



**Interference of Chinese (L1) Thinking Mode in English (L2) Argumentative Essay**

**Writing of Malaysian Chinese Students in UTAR**

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## Abstract

Differences of English thinking mode and Chinese thinking mode interfere English learners whose first language is Chinese in their English as Second Language learning, especially when it comes to writing. This research aims to find out the differences in English writing of Malaysian Chinese students in UTAR between Chinese thinking mode influences and English thinking mode influences. At the same time, it also intends to find out the differences between ESL students in UTAR who are professionally trained and who are not in terms of the Chinese thinking mode interference. A pre-writing questionnaire and a written task of an argumentative essay are therefore applied to collect responses from twenty participants in UTAR, while 10 of them are from English majors and the other 10 are from non-English majors. The analysis shows that differences of English thinking mode and Chinese thinking mode in English writing can be spotted in grammar, sentence patterns, discourse development, and Chinglish elements. However, the differences in English writing between professionally trained English major and non-English major students appear in whether they can fulfill basic requirements of an argumentative essay, avoid types of grammar errors, and apply English logic sentence patterns and discourse development in the essays. Therefore, interference of Chinese thinking mode does exist in Malaysian Chinese students in UTAR who are still learning English.

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## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

### **1.0 Introduction**

Thinking mode has close relation with thoughts. Human mind is spontaneously formed by a shift from external perceiving to concepts and language-based cognition, which evolves human cognition, cultures, and thusly distinctive patterns of human thoughts (Logan & Tandoc, 2018). The most amazing thing about human brain is that it constantly produces various thoughts on almost everything that can be perceived by five senses. As time goes by, these thoughts though varied from each other, gradually form a set of regular patterns, which are concluded as thinking mode. To a certain extent, thoughts are structured based on the cognition of hierarchy of things or things given by historical tradition (Castillo, 2013), and so is thinking mode.

On the other hand, thinking mode as well has close relation with languages. Boroditsky (2010) proposed that besides reflecting and expressing the thoughts, the languages being spoken shape the exact ideas people wish to convey. It has further suggested that speakers' first language has great influences on their thoughts. Under the circumstance of learning a second language, the thoughts generated by first language tend to be easily applied during second language acquisition. The situation becomes more apparent when it comes to second language writing. For example, similar composing strategies in first language and second language may increase the dependency of second language learners on their first language (Karim & Nassaji, 2013). Therefore, it is believed that thinking mode formed in the process of first language acquisition has impacts in second language writing.

### **1.1 Background of Study**

Different cultural environments have nourished distinctive thinking modes which are believed to be related closely to languages and to restrict language forms (Xiong, 2016). While

English people use English to express themselves in an English thinking mode, Chinese people use Chinese to communicate with others in a Chinese thinking mode (Jin & He, 2013). The differences between English and Chinese mode of thinking have constructed the varied ways of expressions between these two languages, which to a certain extent has limited English writing proficiency for English as second language learners whose first language is Chinese. As concluded by Jin and He (2013), Chinese thinking mode consists of characteristics of spiral thinking, synthetic thinking, and concrete thinking, while English consists of characteristics of linear thinking, analytic thinking, and abstract thinking.

The main distinctiveness between linear thinking and spiral thinking is the directness of expressions. As it is known to all, Chinese culture has been deeply impacted by the believes of Confucianism, Taoism, Buddhism etc., which leads to a spiral way of thinking. On the other hand, under the effect of European history and culture, English thinking mode is originated from “Plato, Aristotle, and ancient Greek” (Xiong, 2016, p. 1725). For example, the logical argumentation by Aristotle is a linear order for discourses. Moreover, abstract thinking and concrete thinking have equipped the English and Chinese with their own special features. Chinese thinking mode has strong concreteness which is reflected in Chinese characters (Xiong, 2016). The formation of current Chinese characters is closely related to the general looks of the objects during ancient time (Milnor, 2005), therefore the forms of the characters relate to their meanings. Conversely, as a phonetic language, English word forms have no relationship with its meanings, which makes the language abstract. As for people who speak the language, the integrity of the sentences is to which they pay more attention. In addition, while collectivism runs the Chinese society, synthetic thinking has been cultivated in Chinese people, requiring them to focus on the whole and generality (Xiong, 2016; Jin & He, 2013). Oppositely, English thinking mode enables English people to think in an analytic way and focuses on the part of whole and specifics.



Within the context of Malaysia where a multi-lingual group lives in, most of the Malaysian Chinese are able to speak both Chinese and English. They advocate Chinese education which is regarded as one of the ways to preserve cultural identity that a number of the younger generations are sent to Chinese Independent Schools where Chinese language and values are asserted in the teaching syllabus (Siah et al., 2014). While it has been more than 150 years for Chinese education to be evolved in Malaysia (Lee, 2009), today, Malaysian Chinese have developed a rather complete Chinese language education for school curriculum in order to maintain the Chinese culture and identity. Therefore, just like students growing up in mainland China, most of the Malaysian Chinese students acquire Chinese as their first language, which has more or less influenced in their English as second language acquisition (Dipolog-Ubanan, 2016). However, though Malaysia has an education system of learning multiple languages, there is still a difficulty to maintain proficiency for each language, especially for English language. Despite of learning English for years, the standard of English in Malaysia is declining. English has not been the strong suit for Malaysian students when it comes to English writing where students commit mistakes frequently in English language (Darus & Subramaniam, 2009). The paper by Atiqah (2017) has studied the common grammatical errors generated from the students' essays and proved that the result of which is under great interference of students' first language. The great dependency on their first languages has led to the difficulty in comprehending accurate English grammar. Meanwhile, according to Singh et al. (2017), students in Malaysian tertiary schools tend to generate some grammatical errors when it comes to formal English writing, such as grammatical errors in Subject-Verb Agreement, Verb Tense, Noun, etc.

To further testify English competency of ESL Malaysian Chinese students who have Chinese as their first language, it is suggested that argumentative essay writing is the most suitable way to reflect the authentic level of learners because it plays the role of relating the

classroom knowledge with thoughts, experience, and incidents that take place outside academic field (Schneer, 2018). Crowhurst (1988, p35, as cited in Schneer, 2018, p. 1) proposed that “no one kind of writing provides more opportunities for writing about real issues for real audiences than does argument”, which demonstrates that in order to create arguments, one has to apply what has been comprehended and learned into a pragmatic situation, as what Johns (2008, p. 243, as cited in Schneer, 2018, p. 2) names a “real world context”.

## **1.2 Statement of Problem**

Studies regarding interference of Chinese thinking modes on Malaysian Chinese tertiary students are noticeably insufficient. Existing studies have two obvious features in which are determined as the research gaps: one is that studies working on the topic of Chinese thinking modes focus only on Chinese students from Mainland China (Krish & Oh, 2020), and the other is that most studies working on first language influences in Malaysia focus on Malay as first language (Hashim, 2017). Therefore, there is a need to examine the influences of Chinese thinking mode on Malaysian Chinese tertiary students whose first language are Chinese.

Past studies (Dipolog-Ubanan, 2016; Lin et al., 2020) on the English writing competency of ESL Chinese students did compare Chinese students from both Mainland China and Malaysia, however they failed to further discuss the influences of Chinese thinking modes on Malaysian Chinese students who have been under the systematic learning of Chinese language as well. On the other hand, past studies (Amanpreet & Maniam, 2020; Atiqah, 2017; Singh, et. 2017) on the influences of first language on Malaysian students did discussed the impact of first language, however they omitted the other languages which ought to be the first languages of people other than the Malay race. As the result, it is believed that there is a need for the research to be constructed to fill the research gaps mentioned above.

### **1.3 Research Objectives**

The research objectives of the paper are as followed:

- a) To find out the Chinese thinking mode interference on English argumentative essay writing of Malaysian Chinese students in UTAR.
- b) To find out the differences between ESL students in UTAR who are professionally trained and who are not in terms of the Chinese thinking mode interference.

### **1.4 Research Questions**

The research questions of the paper are as followed:

- a) What are the differences between Chinese thinking mode influences and English thinking mode influences in English argumentative essay writing of Malaysian Chinese students in UTAR?
- b) What are the differences in English argumentative essay writing between Malaysian Chinese students in UTAR who are professionally trained and who are not trained?

### **1.5 Significance of Study**

The research contributes to the existing field of study from a rather integral perspective while focusing on the Malaysian Chinese who represent the combination of Chinese culture and Malaysian culture yet the group has not gained sufficient attentions. On the other hand, the research has identified two research gaps in the existing studies: one is the lacking of discussions regarding Chinese thinking mode interference on Malaysian Chinese tertiary students (Krish & Oh, 2020; Dipolog-Ubanan, 2016; Lin et al., 2020), and the other is the lacking of discussions regarding first language influences on Malaysian Chinese students whose first language are Chinese (Amanpreet & Mahendran, 2020; Atiqah, 2017; Singh, el. 2017), which will be demonstrated and filled in the following chapters.

The research not only focuses on the influences of Chinese thinking modes on Malaysian Chinese tertiary students, where most of the similar studies focus on students from Mainland China, but also focuses on Malaysian Chinese students whose first language is Chinese, where most of the similar studies focus on students whose first language is Malay.

### **1.6 Definition of Terms**

- First Language

First language was defined by Mizza (2014) that it is a language that the Children natively or firstly acquired. First language can be acquired in the environment even without the systematic learning in the classroom. The acquisition of first language depends greatly on the language environment that children may be able to acquire more than one first languages (Lova et al., 2017).

