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# Language switching: a qualitative clinical study of four second language learners' composing processes

Jose Miguel Plata Ramirez  
*University of Iowa*

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LANGUAGE SWITCHING: A QUALITATIVE CLINICAL STUDY OF FOUR  
SECOND LANGUAGE LEARNERS' COMPOSING PROCESSES

by

Jose Miguel Plata Ramirez

An Abstract

Of a thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree  
in Teaching and Learning (Language, Literacy and Culture)  
in the Graduate College of  
The University of Iowa

May 2012

Thesis Supervisor: Professor Kathryn F. Whitmore

## ABSTRACT

Recent research about L2 writing indicates that L2 writers are likely to instruct themselves on how and what to do during the writing process, using both languages to do so. This constant switch between their L1 and their L2 during their L2 composing process is known as “language-switching” (L-S). In this qualitative clinical study my goals were mainly three: a) to describe and understand the purposes for which participants would potentially language-switch to their L1s, b) to depict the perceptions and understandings these four participants have about their personal L2 composing process and the use of their L1s, and c) to describe the tensions they experienced during the L2 writing tasks in the study.

The participants in this study were four students in an American university who completed two L2 writing tasks using a think-aloud technique, in which students verbalized all their thoughts while they wrote. Data collected in this study included interview transcripts, think aloud protocols, reflection sessions, videotapes, students’ written texts and observations. The Atlas TI computer software assisted a constant comparative method which implied a continuous comparison of all the data sources (Merriam, 2009). I matched language-switching instances with the participants’ behaviors and assigned codes referring the writers’ actual activities, behaviors and perceptions.

Findings suggest that the L2 composing process is a bilingual event in which L-S has a natural occurrence. The use of the writer’s L1 during the L2 writing process is closely related to the writer’s L2 proficiency, and the degree of proficiency can be related to the situational context (FL vs. SL) where the L2 is learned and used. Findings revealed that Generating L2 Content was the most recurring purpose for L-S during L2 writing, followed by Controlling the Process of Writing and Revising. It also revealed that

participants transfer their L1 skills to the L2 writing process and that the writing expertise they bring to the L2 composing process may influence the L-S purpose frequency. One contribution of this study is the participants' perceptions about their L-S habits. Most were aware of the benefits that L-S brought to their L2 writing process. Their L1s helped them organize ideas, write better texts and understand the tasks given. This study also revealed that time frame, prompts, lack of L2 proficiency and think-aloud protocols can influence the participants' L2 writing process negatively.

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LANGUAGE SWITCHING: A QUALITATIVE CLINICAL STUDY OF FOUR  
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Graduate College  
The University of Iowa  
Iowa City, Iowa

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

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PH.D. THESIS

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This is to certify that the Ph.D. thesis of

José Miguel Plata Ramírez

has been approved by the Examining Committee  
for the thesis requirement for the Doctor of Philosophy  
degree in Teaching and Learning (Language, Literacy and Culture)  
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To my parents Carmen Ramona and José María, my wife Marie Claire, and my children  
Vanessa Clairet, Fernanda Valentina and Sebastián Tomás.

“Olvídate de esos disparates, al Diablo la literatura y su martirio, escribir es una idiotez,  
habiendo en el mundo tantas cosas buenas...”.

Renato Rodríguez  
Al Sur del Equanil

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## TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES .....	xii
LIST OF FIGURES .....	xiii
CHAPTER 1 STUDY OVERVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK.....	1
Introduction .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	2
My early experience as a writer in Spanish .....	3
My experience as a foreign language learner .....	5
My experience as a graduate student in the U.S. and as a language teacher .....	6
Theoretical Framework .....	7
A transmission vs. a transactional model of education .....	7
Language development theories .....	9
Second language theories .....	12
L1 and L2 writing as process oriented models .....	14
My position as an SL Teacher and as an L2 Writing Teacher .....	21
Research Questions .....	24
Purpose of the Study .....	24
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE ABOUT LANGUAGE SWITCHING .....	26
Lay's Study.....	27
Cumming's Study .....	28
Friedlander's Study.....	29
Qi's Study.....	31
Woodall's Study.....	33
Wang & Wen's Study .....	34
Wang's Study.....	36
Weijen, Bergh, Rijlaarsdam and Sanders's Study .....	37
Other Studies .....	39
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN .....	43
A Qualitative Clinical Design.....	45
The Study.....	46
The recruitment process .....	47
Place and participants .....	50
Writing tasks .....	54
Data collection methods .....	56
Think Aloud Protocols .....	56
Interviews .....	58
Reflective Sessions.....	59
Observations .....	61
Transcriptions .....	63

