Japanese writing, she goes on to describe her feelings when she went back to Japan first (lines 5-8), and then moves on to the topic of food in England (lines 9-11, 19-20). On the other hand, in the English version, after the introduction she moves on to the description of the food in England (lines 10-15), and then goes on to her experiences in Japan (lines 16-18). Namely, she presents the same chunks of information in a different order in each language.

Excerpt 3-1 The order in which information is presented influenced by the language used (Haruka)

	My translation of Haruka's Japanese essay	Haruka's Japanese essay	Haruka's English essay
1	When I lived overseas there was lots of nature	私は外国に住んでいたときは家の回には自然が多くて	<i>In England I lived in a place which a lot of trees and grass, and lots of nature.</i>
2	and it was in the countryside.	いなかでした。	<i>I lived in the countryside</i>
3	there were only two or three shops and	おみせが2, 3こあるだけで	<i>so I only had a couple of shops near by.</i>
4	There were no supermarkets or anything within a 30-minute car ride	30分ぐらい車にのらないとスーパーとかはありませんでした。	
5	When I came to Japan there were a lot of cars and tall buildings	日本にきて大きいビルや車が多くて	(16)
6	It was not very easy for me to readjust to my former lifestyle	前のようにはなかなか出来ませんでした。	
7	There were many convenience stores and supermarkets [and]	コンビニやスーパーがいっぱいあり、	(17)
8	It had changed a lot since I was here four years ago.	4年間きてなかったところがすごくかわってました。	(18)
9	Another thing that is very different is the food.	もう一つとてもちがうのは食べ物です。	
10	In England they often use flour in cooking [and also]	イギリスではりょうりの中にこなをよくつかったり	<i>The food in England is quite fattening and they use a lot of flour in their cooking.</i>
11	you often find things like pasta and bread.	パンやパスタけいのものが多い見られます。	<i>They mostly eat things like paster, burgers, sandwiches, roast beef.</i>
12			<i>In a meal they would allways have meat.</i>
13			<i>In England there are a lot</i>

			<i>of pubs,</i>
14			<i>and they are perticually full on sundays</i>
15			<i>because every body comes to eat a roast lunch (as a tredittion).</i>
16		(5)	<i>When I came to Japan there were a lot of tall buildings and a lot of cars.</i>
17		(7)	<i>There are lodes of shops called combinies</i>
18		(8)	<i>and although I was living in Japan 4 years ago I was sapisred in the amount they have increased.</i>
19	In Japan people often eat fish, rice and miso soup,	日本では魚やごはん、みそしるをよくたべてるので	<i>The people in Japan eat a lot of fish and rice and soup (misoshilu).</i>
20	so even though I had eaten [this food] before, it felt strange.	前にもたべたことがあってもへんなかんじてした。	

From a language dependency perspective, it can be inferred that the use of Japanese might have triggered writing about the Japanese experience first and the use of English might have triggered the English experiences. This, taken together with Mei's data illustrated above, suggests that the use of the language of experience has had some effect on the sequence of information presentation at both the macro and micro levels of discourse in their writing.

The examples introduced in this section together indicate the relationship between the content of the essay and the language used in writing. The essays written in the language of experience showed more detailed descriptions, including more information that was not found in the corresponding essay. Haruka's case showed that the sequence of information may vary depending on the language used for the writing. These phenomena will be discussed in the next section drawing on the literature on bilinguals' autobiographic narratives.

Discussion and conclusion

Dealing with bilingual autobiographic essays by bicultural bilingual students, this paper has provided examples of the phenomenon of language-dependency in autobiographic narratives to investigate whether or not writing in the language of experience facilitates production of content about the event experienced in that language.

Focusing on the content difference between the two languages within individuals, this paper has illustrated examples indicating the following phenomena: 1) more detailed descriptions were included in the language of experience; 2) certain information was only conveyed in the language of experience; and 3) information was presented in different sequences depending on the language of experience.

The first and the second phenomena imply that sometimes the use of the language of experience may indeed influence the degree of elaboration and the kind of information included in the content. This supports the findings of previous research in different theoretical frameworks (Pavlenko, 2005; Schrauf, 2000; Schrauf and Durazo-Arvizu, 2006).

The third phenomenon adds to previous research by showing that the order of information presentation in writing may also be influenced by the use of the language of experience. The fact that the same chunks of information are presented in a different order, with the content experienced in the language of production prior to that experienced in the other language, implies a possible interaction between memory recall and the writing process. While further research is needed, this may be related to the different modes of language production between speaking and writing, and this phenomenon is a possible means of looking into the different manifestations of language dependency between spoken and written data to be explored in the future.

When taken altogether, these findings have pedagogical implications for the education of bicultural bilingual students. In general, the recent trend in bilingual education is towards aiming to develop students' languages in a "balanced" way. In the current social and educational context this orientation would undoubtedly benefit students, allowing them to survive socially, cognitively and emotionally. However, when we look at the content of bilingual writing from the perspective of language dependency in bilingual autobiographic narratives, it appears that bilingual writers can sometimes construct narratives differently in each of their two languages, and the current study has put forward some possible theoretical and empirical evidence to account for this. This has significant importance for educators, regardless of the orientation in the bilingual education.

It is certainly not the author's intention to claim the generalizability of these findings, considering the small sample size and the complex nature of bilinguals' autobiographic memory, narrative and writing. Nor is it my assumption that the phenomena reported in this paper are necessarily permanent for these students. It is highly possible that these differences will decrease or increase as they develop, or depending on the community they are to be socialized into throughout their lives.

Future research will need to focus on two issues that the current study fails to do. The first is a counter-balanced design that will better distinguish the effects of repetition from that of language dependency. The second is retrospective interviews with the writers about how and why the two pieces of writing are different. The latter will be



...it appears that bilingual writers can sometimes construct narratives differently in each of their two languages...



especially important to better understand the perspectives of the bilingual student writers, as they are the ones who know their writing best.

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