- Second Language

Second language is the language being learned or acquired besides one's mother tongue (Mizza, 2014). Second language is learned on the basis of the maturity of first language. Second language requires the learners to undergo a systematic learning to achieve a certain level of competency. Languages apart from the first language are second language (Stefánsson, 2013).

- Second Language Acquisition

Second language acquisition is defined as the studying process of students learning a second language on top of their first language (Stefánsson, 2013). The common environment for second language acquisition is the classroom where learners participate actively in the process to achieve the goal of mastering the language. Factors affecting second language acquisition are age, motivation, and exposure to the language.

- First Language Interference

First language interference is the mistake in the second language application that have a close relation with first language (Derakhshan & Karimi, 2015). The situation usually happens when the second language learners have insufficient knowledge regarding the first language that they rely on the knowledge of first language to fill the gap.

- Thinking Mode

Thinking mode is the way people process information which is specified into three modes of thinking: Analytic thinking mode, integrative thinking mode and holistic thinking mode (Önen, 2015). It is believed that thinking mode has close relations with cultural environment and will affect language learning.

## **1.7 Chapter Summary**

The chapter introduces concepts regarding thinking mode and its impacts in language acquisition while briefly mentions the background on Chinese and English thinking mode as well as the education background of Malaysian Chinese students to clarify the reason of choosing Malaysian Chinese students as participants. In addition, the brief introduction of argumentative essay is displayed to complete the background of the paper. Moreover, the paper identifies two research gaps in past studies then establishes research objectives and research questions to fill the gap. In addition, this chapter displays the significance of the study. Lastly, five key terms that will be discussed in the following chapters are defined.

## CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter is the literature review on different aspects to further affirm the importance of the chosen topic. Although there are numerous researches working on first language interference of Chinese in English among Chinese from mainland China, most researchers seem to overlook other ethnics who are as well brought up in the environment nourished by Chinese language, such as Malaysian Chinese and the fact that they may be influenced by Chinese thinking mode in English learning. The chapter reviews on the concepts of thinking mode and language, Chinese thinking mode and English thinking mode, L1 transfer in L2 writing to build a literary background of the topic and further emphasis on the importance of the research focusing on Malaysian Chinese students' formal English writing competency.

### **2.1 Thinking Mode and Language**

Thinking or cognition is a complex procedure consisting many other processes (Taylor, 2005, as cited in Noormohamadi, 2008), while language as a complex system is a manifestation of thinking to develop cognition (Noormohamadi, 2008). The relation between thinking and language has been controverted in the field when some suggest it is the language shapes thinking (Borositcky, 2010) and others believe in the opposite (Chomsky, 2006). Clark & Chalmers (1998, as cited in Bermúdez, 2003) proposed that language functions as a tool to enhance, extend and facilitate thinking in six ways. First, language acquisition strengthens the systematically storing of data. Learning languages benefits the development of memory. Second, linguistic labels applying can simplify the perceived environment. The complicated context can be refining as objects and properties. Third, language facilitates coordination, which allows the mutual control of recourse distribution and focuses. Fourth, linguistic communication permits various cognitive paths that it exceeds the path-dependent learning pattern. Fifth, control loops for future behavior is able to be create by language. For example,

writing down a to-do list for reminding. Sixth, language as a mediator in the brain corresponding with external information helps in reinforcing the capability of the brain.

Moreover, mode of thinking is claimed to be a certain concept of the world structured according to the persons' original concepts of things cultivated by their native languages and accepted by the language speakers (Castillo, 2013). Castillo (2013) has further concluded five types of mode of thinking coordinating with languages' original concepts. First, the modern mode of thinking means speakers intuit language. Speakers intuit by realizing essential connections in things and conduct reason in thinking, thusly they come to have particular intuitive conception regarding language and its functions. Second, the executive mode of thinking suggests that speakers live the language. Speakers believe their identity lies in the techniques of language expression and the way their language conceiving things. Third, mode of thinking of being as manifesting itself reveals that language is *διάλογος* (*diálogos*) – both speaking and listening. Language manifests by itself when the language users are conducting speaking behavior. Fourth, mode of thinking of being as reality displays that language created, acquired, and used by speakers to perform as human. The language exists in reality because it is created and used. Finally, substantive mode of thinking believes language is spoken as a series of entities. The reality of the language is independent from its creator and is objective.

While the first language has implemented in the aging process, mode of thinking is nourished with the unique characteristics of the particular language. When people share common mode of thinking, they share similar ways of perceiving and conceiving of the world (Castillo, 2013).

## **2.2 Chinese Thinking Mode and English Thinking Mode**

Different modes of thinking nourished by respective cultures (Ren, 2013), which not only reflects in the language's characteristics but also embodies in the language usages (Xiong,

2016). While the distinctions lie in the thinking modes, languages differ from each other overtly, especially the Chinese language and English language. The variations of three pairs of thinking affecting Chinese and English at the level of word, sentence, and discourse respectively are summarized as follow.

### 2.2.1 Linear Thinking and Spiral Thinking

The main difference of the linear thinking and spiral thinking, directness of expression, formulates the varied characteristics of the English and Chinese, where people of the former thinking tend to utilize the topic sentence or thesis statement as the summary of their ideas and elaborate the ideas with examples or evidences while people of the later thinking prefer indirectly narrating about the topic instead of going straight to the point (Ren, 2013).

#### 2.2.1.1 Directness of Nouns

The distinctions between linear thinking of English language and spiral thinking of Chinese language result in the varied forms of noun compilation to convey the meanings in terms of directness. For example, the word “衣柜” in Chinese refers to a cupboard where the clothes are kept and it consists of two elements: 衣(clothes) and 柜(cupboard) while on the other hand, the single word “wardrobe” in English is applied to express the same meaning (Jin & He, 2013).

#### 2.2.1.2 Sentence Pattern

While it is idiomatic for English to apply central idea in a sentence to show ideas directly (Xiong, 2016), preference of Chinese lies in stating “the time, condition, reason or other things” than the central idea in the beginning (Jin & He, 2013, p. 7). For example:

“我正要上床睡觉，他就进来了”.

“He came in as I was going to bed”.



In the English sentence, the central idea “he came in” was stressed in the beginning of the sentence while the other element was then demonstrated. On the other hand, in the Chinese sentence, the background information “我正要上床睡觉 (I was going to bed)” was stated at first to introduce the condition of the central idea.

### 2.2.1.3 Paragraph Development

Hu (1999, as cited in Wang and Chen, 2013) revealed that the structure of English language is the “grape structure” where the trunk is short attaching many fruits on it, while the structure of the Chinese language is the “bamboo structure” where phrases are sequenced to form shorter sentences. Verbs in English sentences are taken as the core which controls the relationships among sentence components. On the other hand, verbs in Chinese sentences are used to present things one by one chronologically (Wang & Chen, 2013).

- 1) “十月五日第 ot-5 号合同项下的 20 万吨大米，原定于十二月底前交货。你放在合同中保证提前交货，并且以此作为签订合同的条件，但是，这批大米迄今尚未装运，对此我们深表遗憾”。
- 2) “The 200,000 tons of rice under Contract No. ot-5 of October 5 is scheduled to be delivered by the end of December. You have guaranteed an early delivery in the contract and it is on this understanding that we signed the contract. Up to now however, the shipment has not yet been made. We very much regret for that”.
- 3) “We very much regret that the 200000 tons of rice under Contract No. 0t-5 of October 5, scheduled to be delivered by the end of December, is up to this moment not dispatched, in spite of the fact that you have guaranteed an early delivery in the Contract which as actually signed on this understanding” (Wang & Chen, 2013, p. 650).

The second paragraph is the direct translation of the first one where it is obvious that Chinese paragraph states the incident chronologically and reveals the central idea “the rice was failed to be delivered” and the regret only at the end which is a typical piece of writing impacted by spiral thinking. However, the third paragraph is what a native English speaker would have composed where the central idea and regret were displayed at the very beginning and others were then demonstrated, which is the result of linear thinking.

### 2.2.2 Abstract Thinking and Concrete Thinking

Chinese thinking mode is always concrete, which has a lot to do with Chinese characters. Chinese logographs consist of form, meaning and pronunciation (Ren, 2013), which dates back to the Oracle Bone Inscriptions (JiaGuWen) around five thousand years ago. The language system has resulted visual thinking rendering in Chinese being concrete in wording and applying concrete images in expression (Jin & He, 2013). On the other hand, English as a phonetic language whose word meanings have no direct relationship with word forms (Xiong, 2016), applies abstract notion to represent specific things (Jin & He, 2013).

#### 2.2.2.1 Usage of Nouns and Verbs

It is noticed that Chinese uses a lot of verbs while English uses a lot of nouns, based on which Jin and He (2013) suggested that it is the verbs that are concrete and straightforward in expressing the movement whereas it is the nouns that depends on other vocabularies to reveal intended ideas. For example:

“意识到知识的重要性很关键.

Realization of the importance of knowledge is crucial” (Jin & He, 2013, p. 8).

Affected by the Chinese thinking mode, the Chinese sentence applies the verb “意识” as the description of the action while English sentence applies the noun “realization” to refer to the very movement.

### 2.2.2.2 Substitution and Repetition

Chinese sentences pay less attention to the sentence structure where the substitutions are used less, therefore it provides a greater freedom in thinking and composing to speakers or writers (Wang & Chen, 2013). In addition, repetition as a preference in Chinese sentences strengthens the effect of emphasis and clarifies the references. While English sentences use substitution to enrich the structure of the sentences and at the same time avoid repetition to reduce redundancy (Jin & He, 2013).