Analysis .....	65
My Role as a Researcher .....	69
CHAPTER 4 THE NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS .....	72
Meg: The future Spanish teacher .....	72
A personal portrait .....	72
The second language user .....	74
The writer .....	75
Meg's L2 writing process .....	76
Meg's purposes for language switching (L-S) .....	82
Generating L2 Content .....	83
Controlling the Process of Writing .....	86
Revising .....	87
Perceptions of her L2 writing process and her L1 use .....	89
Meg's tensions in her L2 writing during the study .....	95
Katie: The future publishing company C.E.O .....	97
A personal portrait .....	97
The second language user .....	99
The writer .....	101
Katie's L2 writing process .....	102
Katie's purposes for language switching (L-S) .....	107
Controlling the Process of Writing .....	109
Generating L2 Content .....	110
Revising .....	114
Task Examining .....	115
Other .....	115
Perceptions of her L2 writing process and her L1 use .....	117
Katie's tensions in her L2 writing during the study .....	120
Summary of the chapter .....	122
CHAPTER 5 THE NATIVE SPANISH SPEAKERS .....	124
Carlos: the musician .....	124
A personal portrait .....	124
The second language user .....	126
The writer .....	127
Carlos's L2 Writing Process .....	129
Carlos's purposes for language switching (L-S) .....	133
Perceptions of his L2 writing process and his L1 use .....	135
Carlos's tensions in his L2 writing during the study .....	138
Roberto: the family provider .....	139
A personal portrait .....	139
The second language user .....	141
The writer .....	142
Roberto's L2 Writing Process .....	143
Roberto's purposes for language switching (L-S) .....	147
Generating L2 Content .....	148
Revising .....	150
Task Examining .....	151
Controlling the Process of Writing .....	152
Perceptions of his L2 writing process and his L1 use .....	152

Roberto's tensions in his L2 writing during the study .....	155
Summary of the chapter .....	157
CHAPTER 6 CONCLUSIONS.....	158
Research Questions .....	160
What are the purposes of any language switching that occurs during the participants' L2 composing process? .....	161
Influence of the situational context of L-S .....	161
Participants' L-S frequency .....	162
Factors influencing L-S .....	164
L-S purposes and frequency .....	165
A rationale for participants' L-S purposes frequency .....	168
What are these students' perceptions about their L2 composing process and their use of L1 in L2 writing? .....	169
Cultural transfers & L2 writing perceptions and behaviors .....	169
Writers' perceptions about their L1 use during L2 writing .....	174
What are the tensions these writers experience in their L2 composing processes during the study? .....	178
Time constraints .....	179
Tensions due to lack of L2 proficiency .....	180
Tensions due to the prompt.....	180
Tensions due to the think-alouds .....	181
Tensions due my beeping .....	183
Summary of Findings .....	184
Limitations of the Study .....	185
Pedagogical Implications .....	187
Research Implications .....	190
Final Considerations.....	191
APPENDIX A SCHEDULE DURING DATA COLLECTION.....	193
APPENDIX B PROMPT TASK # 1 .....	194
Letter. (For native Spanish speakers).....	194
Carta. (For native English speakers) .....	194
APPENDIX C PROMPT TASK # 2 .....	195
Argumentative Essay. (For native Spanish speakers) .....	195
Ensayo Argumentativo. (For native English speakers).....	195
APPENDIX D FIRST PROMPT USED WITH MEG .....	196
APPENDIX E INITIAL INTERVIEW .....	197
APPENDIX F FINAL INTERVIEW .....	199

APPENDIX G POST-WRITING REFLECTION INTERVIEW .....	200
APPENDIX H THINK-ALoud TRANSCRIPTS CONVENTIONS.....	202
APPENDIX I SAMPLE OF KATIE’S THINK-ALoud TRANSCRIPTION # 2.....	203
APPENDIX J MEG’S WRITTEN TEXTS .....	213
APPENDIX K KATIE’S WRITTEN TEXTS .....	220
APPENDIX L CARLOS’S WRITTEN TEXTS .....	225
APPENDIX M ROBERTO’S WRITTEN TEXTS .....	233
REFERENCES.....	238

