

Dear Criss,

How's everything? It's been a long time since the last time I wrote you a letter. Did you have fun in Toronto? I heard that Toronto is very cold right now. Please don't get yourself cold. I really miss you, and here is good news: since last time you invited me to Toronto, I asked my parent about it, and they allow me to visit you in this winter vacation. I can't wait to see you. Talking about your recent life reminds me of the things I want to share with you. Actually, this is the main reason I'm writing this letter to you.

Yesterday, I went to a very weird party. It was held by my writing professor. I remember in the last class that she announced that many writing professors would come to that party, and every student in the class could attend that party. In the beginning, I thought that was just a party to celebrate something, and many students would attend. However, when I got there, I found that it was not what I expected. Rather than a party, it was more like a group of teachers gathering for an academic discussion. What's funny is, only a few students attended the "party", and I was one of them. I'm not that type of serious person who is interest in this kind of academic discussion, so I tried to find an excuse to escape. However, I heard something very interesting and I thought it is very connected to our international students. Therefore, I stayed to listen the "party".

The "party" was held in a prepared classroom: the chairs were arranged in a large circle, with a large table in the center holding some snacks. When I got there, many professors had already arrived. Most of the people attended were stranger to me, but I recognized my German teacher who taught me last year. She smiled to me, and I took a seat next to her. We had a brief chat. The party wasn't exactly quiet; everyone was

greeting each other. We waited for a while, and the discussion began.

The discussion chairperson seems was my writing professor, and everyone joined in the discussion seemed to be prepared. My professor shows up the topic: it was about the tools used by students to assist their writing, such as AI tools or translation tools. In the beginning of the discussion, my German professor talked about some of her students in the class used Google Translate (GT) to do the writing homework, and she was very annoyed about this. This is because the work done by GT has low quality, and students can't learn from the homework if they just do it with the help of GT. She claimed that Google Translate should get banned in every second language teaching courses, and even for the Linguistic and Writing courses. Many professors who teach a second language, such as Japanese, Chinese followed her opinion, and they agreed that GT should be banned in writing class. A French professor stated that students can perform better when writing directly in the target language than the original language and translating under time pressure, such as exam or class writing condition (Cohen, 2001), and he provided the research that making a task for students' writing: the researcher group made a short test: learners of French performed 2 essay writing tasks: writing directly in French as well as writing in the first language and then translating into French. The result shown that most of the students did better on the direct writing task (Cohen 2001). When quietly listened to the discussion, I felt a little bit nervous because as an international student, sometimes I did use GT to help me translate some complicated sentence from my language – Chinese – to English.

More and more voice supporting the opinions that those tools can cause bad effects

on language teaching had emerged. By contrast, some opposing viewpoints were raised. A very famous professor who had researched in Technology-enhanced language learning had attended the party. Her name is Shu-Chiao Tsai. She stood up and claimed that translation tools could make a better performance in student's writing. Many professors shocked after hearing this different opinion. After the classroom became quiet. Tsai (2019) started to show her evidence: she provided her investigation among lower grade Chinese student. Students were asked to write first in Chinese and then to make corresponding texts in English. Then, their Chinese writings were translated into English using the 2016 version of Google Translate, and their self-written English texts were compared to the translated English texts. The results showed that those translated versions had higher quality. Most people found this research convincing because comparing to the French translation research, because the data came from newer research. It was very interesting that two experiment were set for same purpose but had different results. Then, she showed another article she wrote. This article investigated effectiveness of Google Translate as a tool for improving English writing among Chinese EFL student. Students wrote reflective essays in Chinese, and used Google Translate to translate them into English, and revised their English drafts based on the Google Translate translation. Results indicated that the translate versions have better content quality, vocabulary usage, and grammatical accuracy. Non-English majors showed more positive attitudes toward Google Translate, highlighting its potential as a supportive tool for language learning and writing improvement (Tsai, 2020). "Google Translate can be a valuable assistive tool for second language teaching." Tsai ended her

speech about the Google Translate. Everyone started applauding. She provided a very different perspective. I admired her critical thinking.

After Tsai showed her opinion, the party became a free debate on the effectiveness about Google Translate, and voice of PRO teams was raising. However, Garcia provided her research with Pena which hold a dialectical perspective on this topic. She showed her research about the impact of machine translation tools, such as Google Translate, on beginner language learners' writing skills in a second language. Tests revealed that machine translation assisted beginners in improving communication, especially for those with limited second language proficiency. Writing directly in second language required more effort but yielded higher quality, while MT helped produce more words and facilitated better engagement in the writing process (Garcia & Pena, 2011).

After a long-time debating, the atmosphere seemed to gradually ease. One of those professors suddenly asked if the students in the "party" use Google Translate for writing assist. There were not many students in the classroom, but some of them were international students. I said a few words to answer the question. I replied that I sometimes used Google Translate for small but necessary assistance but the quality is not very good. The translation had a strong sense of machine translation. Some of the professor laughed and the discussion on this topic had pretty much come to an end. After a brief break, they introduced another topic.

I was not asked to attend the whole party, so I chose to leave the party because I still had some homework to do. The discussion was not as boring as I expect. Instead,

it was very interesting. I guess you may sometimes use Google Translate for Chinese translation. Have you ever discussed this topic with your professor? I'd love to hear their perspective.

Yours Weisheng.

Reference

- Cohen, A. D., & Brooks-Carson, A. (2001). Research on Direct versus Translated Writing: Students' Strategies and Their Results. *The Modern Language Journal*, 85(2), 169–188. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1192881>
- Garcia, I., & Pena, M. I. (2011). Machine translation-assisted language learning: writing for beginners. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 24(5), 471–487. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/10.1080/09588221.2011.582687>
- Tsai, S. C. (2019). Using Google Translate in EFL drafts: a preliminary investigation. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 32(5–6), 510–526. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/10.1080/09588221.2018.1527361>
- Tsai, S. C. (2020). Chinese students' perceptions of using Google Translate as a translingual CALL tool in EFL writing. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 35(5–6), 1250–1272. <https://doi-org.proxy.library.ucsb.edu/10.1080/09588221.2020.1799412>