“我们提倡和平共处的原则， 这些原则目前在世界上一越来越得人心了。

We have advocated the principle of peaceful co-existence, which is now growing more and more popular in the world” (Jin & He, 2013, p. 8).

It can be observed that the word “原则” is repeated in the Chinese sentence, which creates the concreteness in terms of visual sense than “which”. Moreover, the substitution applied in the English sentence has increased the variety of the sentence structures, which adds to the extent of abstractness while reducing the redundancy.

### 2.2.2.3 Language Habit

When the speakers of each language organize a discourse, Chinese replies on concrete images and fancy terms to build the atmosphere while revealing emotion while English replies on abstract nouns with abundant meanings to show a complicated and rational concept (Jin & He, 2013). For example:

“此地有崇山峻岭，茂林修竹，又有清流急湍，映带左右，引以为流觞曲水…”

(《兰亭集序》 by Wang Xizhi, as cited in Jin & He, 2013)

“In the background lie high peaks and deep forests, while a clear, gurgling brook catches the light to the right and to the left...” (Translation by Lin Yutang, as cited in Jin & He, 2013)

The Chinese sentence describes the beautiful scenery of a gathering while giving the readers a sense of the fairyland. Furthermore, the English version applies abstract nouns such as “peaks” which represents the mountains while implying the height of the mountains.

### 2.2.3 Analytic Thinking and Synthetic Thinking

Chinese tend to think in a synthetic way, believing in unity which is developed from “harmony” and “oneness”. Meanwhile, English derived from syllogism results in the analytical and logical thinking (Ren, 2013). And this renders the Chinese thinking beginning from the whole to parts while the English thinking doing the opposite (Xiong, 2016).

#### 2.2.3.1 Accuracy of Wording

In Chinese, a word may have varied purposes yet is used generally. For example, there are various expressions in English of the word “说”, for example, say, speak, whisper, shout, etc. On the contrary, words in English are preferably used with specific concepts, which leads to the accuracy and exquisiteness of wording (Jin & He, 2013). For example, while in English the sentences “she says it is fine” and “She speaks German” use two different verbs to specifically describe the different actions, the Chinese sentences commonly repeat as “她说没关系” and “她说德语”.

#### 2.2.3.2 Interconnection

English utilizes conjunctions as a mean of cohesion where the relation between clauses is shown straightforwardly by the conjunctive words, whereas it relies on context, word sequence and illocutionary logical to understand ideas in Chinese. With an overt cohesion,

English as a analytic language emphasizes hypotaxis and the external form while Chinese as a synthetic language with a covert cohesion puts more focus on parataxis and the inner logic (Jin & He, 2013). For example:

“跑得了和尚，跑不了庙。”

The monks may run away, but the temple cannot run away with them” (Liu & Zhou, 2014, p. 109, as cited in Jin & He, 2013, p. 9).

To understand the Chinese sentence, one has to observe the tone-turning relation of two clauses and grasp the intended meaning of the whole sentence. Meanwhile the English sentence applies the conjunction “but” making it easier to identify the clause relation and understand the meaning.

### 2.2.3.3 Paragraph Cohesion

Paragraph cohesion in English can be displayed clearly by applying cohesive devices such as ellipsis, reference, etc. Thus, strong logic is usually reflected in English writing with long and compound sentences. However, Chinese tends to omit the transmissions to avoid rigorousness and emphasizes on the “unity of meaning” rather than “the form of connection” in paragraph (Jin & He, 2013, p. 10). Therefore, English argumentation usually has a clear stand while Chinese writing is mostly indirect and ambiguous (Ren, 2013).

“北京的冬季，地上还有积雪，灰黑色的秃树枝丫叉于晴朗的天空中，而远处有一二风筝在浮动，在我是一种惊异和悲哀” (Lu, 1925).

“A Peking winter dismays and depresses me: the thick snow on the ground and the bare trees’ ashen branches thrusting up towards the clear blue sky, while in the distance on or two kites are floating” (Anonymous, 2014).

From the observation of the Chinese paragraph, cohesive devices rarely appear that one has to read the whole section to infer what the author intended to express. The way of the writing is affected by the synthetic thinking which gives readers the description of the combination of the environment and the mood of the author. On the other hand, the translation work uses words such as “and”, “while”, “or” to strengthen the cohesion and logic of the text.

### **2.3 L1 Transfer in L2 Writing**

To measure the learner’s competence of second language acquisition, second language (L2) writing has been stressed and examined (Krishnan, et al., 2018). While L2 writing is never an easy task, it is noticed that learners tend to apply first language (L1) transfer in completing the L2 writing. L1 transfer is L2 learners using transfer as a tool in learning a second language or in conveying their intended meanings, meanwhile L2 learners may use it to form hypotheses regarding the second language and practice them (Mahmoud, 2000, as cited in Karim & Nassaji, 2013). While the L1 transfer greatly depends on the similar structures between L1 and L2 (1957, as cited in Karim & Nassaji, 2013), Lado proposed Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) to clarify the role of L1 in L2. He suggested that productive and receptive skills of L2 learners can be influenced by the patterns of their L1. Meanwhile, the similarities and differences of two languages determine the ease and difficulty of L2 learning to a great extent. The writing processes of L1 and L2 are assumed the same where writers are required to outline, compose and modify, focusing on expanding ideas and organizing linguistic output (Krishnan, et al., 2018). When learners are able to leverage L1 and L2 cognitively and linguistically, skills initially formed in L1 can be easily transferred to L2 learning (Cummins, 1983, as cited in Krishnan, et al., 2018). On top of that, Selinker (1983, as cited in Karim & Nassaji, 2013) concluded two main types of transfer: positive transfer where L2 learners utilize L1 knowledge in facilitating L2 learning and negative transfer where L1 knowledge interferes learner’s L2 acquisition. However, according to Cummins’ concept of threshold proficiency (1979, as cited

in Rana, 2018), positive transfer requires that only the threshold level of L2 proficiency is achieved can L1 knowledge facilitates L2 learning. Otherwise, lower-level proficiency of L2 may result in failure of such L1-based strategy that errors caused by ingrained L1 linguistic habits may occur in transferring from surface structure of L1 to the surface structure of L2 (Karim & Nassaji, 2013; Dulay et al., 1982, as cited in Dipolog-Ubanan, 2016). Dipolog-Ubanan (2016) further proposed four categories of mistakes taking place under such situation: “poor diction, Chinese thinking patterns, mixture of sentence structures, and incoherence in statements” (p. 1844). When L2 learners try to translate directly from L1, mixture of both language which appears ungrammatical and no sense to L2 native speakers (Timina, 2013, as cited in Dipolog-Ubanan, 2016).

## **2.4 Chapter Summary**

While thinking mode plays an important role in language acquisition and vice versa, the knowledge initially gained in the process of L1 learning has formed a certain pattern of thinking which impacts L2 learning, especially in L2 writing. For example, distinctions between Chinese and English thinking seems to hold Chinese ESL learners back in mastering English where Chinese language habits acquired may have resulted in the appearance of Chinglish. The situation does not limit to occurring among Chinese students from mainland China, but also appears in Malaysian Chinese students who have Chinese as their first language. In order to fill the gap of lacking researches targeting the topic of whether Chinese thinking mode affecting Malaysian Chinese students’ English competency, the research is conducted through the methodology in the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 3 METHODOLOGY

### 3.0 Introduction

The chapter consists of a demonstration of the method and theoretical framework applied in conducting the research, after which the participants and the sampling chosen are explained and justified. The tool for data collection also is introduced while in the end the detailed research procedure is displayed.

### 3.1 Research Design

The present study is a qualitative research whereby the researcher studies the grammatical errors based on the book *The Oxford English Grammar* (Stevens, 1996), discourse developments based on past studies by Jin and He (2013), Ren (2013), and Xiong (2016) and Chinglish elements based on the book *The translator's guide to Chinglish* (Pinkham, 2000) in the essays written by the students to further examine how their English (L2) writing are interfered by Chinese (L1) thinking mode. The qualitative method provides the complex and thorough textual demonstration of people's experience upon the given issue. At the same time, qualitative research plays an important role in identifying impalpable factors and interpreting the complicated reality of the situation in the research (Mack, 2005). Therefore, the reason of choosing the qualitative research is because the researcher tries to investigate Chinese thinking mode's influences on English argumentative essay writing of Malaysian Chinese using text analysis method, which requires experiences of the participants towards the phenomenon.

The present study hypothesizes that participants are more or less under the influences of Chinese (L1) thinking mode during ESL (L2) learning process (Dipolog-Ubanan, 2016). Thereby, by employing the analytical method suggested in *The Translator's Guide to Chinglish* by Joan Pinkham (2000), the study analyzes the collected data. Furthermore, He (2020, p. 25) contended that "As a native-English speaker, she once worked in Beijing as a polisher for 8



years, which made her examples authentic”, which has further proven the credibility of the book by Pinkham (2000).

### *Theoretical framework*

Applying the suggested theoretical framework, the present study aims to investigate the interference of Chinese thinking mode by examining grammatical errors and discourse developments in the writings of participants. While the researcher adapts the theoretical framework from the book *The Translator’s Guide to Chinglish*, a few examples examined are as followed, in which “A” is the sentence or phrase with errors while “B” is the corrected one.