## LIST OF TABLES

### Table

2-1	Summary of previous L-S studies and my qualitative clinical study. ....	42
6-1	Comparative chart of the frequency of purposes of the four participants.....	167
6-2	Comparative chart of participants' L2 writing behaviors. ....	174
6-3	Comparative chart of participants' tensions related to the L2 writing process. ....	183

## LIST OF FIGURES

### Figure

3-1	Diagram of a qualitative clinical think-aloud study. ....	46
3-2	Diagram of room layout where participants wrote the two writing tasks. ....	50
3-3	Actual sample of the researcher note-taking. ....	60
4-1	Meg's outlines for the two writing tasks. ....	78
4-2	Excerpt from Meg's second L2 written text with 3 false starts. ....	79
4-3	Meg's L1 and L2 use distribution during writing task # 1. ....	80
4-4	Meg's L1 and L2 use distribution during writing task # 2. ....	82
4-5	Meg's L-S distribution of purposes during her first writing task. ....	83
4-6	Meg's L-S distribution of purposes during her second writing task. ....	88
4-7	Excerpt of Meg's second L2 written text. ....	91
4-8	Katie's first and second outlines for the two writing tasks. ....	104
4-9	Katie's L1 and L2 use distribution during writing # 1. ....	106
4-10	Katie's L1 and L2 use distribution during writing # 2. ....	107
4-11	Katie's L-S distribution of purposes during her first writing task. ....	108
4-12	Katie's L-S distribution of purposes during her second writing task. ....	116
5-1	Carlos's outlines for the two writing tasks. ....	130
5-2	Carlos's L1 and L2 use distribution during writing # 2. ....	133
5-3	Roberto's L1 and L2 use distribution during writing # 1. ....	145
5-4	Roberto's L1 and L2 use distribution during writing # 2. ....	146
5-5	Roberto's L-S distribution of purposes during his first writing task. ....	147
5-6	Roberto's L-S distribution of purposes during his second writing task. ....	148

## CHAPTER 1

### STUDY OVERVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### Introduction

In the field of second language (L2) writing, there are still many controversies and dilemmas that have influenced the decisions writing teachers make for their teaching practice and have also created false dichotomies that some new writing teachers assume as the only truths in the field. Casanave (2007) suggests that more than engaging in discussions and debates, L2 writing teachers need to reflect on those controversies and dilemmas to make informed decisions to benefit their teaching. It is also important to study and understand the composing process and all its diversity with the purpose of incorporating findings in our teaching practices. Although there is a considerable amount of research published in the L2 writing field and much of the research has been done with the purpose of improving educational practices (Leki, Cumming, and Silva, 2008), there is still a generalized hope among researchers in this field for more research. To date, a wide range of research yields inconclusive findings that still lack depth and clarity.

Much of the research in the L2 field has been strongly influenced by previous L1 composition studies (Sasaki, 2000; Woodall, 2002; Williams, 2005) and hence a comparison between these two writing fields has become a common reference. Williams (2005) states that research in L1 and L2 composing processes has found them to be “generally similar, yet with some significant differences” (p. 31). For example, L2 writers spend less time planning, are less accurate in language use and their processes are slower and longer than their L1 counterparts. However, during their composing process, L2 writers use their L1 in order to compensate for the difficulties in the L2 (Cumming, 1989), something that monolingual writers do not do. Some studies suggest that using L1

while composing in L2 could be beneficial for L2 writers. That being the case, language switching could become a fundamental tool during the L2 composing process; a tool some writers are denied because of teachers' misconceptions and false assumptions.

Recent research on Second Language (SL) or Foreign Language (FL) writing processes has shed light on new ways to understand the process of writing and allows us, as language teachers, to find new alternatives to inform our teaching practices. The common assumptions among L2 writing teachers, who have emphasized the need for SL writers to think and write as entirely as possible in the L2, have encouraged me to design and conduct the present research on "language-switching" (L-S) under a qualitative clinical design (Whitmore, Martens, Goodman and Owocki, 2004).