A: “to accelerate the pace of economic reform”

B: “to accelerate economic reform”

(Pinkham, 2000, p. 3)

While the Chinese translation of the sentence is “加速经济改革的步伐 (jia su jing ji gai ge de bu fa)”, it is obvious that the phrase A is interfered by the Chinese that the redundant phrase of “the pace of” is attached to demonstrate the word “步伐 (bu fa)”. However, “to accelerate” actually means “to increase the pace of”, therefore the Chinese interference appears on phrase A.

A: “There have been good harvests in agriculture”.

B: “There have been good harvests”.

(Pinkham, 2000, p. 3)

The interference of Chinese is more obvious in this pair of sentences. “农业一直有好收成 (nong ye yi zhi you hao shou cheng)” is the Chinese translation, in which the word “收成 (shoucheng)” in Chinese does not necessarily refers to the agriculture so the sentence A under the interference of Chinese feels the necessary to attach “in agriculture” to be more specific. However, the “harvests” does imply agriculture, which makes the sentence A seem redundant.

### **3.2 Sampling and Participants**

The method of sampling of the research is purposive because the samples selected are based on the participants’ knowledge and background, therefore the samples are believed to be the most suitable and appropriate to achieve the purpose of the study (McCombes, 2019). Creswell (2018) suggested that participants of the qualitative research should be around twenty to thirty; therefore, there are a total of 20 participants chosen from Year 3 students in Universiti Tunku Abdul Rahman. Students from mentioned years have relatively better command in English language after two years of study in the university due to that they have been under trainings from various assignments and university projects. Ten of them are recruited from English majors because students of English majors such as English Language or English Education are supposed to have a certain level of English proficiency and competency comparing to students from other majors, therefore they are supposed to be more aware of the first language interference. On the other hand, in order to do a comparison, the other ten participants are selected from non-English majors because students of non-English majors may have less knowledge about concepts studied in the present study or ways of composing formal English writing, such as an argumentative essay. All students chosen are Malaysian Chinese whose first language is Chinese and second language are English.

### 3.3 Data Collection

There are two stages of data collection: a pre-writing questionnaire and a written task as attached in appendix.

#### Stage 1: Pre-writing questionnaire

A pre-writing questionnaire adapted from Krishnan (2018) is given before the written task. It is designed to retrieve information on participants' name, gender, years of study in UTAR, self-assessment of English proficiency, and experience of using L1 (Chinese) in L2 (English) writing. The questionnaire created in Google form consists of two categories: multiple-choice questions and short answer questions.

#### Stage 2: Written task

The present study instructs a written task of a short argumentative essay writing to examine the phenomenon of utilizing L1 (Chinese) in the L2 (English) writing. The reason of choosing argumentative essay is that learners who are able to write persuasively and express their ideas in logical arguments shall succeed in mastering the language in both settings of academia and real life (Crowhurst, 1988, as cited in Schneer, 2013). The topic of the argumentative essay is "*Is competition good?*", and the length is around 250 words. The topic adopted is based on the most common argumentative essay topics in the website "EssayShark" therefore the topic stands neutral and has no cross-culture intention (Krishnan, 2018). The written task is created in a Google form.

### 3.4 Research Procedure

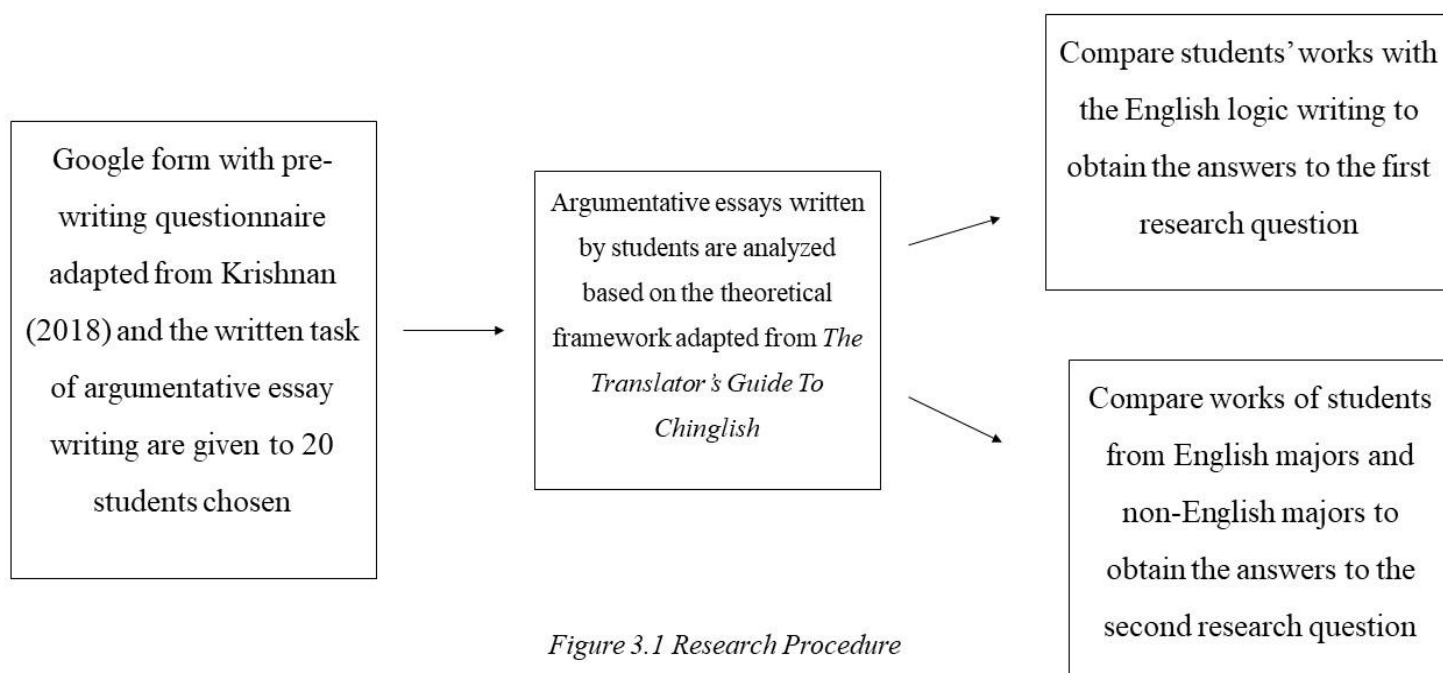


Figure 3.1 Research Procedure

First, twenty participants are recruited to complete the pre-writing questionnaire and written task in Google form. Second, after completing the Google form, the argumentative essays written by the participants are analyzed based on the theoretical framework adapted from book *The Translator's Guide to Chinglish* where various examples of utilizing L1 (Chinese) in L2 (English) writing in an inappropriate way are identified and categorized in different contents. There are two main categories of errors in the book: unnecessary words and sentence patterns. For the first category, “unnecessary nouns and verbs, unnecessary modifiers, redundant twins, saying the same thing twice, and repeated references to the same thing” are identified and categorized. While for the second category, “the noun plague, pronouns and antecedents, the placement of phrases and clauses, dangling modifiers, parallel structure, and logical connectives are analyzed and explained” (Pinkham, 2000). The tables of examples taken from *The Translator's Guide to Chinglish* are attached as followed.

No	Types of errors (Unnecessary words)	Examples of errors
1.	Unnecessary verb	“We must <u>make an improvement</u> in our work” (p. 6-7 ).
2.	Unnecessary modifier	“To <u>successfully accomplish</u> the arguous and complicated tasks defined at this congress...” (p. 38)
3.	Saying the same thing twice	“We must futher <u>strengthen the building of national defence</u> in order to <u>enhance our defense strength</u> ” (p. 93).

No	Types of errors (Sentence Patterns)	Examples of errors
1.	The noun plague	“The <u>prolongation</u> of the <u>existence</u> of this temple is due to the <u>solidary</u> of its <u>construction</u> ” (p. 172).
2.	Pronouns and antecedents	“We failed to attach equal importance to both <u>type of work</u> , and there was no proper coordination between the two <u>types of work</u> ” (p. 202).
3.	The placement of phrases and clauses	“Over the past decades he has devoted the greater part of his life to <u>developing and spreading</u> improved orange strains <u>among fruit growers</u> ” (p. 246).

Third, all the essays are compared to the English logic writing. This step is to find out the answers to the first research question “*What are the differences between Chinese thinking mode influences and English thinking mode influences in English argumentative essay writing of Malaysian Chinese students in UTAR?*”. Fourth, after which, the argumentative essays written by students from English majors are compared to those written by students from non-

English majors to answer the second research question “*What are the differences in English argumentative essay writing between Malaysian Chinese students in UTAR who are professionally trained and who are not trained?*”.

### **3.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter presents the qualitative design of the research by the researcher to identify the interference of Chinese thinking mode in English argumentative essay writing and the justification of choosing the perspective design. To examine the written works of the participants, the theoretical framework adapted from the book *The Translator’s Guide to Chinglish* is applied. Next, the purposive sampling, twenty participants from UTAR, and the data collection tools of a questionnaire and a written task are introduced with reasons justified. Finally, the detailed research procedures and the method of text analysis are displayed.

## CHAPTER 4: RESULTS AND FINDINGS

### 4.0 Introduction

This chapter displays the findings of the data collected from the first and the second stages in the research design: a pre-writing questionnaire and a written task conducted through the Google Form. Twenty responses were received and analyzed in various aspects according to the framework designed in Chapter 3. There are two main sections in this chapter. Section 4.1 exhibits findings of the pre-writing questionnaire, including the general information about the participants, including name, gender, years of study in UTAR, first language, and their own experience in English learning and knowledge about Chinese thinking mode. While section 4.2 constitutes the comparisons among examples extracted from participants' essays in terms of grammar mistakes, sentence patterns, discourse development and Chinglish elements.

### 4.1 Findings of Data Collected via Pre-writing Questionnaire

The findings under 4.1 play a significant role in supporting the answers to the second research question in terms of the English learning habits and knowledge about Chinese thinking mode. The questionnaire consists of eleven questions which include basic information of participants (Table 1) and their experience of Chinese thinking mode (Table 2 & Table 3).

No	Basic Information	Participants
1	Male	3
2	Female	17
3	Levels of Study – Y3 S2	6
4	Levels of Study – Y3 S3	14
5	English proficiency self-rating – excellent	0

6	English proficiency self-rating – very good	3
7	English proficiency self-rating – good	13
8	English proficiency self-rating – fair	4
9	English proficiency self-rating – poor	0

Table 1

There are twenty participants filling it, including 3 males and 17 females. Most of the participants are from Year 3 Semester 3, accounting for 14 people, and 6 students in their second semester of year 3. All the participants own Chinese as their first language despite the fact that some of which are actually native in Chinese dialect such as Cantonese. When it comes to rating their English proficiency, 65% of the participants rated “Good”, whilst 20% of them rated “Fair” and only 15% rated “Very Good”. None of them rate themselves “Excellent” or “Poor”.

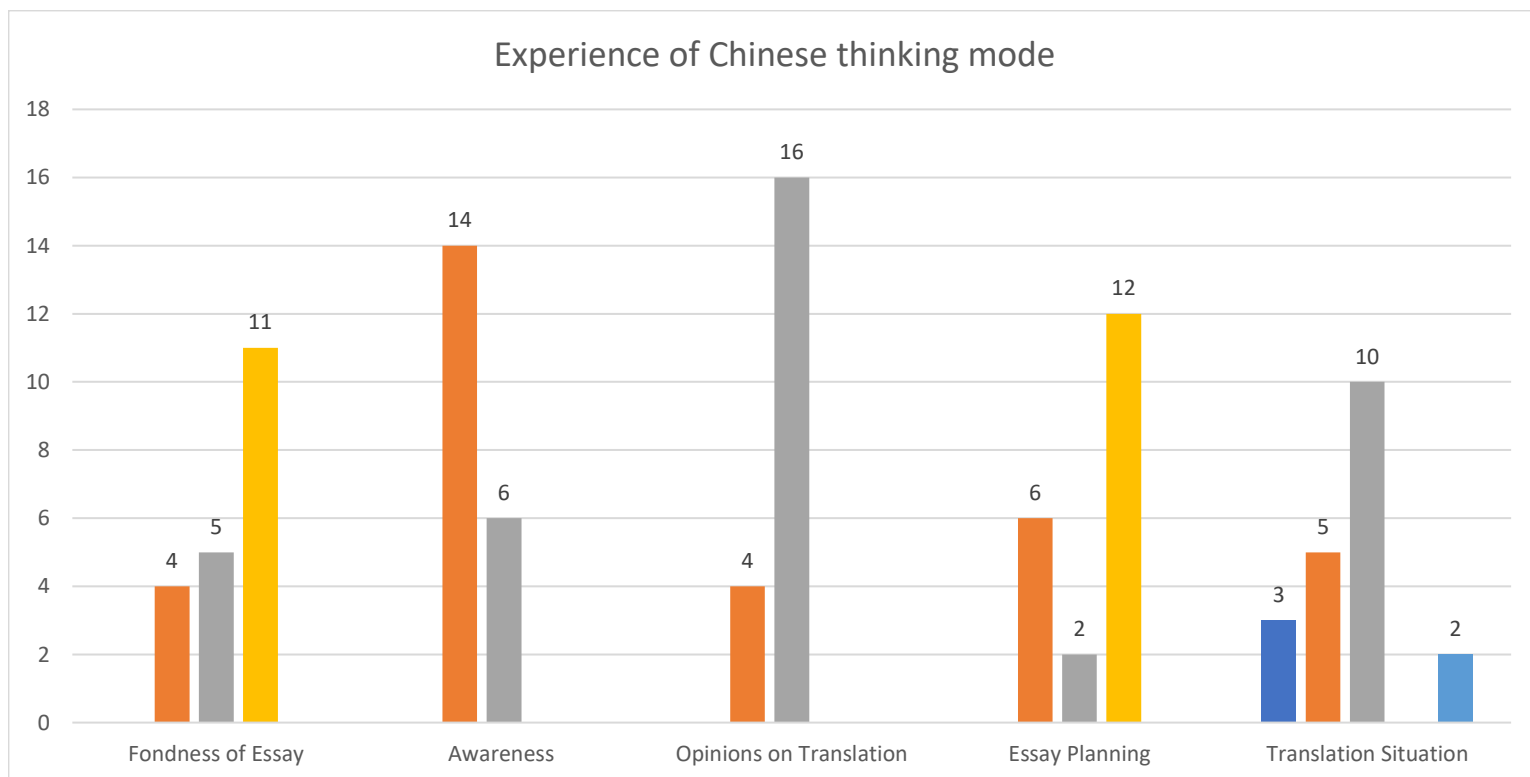


Table 2



Next, answers to the question “how do you like essay writing” (Table 3) can be divided into three categories: positive, neutral, and negative. Four students suggested that essay writing is fun as long as the topic is interesting and five gave neutral stands about essay writing. the rest of the participants explicitly expressed their dislike regarding the essay writing. Furthermore, in the responses collected regarding the awareness of the Chinese thinking mode and its influences (Table 3), some are able to recognize it and its negative effects in their English learning while others seemed to have a rather general concept. It is worth noting that there are still a number of participants lacking knowledge about Chinese thinking mode and most of them are from non-English majors.

NO	Short Answer Questions	Summarized Answers	Participants
1	How do you like essay writing?	Favor essay writing	4
		Neutral about essay writing	5
		Dislike essay writing	11
2	How much are you aware of the Chinese thinking mode and its influences?	Aware of Chinese thinking mode and its influences	14
		Unaware of Chinese thinking mode and its influences	6
3	What do you think of translating Chinese to English in English writing?	Translation from Chinese to English is positive	4
		Translation from Chinese to English is negative	16

Table 3

Furthermore, to collect participants’ opinion towards translating Chinese to English in English writing (Table 3), some believe that it requires a relatively professional knowledge in both languages to accomplish the task; others consider it a convenient thing for generating and

expressing ideas and intentions. There are, however, thoughts against these, for example, a few said such translating may lead to an article full of grammatical and structural mistakes and cause confusions for readers.

NO	Essay Writing Process	Situations	Participants
1	How do you usually plan your English essay?	The whole process of planning is in English.	2
		The process is in Chinese first, and then it is translated to English.	6
		The process is a mixture of English and Chinese.	12
2	How often do you encounter the situation where you translate a certain Chinese words or phrase to English in English writing?	Very often	3
		Often	5
		Sometimes	10
		Not really	0
		Never	2

Table 4

In the subsequent question (Table 4), it is obvious to see that the majority of participants are used to applying a mixture of English and Chinese in planning the English essay while 10% of which tend to translate their thoughts from Chinese to English, which reveals the situation where most of the students might encounter the negative impact by the Chinese thinking mode in their English writing despite the 30% of students who are able to use English in the whole process. It is still worthy to pay attention that most of participants in this category are from English majors.

Finally (Table 4), half of the participants have encountered the situation sometimes where they translate a certain Chinese word or phrase to English in English writing while there are 25% of them often encounter such situation and 15% do so very often. It is noticeable that participants who never need the translation process in their English writing are the fewest, taking up only 10% of people who are all from English majors.

#### 4.2 Findings of Data Collected via Written Task

The findings in 4.2 answer both research questions, “What are the differences between Chinese thinking mode influences and English thinking mode influences in English argumentative essay writing of Malaysian Chinese students in UTAR?” and “What are the differences in English argumentative essay writing between Malaysian Chinese students in UTAR who are professionally trained and who are not trained?”.