### Statement of the Problem

Several are the reasons that encourage me to conduct research in the field of L2 writing and, specifically, to examine the topic of L-S. Among the most evident reasons are my previous experience with writing during my childhood, my experience as a FL learner and teacher, and my growing interest, as a graduate student in the U.S., in understanding the SL/FL writing processes from the writer's standpoint, as well as the controversial data collection methods used in writing research such as think aloud protocols. Think aloud protocols (Cumming, 1989; Qi, 1998; Woodall, 2002; Roca de Larios, Manchón, Murphy and Marín, 2008) have been used as a technique to investigate the cognitive processes that occur in the writer's head while composing. This technique gives us the chance to analyze the actual process of writing from the writer's point of view. Observing what goes on during the writer's L2 composing processes is a valuable tool to understand the L2 process itself and the purposes and reasons why some writers may language switch during their L2 composing processes.

### My early experience as a writer in Spanish

My experience as a writer in my native language was strongly influenced by the transmission model of education I experienced during my elementary school. Learning was seen as the transmission of information from the teacher to the students. I was usually asked to copy a whole story from my text book in my notebook to get the lesson of the day. Copying from the blackboard was a very common pedagogical activity for practicing writing. The teacher modeled and I usually followed without any chance to do creative work. Writing was not seen as a creative transactional process but as a mechanical activity to be mastered; thus, good writing meant expertise in calligraphy.

As a teenager, I attended a high school in which Language Arts classes were devoted to the systematic instruction of spelling and orthography. Although I became proficient in the use of language form, I did not have a chance to do any creative work in the school setting. As part of my leisure activities after my completion of the homework of the day, I used to get together with my “*panas*” (buddies) to talk about T.V. programs, play indoor soccer, go to the movies, establish rivalry with the teens in the other neighborhood and engage in “stone throwing” battles against them, and occasional fist fights to defend self and neighborhood reputation and pride.

However, during those years I also experienced activities beyond physical struggles, activities which were related to literacy such as producing a weekly one-page bulletin called *El Chismografo* (the Gossiper) and tagging for different purposes. I must say these two last activities strongly influenced my developing writing skills. In those activities, I was seen as the smart guy who was able to do nice drawings and was concerned about language use. My friends and I used to get together to anonymously play the journalist role, collecting and gathering information about trivial and humorous issues from and about the people who lived in our neighborhood. Stories needed to be brief, concise, comical and sometimes sassy. To do this, we usually discussed the issue

and played with words in order to find a funny way to say it, often creating nicknames for people according to their behaviors. We got involved in a real writing process without knowing that we were using high order thinking for writing, revising, editing, typewriting, and anonymously publishing a one-page bulletin on the wall of the most visited grocery store of the neighborhood. People were really anxious to read the new edition of *El Chismografo* every week and they laughed or got upset depending on whether they were mentioned nicely or criticized badly on the page. People gathered in the grocery store and used the *El Chismografo* news to discuss certain issues for fun or seriously about the neighborhood. The news got out fast and quickly around the neighborhood and people used to blame to each other for that newsletter's authorship. (As far as I know, no one ever knew who was responsible for it).

In reflecting about it, I can honestly say that I have been engaged with writing ever since that time. That was the time for us to express our perceptions about people and events in our community. We wanted to be our neighborhood's "conscience" since we exalted the good behaviors and harshly criticized the unscrupulous. We were awfully nice and mean at the same time. I also started tagging on walls and roads, in our neighborhood first, and then we dared to do it on the downtown walls, struggling between the creative work and the police chase. Graffiti in our neighborhood was related to different topics. We tagged about the girls we liked and also to complain about the high cost of living. We used to blame the grocery's owner for the increasing prices of goods and these kinds of graffiti only lasted one or two days since the owner used to have the wall painted fast. Maybe I did not realize how literacy was shaping me in my attempt to belong to a community. I did not care too much about defacing public or private property; what I really cared about was being able to express my feelings, showing people and (surely) myself that I was able to do "smart graffiti," and challenging the police. That period in my life shaped my identity as a writer.