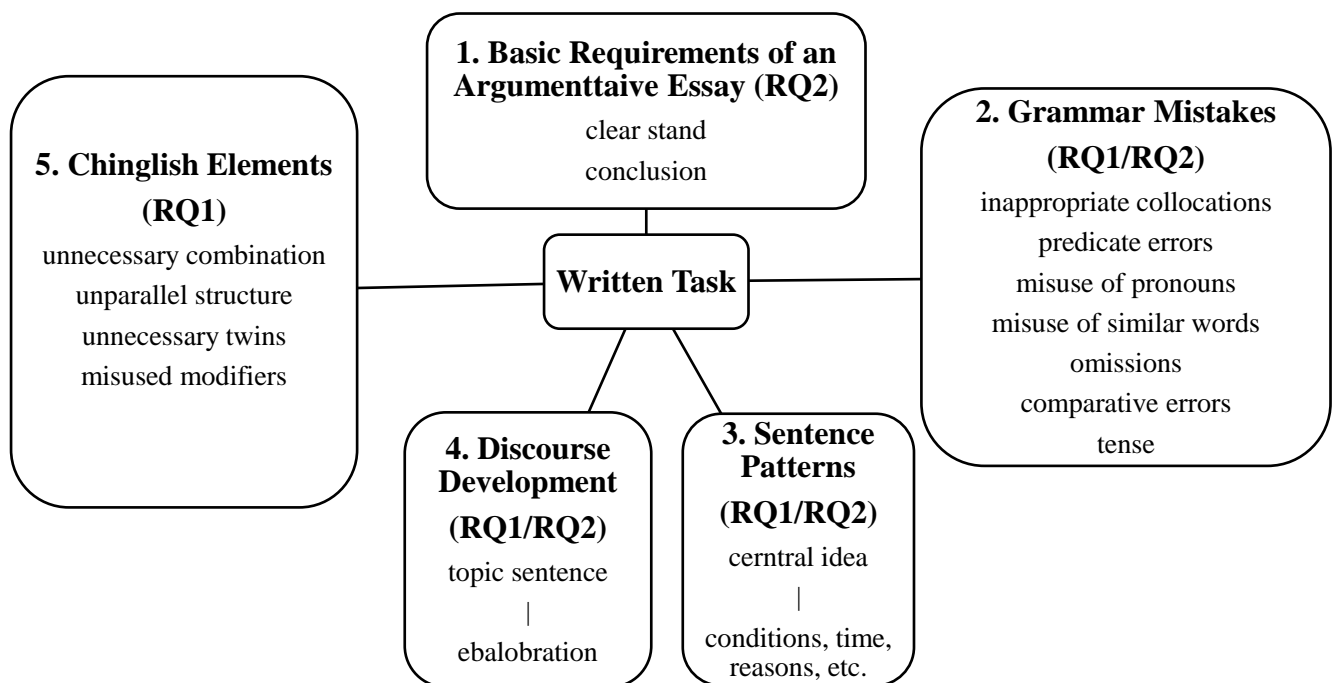


Figure 1 Analysis Process

The analysis and discussion of the findings collected from the essay writing are categorized in five sections (Figure 1). First of all, the essays are evaluated if they correspond to the requirements of an argumentative essay. Second, grammar mistakes are examined while the subsequent is sentence patterns. After that, the discourse development, and finally the spotted Chinglish elements in the articles are to discussed as well. The results of the examination in grammar mistakes, sentence patterns, discourse development and Chinglish elements are applicable in answering the first research question which is about the differences in English essays writing between students under Chinese thinking mode impacts and that under English thinking mode impacts. While the findings of investigating argumentative essay requirements, grammar mistakes, sentence patterns and discourse development is to answer the second research question which is about the differences in English essays writing between students who are professionally trained as students from English majors and who are not as that from non-English majors.

#### 4.2.1 Basic requirements of an argumentative essay

Among all twenty participants, there are seven of them failed to take a clear stand in discussing the topic “is competition good?”, in which these seven participants, including three from English majors and four from non-English majors, wrote about either both advantages and disadvantages of the competition or impacts positive and negative competitions. Examples are as followed.

1. “In fact, competition has its advantage in building our self-confidence and its disadvantage of overconfidence that lead to failure.”
2. “Competition can be differentiated into positive and negative competition... However, is both positive and negative competition good? In fact, both types of competition have been deeply used in our routine life, no matter in school or working environment.”

3. “In my opinion competition can be good and can be bad at the same time.”

In addition, missing the conclusion stage are seven participants out of twenty, among which four are from non-English majors and the rest three are from English majors. Despite the supporting details in the argument section, lacking a conclusion leads to the incompleteness of the essay structure and to some extent confuses the reader.

#### 4.2.2 Grammar mistakes

After the examination of each essay, spotted grammatical errors observed are grouped into the following categories (Table 5): inappropriate collocations, predicate errors, misuse of pronouns, misuse of similar words, omissions, comparative errors and tense (Stevens, 1996).

NO	Grammatical Errors	Definitions of the Errors
I	Inappropriate collocations	Mistaken the fixed collocations
II	Predicate errors	Multiple finite verbs in one sentence
III	Misuse of pronouns	Misunderstand accusative and nominative cases
IV	Misuse of similar words	Misunderstand the part of speech
V	Omissions	Omissions of subjects and conjunctions
VI	Comparative errors	Misunderstand the transformation
VII	Tense	Misuse of past tense

Table 5

##### *I. Inappropriate collocations*

The most frequent grammatical mistake appeared in the essays examined is inappropriate collocations. There are a number of specific collocations in English, which limits the combinations of the words, the characteristic of the subsequent word, even the position of the following word.

A: "...since there will have some of the successful competitors..."

B: "...since there will be some of the successful competitors..."

The example (A) is extracted from one of the essays and sentence B is grammatically correct after modification. It is noticed that the combination "there will have" is deeply affected by the Chinese thinking mode because the participant who created the combination as such is trying to translate the Chinese phrase "会有 (hui you)" into English without knowing that the combination is actually incorrect because the word "be" in the collocation "there be" is irreplaceable other than the change of its tense.

The causes of other inappropriate collocations seem to be insufficiency in English grammar knowledge. However, as they are further considered, one is able to discover that Chinese thinking mode plays a part, which is similar to the findings suggested in the book *The Translator's Guide to Chinglish*. Take the following extracts as examples.

1. A: "...competition goes wrong when we are overconfident on ourselves."

B: "...competition goes wrong when we are overconfident in ourselves."

2. A: "A good and healthy amount of competitions will be good..."

B: "A good and healthy number of competitions will be good..."

3. A: "...can let the manager knows that"

B: "...can let the manager know that"

4. A: "...giving NVIDIA more pressure to improve their products."

B: "...giving NVIDIA much pressure to improve their products."

5. A: "...to actually compete and to show off themselves..."

B: "...to actually compete and to show themselves off ..."

In the first pair, "be overconfident in" is the accurate collocation. Moving on to the second pair, the phrase "an amount of" modifies uncountable nouns while the phrase "a number

of” modifies countable nouns. Next, “let” in the third pair is followed by the original form of verb, such as “Let it go”. The fourth pair shows the differences between “much” and “more”: the former modifies uncountable nouns while the latter modifies countable nouns. Lastly, the pronoun should be placed between the phrase instead of the end while the noun can be placed in both positions.

## *II. Predicate errors*

Another obvious grammatical mistake is the predicate error. There can only be one verb in an English sentence, so the other verbs have to become non-finite verbs. Despite the rule made in English language, Chinese language does not require so, which may lead to the following mistaken example.

1. A: “there are two conspicuous reasons generating the sense of competition along with its drawbacks will be taken into consideration.”  
B: “there will be two conspicuous reasons generating the sense of competition along with its drawbacks taken into consideration.”
2. A: “While it is to be realized and agreed on that societies and communities undergo rigid educational system, encouraging competitions for the momentary fame and implicit enviousness definitely leads people to drive harder for another better result.”  
B: “While it is to be realized and agreed on that societies and communities undergoing rigid educational system and encouraging competitions for the momentary fame and implicit enviousness definitely lead people to drive harder for another better result”

The first participant failed to see the “are” as the verb in the sentence so sequentially the second verb “will be taken” is added without changing it to non-finite verb. While the

second participant failed to coordinate the two verbs “undergo” and “lead”, which renders the happening of multiple verbs in one English sentence.

### *III. Misuse of pronouns*

There are also a few cases in the essays where the pronouns were misused by the participants. In the first pair, the pronoun “who” should be changed to “whom” because the reference of the pronoun is the class of object, therefore the accusative case is accurate. Similarly, as the class of subject, the pronoun ought to be nominative, where “I” is correct.

1. A: “...one must be careful for who they choose to compete with.”

B: “...one must be careful with whom they choose to compete.”

2. A: “Me as a Destiny 2 player who sometimes...”

B: “I as a Destiny 2 player who sometimes...”

### *IV. Misuse of similar words*

There are some words in English having similar morpheme structures even though the meanings or parts of speech are different. The word “overconfident” is an adjective but the context of the sentence requires the noun “overconfidence”. While “mentally” and “physically” are adverbs, adjectives like “mental” and “physical” are appropriate in the second sentence to modify the noun “harm”. Lastly, the word “everyday” is an adjective while “every day” is a phrase, so according to the context, the use of phrase is more accurate.

1. A: “Overconfident brings a huge impact when we take thing lightly.”

B: “Overconfidence brings a huge impact when we take thing lightly.”

2. A: “...they will cause mentally and physically harm to themselves...”

B: “...they will cause mental and physical harm to themselves...”

3. A: “Thus, everyday we are in a rat race, for our dream.”

B: “Thus, every day we are in a rat race, for our dream.”



## V. Omissions

The omissions took place frequently in the essays. A in the first pair clearly omits the conjunction and the subject of the second sentence, which causes multiple verbs in one sentence, meanwhile the confusion may arise. In the second pair, however, the article “a” is missed where the “environment” remains unknown to the readers.

1. A: “The world is full of competition, (omission of conjunction) instead of run away from it, (omission of subject) try to face it with positive thinking.”

B: “The world is full of competition, so instead of running away from it, we should try to face it with positive thinking.”

2. A: “Nevertheless, it is in fact that there are some group of people who are affected and suffered under harsh competing environment.”

B: “Nevertheless, it is in fact that there are some groups of people who are affected and suffered under a harsh competing environment.”

## VI. Comparative errors

This is one of the cases that display the impacts of Chinese thinking mode the most. The phrases “more easier” and “more healthier” are two examples taken from the essays to back up the idea. It can be easily told that writers of both phrases are trying to express the Chinese word “更(geng)” in their English writing so they directly translate the word into “more”, regardless of the comparatives have had the meaning of “more”.