### My experience as a foreign language learner

As a foreign language learner I have experienced many difficulties to become proficient in English. Learning English in Venezuela was a very hard task to accomplish. During those days, the media, internet and some other sources of input in English were not as popular as they are today. So, the chances to get involved in meaningful contexts to use what we had learned were few. During my college days back in Venezuela, classes were not oriented so that students could master all four modes of language (writing, speaking, listening and reading), and opportunities to use the language were not many. As a learner, I had few chances to develop my writing skills in the FL since many classes were intended to enhance my knowledge *about* the language. The classes focused on the formal study of English grammar, as well as its phonetics. I clearly remember my English composition teacher telling me how important grammar was, and introducing some other steps and formatting principles necessary to write good academic essays in English. They needed to sound *English*, like native-like written pieces. “Remember to use passive voice here and there.” “Don’t ever dare to start a paragraph without a topic sentence,” “English writing is concise and accurate.” “Don’t beat around the bush; go straightforward to the nest,” “What is your argument here?” My professor had a magical recipe full of ingredients and directions to make me and my classmates capable of composing a formal English paper, but the whole is always more than the sum of the parts (Goodman, 2003). Certainly some of her questions and advice at that time helped me form an idea of what composing in English was, it was painful! As I tried to state singular topic sentences and support them with lots of arguments, somehow I almost always lost the ideas I first wanted to develop; meanwhile my desire to create my own stories and do my own writing were still floating in my head.

In those few writing activities during my undergraduate studies, I experienced the difficulty of composing in a language that was not even used for daily communication. I

was pushed to think in and use the foreign language at all times due to some of my teachers' assumptions that using the foreign language would allow me to better compose in English. The truth was that my low proficiency in the FL made me feel less capable and disappointed with my composing skills.

My experience as a graduate student in the U.S. and as a  
language teacher

My experience as a graduate student in ethnographic writing seminars and L2 writing courses at the university, in which I had the chance to discover, explore and reflect about new ways of writing, data collection methods and my understandings of the foreign language students' needs in my home country --Venezuela-- have led me to thoughtfully reflect and analyze how I can contribute to my students' writing strengths. It is fundamental to understand in depth what goes on in the L2 composing process and what tools students have at hand when they compose.

According to my own experience as an English language teacher in Venezuela and as a Spanish instructor in an American university, I have realized that the time and attention devoted to the writing process in both languages and contexts are inadequate and unfair. Students do not usually have the chance to see and understand the process of writing as a whole but as an isolated activity within the foreign language class. They do not have the chance to get involved in a real writing process either, and to make use of the tools writers typically have at hand when they compose. Writing is usually embedded in the general class, but it is not a paramount part of it, so students perceive writing as a take-home activity or as an in class-evaluation activity.

Institutional policies and L2 teachers' assumptions about the exclusive and obligatory use of the L2 during the L2 composing process or the L2 classes not only limit students' possibilities but contrast with some fundamental theorists such as Cummins

(1996) and Freeman & Freeman (1992; 1998) who advocate the fostering and use of the students' native languages during the L2 learning process. There is an increasing tendency to assume that the best way to compose in an L2 is to think exclusively in the L2. Kibler (2010) states that from "second and foreign language perspectives, prohibiting or restricting first language use is common practice" (p.123). However, as writing teachers, we do not really know what goes on in the students' minds when they compose in the L2 and it is here where a think aloud technique to investigate the writers' cognitive process is highly valuable.

### Theoretical Framework

As language teachers, our day-to-day decisions to plan instruction, select materials, interact with students and assess their progress are grounded in our assumptions, beliefs, philosophies and research findings about the teaching and learning process. In the following section I will describe the several theories which underlie my position as a L2 teacher which contrast with the transmission model of education. I will first present theories regarding language learning and second language theories; then, I will also present theory on L1 and L2 writing as process-oriented models.

#### A transmission vs. a transactional model of education

For a long time, psychologists have studied how people learn and behave. This understanding has helped them build theories that have strongly influenced the way educational settings work. Historically, the educational system has been influenced by two main philosophical paradigms: the transmission or behavioral model and the constructivist or transactional model. Smith (1998) describes two different theories of learning: The official theory and the classical theory of learning. The former, which became official dogma and has been perpetuated in many educational settings through the

present day, was strongly influenced by Ebbinghaus's studies. This German psychologist developed the theory of nonsense by scientifically proving that people could learn nonsense through repetition and memorization. According to Smith (1998), the official theory sees learning as an individualistic, occasional, strenuous, fragmented and easily forgotten process. This view assumes that learning only takes place when it is difficult. In contrast, the classical view sees learning as a vicarious, continual, effortless, and never forgotten process. People learn from the company they keep. If they are invited to "join a club," they will soon learn from those people. People store experiences in their long term memory which are difficult to forget since that information is stored naturally and effortlessly. This theory deals with the natural way children and adults learn in their daily lives. You do not learn as a consequence but in the process of watching and doing what others do.