## VII. Tense

1. A: “We can improve self-confidence when we did our best in final exam...”

B: “We can improve self-confidence when we do our best in final exam...”

2. A: “Even when one didn't speak of it, it is natural to...”

B: “Even when one doesn’t speak of it, it is natural to...”

The examples above display the misuse of tense where the present tense can express the meanings yet the writers insisted in using past tense, which may lead to confusions of readers regarding the authentic time the writer is talking about.

#### 4.2.3 Sentence patterns

A: “For example, if there are two newbies in the same department, competitions can let the manager know that who is performing well and who still needs to put more efforts.”

B: “For example, the manager can know who is performing well and who still needs to put more efforts through the competitions by the two newbies in the same department.”

C: “Thereby, a prolonged progress that produces pressures and affects mental health furthermore provides few ways to agree on the goodness of a competition.”

Sentence A and C are two examples taken from essays, in which the writer of A comes from a non-English major and that of C is from an English major. It is explicit that sentence A is under the impact of Chinese thinking mode comparing to sentence B which is re-written because the condition “if” is put before the central idea. On the contrary, the directness of sentence C informs the reader what the composer tried to talk about first, then comes the modifiers. From sentence patterns, one is able to tell that students from non-English majors tend to be impacted more than that from English majors.

#### 4.2.4 Discourse development

A: “In this current advancing world, competition exists everywhere. One not only has to compete with other human beings but also the machines and robots for jobs. Thus, every day we are in a rat race, for our dreams. Competition makes one step out of his or her comfort zone and realize his or her potential to accomplish the goal. Although it sometimes causes one to stress out, which is terrible for mental health, it pushes one to become a better self.”

B: “Firstly, competition enables people to challenge themselves and break their limits. When one faces a competitor, both of them not only compete to win, but at the same time, they get to realize their other potentials to resolve the issue encountered and enhance their capabilities. This kind of healthy competition allows the production of more innovative creations and higher quality outcomes.”

The paragraph A is extracted from the essay written by a non-English major while the paragraph B is from an English major. Distinctions between two paragraphs are clear enough that A starts with the description of today’s world and the status of competition, and then ends with its central idea. However, B starts with a topic sentence to explicitly display what the writer is discussing in the section, and then follows the elaboration.

#### 4.2.5 Chinglish elements

From the book *The Translator’s Guide to Chinglish*, the core of the Chinglish is that there are always unnecessary words or phrases as a result of the spiral characteristic of Chinese thinking mode (Table 6), which makes the expression redundant and inaccurate in spite of the correctness in grammar (Pinkham, 2000).

NO	Chinglish Elements	Characteristics
I	Unnecessary combination	“weak verb + noun”
II	Unparallel structure	Elements connected through conjunctions are not parallel
III	Unnecessary twins	Two words with identical meanings
IV	Misused modifiers	Dangling gerund and infinitive

Table 6

##### *I. Unnecessary combination*

Among all the examples, the most frequent Chinglish element spotted in the essays is the use of “unnecessary verb”, which is usually the pattern “weak verb + noun”, meaning that the main action is actually carried by the noun, weakening the use of the verb.

1. A: “...how to make improvement from competitions...”

B: “...how to improve from competitions...”

2. A: “Overconfidence brings a huge impact...”

B: “Overconfidence impacts hugely...”

In the first pair, the main action of the sentence actually falls on the noun “improvement”, which makes the verb “make” seem redundant while in the second pair, the main action falls on “impact”, the verb “bring” therefore appears unnecessary.

## *II. Unparallel structure*

Elements linked in “parallel structure” should lie in the same grammatical range (Pinkham, 2000), but examples from the essays however, prove the existence of Chinglish in some articles.

1. A: “One not only has to compete with other human beings but also the machines and robots for jobs.”

B: “One has to compete with not only other human beings but also the machines and robots for jobs.”

2. A: “When their children lose, the children need encouragement instead of scolding them.”

B: “When their children lose, the children need encouragement instead of scolding.”

## *III. Unnecessary twins*

Next, there are “redundant twins” where one word has implied the meanings of the other or the meanings of two words are so close that one is enough to express the intention (Pinkham, 2000) spotted as well in the essays.

1. “I advocate and believe that competition is unhealthy as everyone is unique and special in his or her own way.”
2. “an everyday breakfast meal”

Sentence 1 carries two pairs of “redundant twins”. The word “advocate” implies the meaning of “believe” because one does not advocate something he or she does not believe. While the meanings of unique and special are so similar that any one is adequate yet with two appearing at the same time, it does not display the function of stressing but it seems rather redundant. As for sentence 2, “breakfast” is included in “meal” so there is no need to use either to modify another.

#### *IV. Misused modifiers*

Finally, “dangling modifiers” appear in the essays when the writer is having difficulties in identifying an active or passive carrier of the action and understanding the correspondence between subject of the sentence and carrier of the action (Pinkham, 2000).

1. A: “...to convince you why it(competition)'s actually a good thing provided you with a right mindset.”  
B: “...to convince you why it(competition)'s actually a good thing providing you with a right mindset.”
2. A: “Yet, the competition among human in the recent decades is to come out with a better individual in every aspect.”  
B: “Yet, the competition among human in the recent decades is to spot a better individual in every aspect.”

In the first pair, the carrier of “provided” is passive yet the meaning of sentence granted “competition” an active action in carrying the action “provide”, therefore “providing” is accurate under the context. Meanwhile, the second pair reveals the similar concept that the carrier of the action “to come out with” does not correspond with the subject of the sentence – “competition”. As a result, replacing the phrase with “to spot” fits the sentence and corresponds to the subject.

### **4.3 Chapter Summary**

The chapter displays and analyzes the twenty responses collected via two stages on the Google Form. The pre-writing questionnaire provides a general information about the participants, most of which have encountered the situation where a translation from Chinese to English is needed in their English essay writing. This may explain the result that the majority plan their essay using a mixture of English and Chinese. When it comes to awareness of Chinese thinking mode and its influence, English-major students show better understanding towards the concepts than students from non-English majors, which diversifies the opinions regarding translating Chinese to English in English writing. Findings in the pre-questionnaire support the answers to the research question two as a background knowledge about the participants. On top of this, the written task displays the authentic knowledge of participants in English language and their thinking patterns. While most of the students from English majors are able to achieve requirements of an argumentative essay, there are still a few non-English major students failed to complete a formal one, which answers to the second research question about the differences in English essays writing between students who are professionally trained and who are not. In addition, English major students are able to avoid Chinese thinking mode in their English writing, which answers to the first research question regarding the differences in English essays writing between English thinking mode impacts and Chinese thinking mode impacts.

## CHAPTER 5 SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

### **5.0 Introduction**

This chapter summarizes findings of data collected through the pre-writing questionnaire and the written task, whilst it also gathers the findings pertaining the first research question which is about the differences in English essay writing between English thinking mode impacts and Chinese thinking mode impacts and the second research question which is about the differences in English essay writing between students who are professionally trained and who are not respectively in 5.1 and 5.2. Subsequently, 5.3 examines the if the findings reflect the past research and analysis the causes behind, and finally, recommendations for the future research are given based on the limitations in 5.4.

### **5.1 Summary of Findings Pertaining the First Research Question**

The first research question is “what are the differences between Chinese thinking mode influences and English thinking mode influences in English argumentative essay writing of Malaysian Chinese students in UTAR”, therefore, to answer the question, essays written by UTAR students were analyzed in terms of grammar mistakes, sentence patterns, discourse development and Chinglish elements.

Under English thinking mode influences, grammar mistakes which relate to Chinese thinking mode are made less. Based on the results, inappropriate collocations, predicate errors, misuse of pronouns, misuse of similar words, omissions, comparative errors and tense are the frequent mistakes spotted in the essays written by participants. English has a lot of specific collocations that it is easy for English learners to make mistakes when attentions are not paid. All of these grammatical details are significant in English as they represent different meanings. However, in Chinese, there is no stress on such details, which might be the reason behind this grammatical mistake. Moreover, as a language with precise grammar system, there is only one finite verb allowed in an English sentence, or it otherwise often leads to predicate errors. What

is interesting to note is that such phenomenon happens more in the essays of English-major students because they tend to write long sentences so it takes more efforts to make sure the accuracy of grammar. In addition, in Chinese, the meanings of the words are determined by the relations among characters, yet morphemes in English comply certain regulations or become completely different to express meanings (Wang & Chen, 2013). Therefore, when it comes to pronouns, there are difference cases of pronouns revealing different meanings but in Chinese there are fewer changes, which may be the cause of some participants misusing the pronouns. Next, words with similar morpheme structures can be confused when learners are under the influence of Chinese thinking mode, because they have the same meanings in Chinese but different in English. Furthermore, omissions of subjects, articles and conjunctions are the frequent grammatical mistakes taking place in essays written by participants who are affected by the Chinese thinking mode as the omission is common in Chinese as the language requires readers to understand the idea by looking at the context and the whole article (Jin & He, 2013), so it is not considered as an error when omission happens in Chinese articles. Finally, due to the fact that Chinese language has no tense requirements in verbs as the time expressions rely on the adverbial, participants who are impacted by Chinese thinking mode tend to generate confusing tenses. Somehow, they especially prefer replacing the present tense with past tense even when the time is at present. All the examples are taken from both English and non-English students, which reveals that grammatical mistakes exist in both groups of students. It is undeniable that there are a few students committed less or nearly none mistakes in their grammar, therefore, students are able to avoid grammatical mistakes to a certain extent if they are able to apply English thinking mode in their English essay writing.

When it comes to sentence patterns, following Chinese thinking mode, the central idea of a sentence is always put later while the expressions of time, conditions, reasons etc. tend to be written first (Jin & He, 2013), yet English thinking mode, on the other hand, renders opposite



sentence patterns. According to the examples taken from the essays, students who are able to apply English thinking mode compose sentence patterns where the main idea is the front while the explanations are subsequent. On the contrary, participants who are unable to avoid Chinese thinking mode in their English writing tend to describe the situation first then the main idea.

Different development is discourse is another distinction between Chinese and English thinking mode. As it is mentioned in the earlier chapter that English thinking mode leads its language users to mention the central idea at the beginning of the paragraph and elaborate later, in which the topic sentence is leveraged greatly in doing so. In addition, transitions are taken seriously to connect different sentences to boost cohesion in the paragraph. While the Chinese thinking mode nourishes a distinct way for writing, where the central idea is always in the end of the paragraph while the cohesion is often neglected, so the impacts of which in English learners may lead to a confusing discourse for native English speakers.

Last but not least, Chinglish elements were spotted in the essays written by students who are impacted by Chinese thinking mode in terms of unnecessary combinations, unparallel structure, unnecessary twins and misused modifiers. Unnecessary combinations such as “weak verb + noun” appeared frequently when the writers apply an unnecessary verb whose action is mainly carried by the noun because they simply wish to translate a certain verb in Chinese to English. while the unparallel structure where elements linked are not presented in the same grammatical category is another mistake can be seen in the examples of participants when they fail to see a “virtually mandatory parallelism”. Moving on, unnecessary twins are the combination of two words with similar meanings yet the second word adds no significance to the first word. In Chinese, such combinations may be used in stressing, but in English it seems redundant in expressing meanings. Finally, misused modifiers are participles, gerunds, or infinitives transformed incorrectly due to the fact that learners fail to match the implied subject with the subject of the sentence (Pinkham, 2000).

In conclusion, answers to the first research question about the differences in English essay writing between English thinking mode impacts and Chinese thinking mode impacts are as followed. First, Chinese thinking mode influencing writers may lead to frequent grammar mistakes while writers who apply English thinking mode are able to avoid such. Second, condition before central idea is the result of Chinese thinking mode influence while sentence pattern where the central idea is put in the front corresponds to English thinking mode. Third, Chinese thinking mode nourishes a spiral way of writing, where the beginning of the paragraph is often paving for the following and a synthetic way of composing, where the context is more important than transitions. Yet, students who are influenced by the English thinking mode shall utilize topic sentence to enlighten the central idea of the discourse and transitions to maintain cohesion. Lastly, Chinglish elements are spotted in the English essay writings of those under Chinese thinking mode, mostly because they try to translate Chinese directly into English.

## **5.2 Summary of Findings Pertaining the Second Research Question**

The second research question is “What are the differences in English argumentative essay writing between Malaysian Chinese students in UTAR who are professionally trained and who are not trained”, therefore, to answer the question, essays written by UTAR students were analyzed in terms of basic requirements of an argumentative essay, grammar mistakes, sentence patterns, and discourse development. At the same time, responses collected via the pre-questionnaire also support the answers to this question.

According to Hyland (1990, as cited in Schneer, 2014), argumentative essay has a systematic model including three central stages: a clear-stand thesis, a supportive argument, and a reaffirming conclusion. The thesis often consisting “an attention grabber”, “background information”, and “the writer’s position” should take either side of an argument but stand in neutral while the supportive argument usually comprises paragraphs to back up the propositions in the thesis and lay out evidences. The conclusion furthermore restates “the

writer's position" probably with a close which broadens the context or the view of the proposition (Hyland, 1990). Therefore, based on the preliminary evaluation of the essays, the first inference can be drawn that students from English majors are equipped with a slightly better understanding of an argumentative essay than those from non-English majors.

In addition, similar to the examinations for the first question, grammar mistakes that are the result of Chinese thinking mode happen more frequently in essays written by students from non-English majors yet what is interesting to note is that predicate errors happen more in the essays of English-major students because they tend to write long sentences so it takes more efforts to make sure the accuracy of grammar. All the examples are taken from both English and non-English students, which reveals that grammatical mistakes exist in both groups of students. It is however undeniable that there are a few students from English majors committed less or nearly none mistakes in their grammar.

When it comes to sentence patterns and discourse development, examples from the essay written by the participants also reveal the fact that English major students are better at avoiding Chinese thinking mode in their English writing because they are able to compose English logic patterns in an English essay while students from non-English majors straightly follow their Chinese thinking mode to compose a rather spiral structure of a sentence or a discourse.

On the other hand, from the responses from the pre-writing questionnaire, students from English majors have better knowledge in Chinese thinking mode than that from non-English majors, which supports the results of the written task. First of all, the former tends to be more aware of Chinese thinking mode and better at identify its influences, therefore, they shall avoid such influences in their English essay writing better than non-English major students. Second, all the responses that the whole process of essay planning is in English come from English

major students, which to a certain extent displays the ability of them applying English thinking mode in composing English essays. Therefore, from what have been analyzed, participants from English majors have better understanding in Chinese thinking mode and its influences than that from non-English majors. At the same time, English students are better at avoiding Chinese thinking mode in their English writing than non-English students.

In conclusion, answers to the second research question about the differences in English essay writing between students are who professionally trained and who are not are as followed. Firstly, professionally trained students are more able to meet the basic requirements of an argumentative essay yet students who are not are less able to do so. Secondly, when it comes to grammar mistakes, sentence patterns and discourse development, the former can do better in avoiding Chinese thinking mode in their English essays while the latter is prone to follow. Lastly, responses of the pre-questionnaire play a significant role in supporting the above results.

### **5.3 Reflections of Past Studies**

The results reflect to studies by Jin and He (2013), Ren (2013), Xiong (2016), Wang and Chen (2013) in their discussions about Chinese thinking mode and English thinking mode. For example, linear thinking and spiral thinking analyzed in the articles appear in the essays written by the participants who are impacted by Chinese thinking mode so their development of discourse often paves for the central idea in the beginning. In addition, analytic thinking and synthetic thinking exhibit as well in grammar mistakes and the use of conjunctions and transitions in the collected essays when there are inaccurate words while the interconnection and cohesion are overlooked.

Therefore, it is safe to infer that there are a number of Malaysian Chinese students who have less knowledge about English language under impacts of Chinese thinking mode, which has influenced their English competency especially in terms of writing despite the fact

that Malaysian Chinese students are exposed to both Chinese and English in their everyday lives. The reason behind is obvious. Just like students in mainland China, Malaysian Chinese students who learned Chinese as their first language tend to form a certain thinking mode when they were learning Chinese, and this thinking mode, based on the theory by professor Boroditsky (2010), can be easily applied during second language acquisition. From what has been examined in their essay writing, the most likely cause of the frequent mistakes is that the writers try to directly translate Chinese into English in their English essay writing instead of composing from an English logic angle. This translation, however, requires a threshold level of English proficiency to assure the accuracy of the transferred expressions (Cummis, 1979, as cited in Rana, 2018), therefore, Malaysian Chinese students who are still learning English may be tripped by this language transfer and mistakes, as a result, may appear frequently in their English writing.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for the Future Research**

There are two recommendations for the future research regarding Chinese thinking mode in terms of the scope of subjects and the competency in analyzing process. Due to the limitation of manpower and network, the research may not be as objective to identify the authentic level of UTAR students' English competency for the examination. At the same time, the researcher belongs to the group who have Chinese as their first language, therefore, the impacts on the researcher may cause a subjective deviation in analyzing the texts. Thereby, it is recommended that, to receive an objective English competency of UTAR students, the research is better to be conducted by the university authority so that students can take the task seriously. On top of that, the analyzing process is better to be conducted by native English speakers who are competent in their first language, so that comprehensive analysis can be done to achieve the objectives of the research.

## **5.5 Chapter Summary**

This chapter summarizes the findings in Chapter 4 and rearrange them according to their information in answering two research questions about differences in English essay writing between English thinking mode impacts and Chinese thinking mode impacts as well as differences in English essay writing between students who are professionally trained and who are not. The result shows that students who are unable to avoid Chinese thinking mode generate more mistakes in writing and their discourse developments does not correspond to English logic while students who are able to apply English thinking mode generate less mistakes and develops English logic structures in writing. After that, reflections of results in past studies and the causes behind are discussed in terms of Chinese thinking mode formation. In the end, recommendations for future study are given based on the limitations of this research.

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## APPENDIX

### *Pre-writing questionnaire*

1. Name:
2. Gender:
3. Year/ Semester:
4. What is your first language?
5. How do you rate yourself concerning your English proficiency?
  - a. Excellent
  - b. Very good
  - c. Good
  - d. Fair
  - e. Poor
6. How do you like essay writing?
7. How much are you aware of the Chinese thinking mode and its influences?
8. How do you usually plan your English essay?
  - a. The whole process of planning is in English.
  - b. In your first language (Chinese), then translate to English
  - c. Mixture of English and your first language (Chinese)
9. How often do you encounter the situation where you translate a certain Chinese word or phrase to English in English writing?
  - a. Very often
  - b. Often
  - c. Sometimes
  - d. Not really
  - e. Never
10. What do you think of translating Chinese to English in English writing?

### *Written task*

Please write an argumentative essay under the topic “*Is competition good?*”. The length of the essay should be around 250 words. No specific essay pattern is restricted.