The official theory, which underlies the transmission model of education, is also based on the reinforcement theory proposed by Skinner (1957). This psychologist saw learning as a change in the individual's behavior. This change occurs when the individual is trained to respond to a stimulus that comes from the environment. Skinner states that responses are strengthened "when they are frequently followed by the event called 'reinforcement'" (p. 29). This behavioral change is "causal"; hence, it can be controlled by altering the conditions under which it occurs. Thus, in this context, learning is seen as the formation of habits and associations from stimuli, responses and reinforcements. Though this learning theory gives the environment an important role (since it is where stimuli come from) the learner is seen as a passive recipient.

Dewey's (1949; 2001) progressive movement, which arose as a reaction to the displeasure with traditional education in America, recognizes the importance of pragmatic approaches and socialized learning. He settled the basis for a future education which entailed a learner-centered process with the purpose of allowing students to communicate, create, express themselves and socialize. He emphasized the importance of

connecting the educational process with the students' own lives. Dewey (1949), with his term "transaction," founded one of the most important principles of the social theories of learning. According to Dewey, the term "transaction" describes a reciprocal and beneficial relationship between two entities. Knowledge implies a transaction between something to be known, and something already known. Rosenblatt (1994), who later would develop and enrich the term, states that each transaction is a unique experience in which the reader and text continuously act and are acted upon by each other.

### Language development theories

Besides attempting to explain how people learn, psychologists have also tried to understand and formulate different theories which may account for the complex process of language learning. Still, there is little consensus on the most fundamental issues that explain children's language development and current debates among scholars usually emerge (Rice, 2000).

Piaget (1981) proposes a theory of cognitive development from which many investigators have studied the relationships between this cognitive development and the development of language. In this theory, children play active roles in language development. There is a constant interaction between the internal cognitive structures the children bring to the environment and what the environment provides to them. Piaget enumerates different stages through which children go during their mental development: a) the motor-sensorial stage (from birth to 2 years of age), in which children make sense of the world through the touch, sight, taste, smell and ear. b) The pre-operational stage (from 2 to 7 years of age), in which children develop the symbolic functions such as language, mental imagination, order and time. c) The operational stage (from 7 to 11 years of age), in which children begin to use mental operations and to acquire a set of concepts for the conversation and d) the formal operational stage (from 11 years on), in

which the young ones handle abstract concepts, raise hypotheses and make inferences and deductions.

Halliday (1977) developed a theory that explains that learning a language is learning how to mean. He states that children first develop a protolanguage in their early stages of life, which implies that they learn how to mean long before they learn words. At that stage their language system is a two-level system: content and expression, and what is fundamental about this protolanguage is that it has “systematicity” and “functionality.” This system is the child’s own invention. Later, as children learn language in a social context, they develop different functions as a necessary condition to learn the adult language. These functions (instrumental, regulatory, interactional, personal, heuristic, imaginative and informative) allow them to interact with the environment. It is presumed that these functions are universals of human culture. Halliday (1977) states that “learning the mother tongue consists of mastering certain basic functions of language and in developing a meaning potential in respect of each” (p. 33). Children master the different functions in constant interactions with their environment, developing each function and mastering the adult language until they refine their functions to ideational, interpersonal and textual adults’ functions. Halliday finds that there are three simultaneous kinds of language learning: we learn language, we learn through language, and we learn about language, all of these being interdependent. A critical concept is that language is learned not as a sequence of skills but as a whole in the context of its use.

Kenneth Goodman (2003) drew on the work of Piaget, Vygostky, Dewey, and Halliday to formulate a new psycho-socio-transactional theory of language learning and its role in the overall general learning. His theory about language development focuses on two fundamental concepts: personal invention and social convention. These centripetal (invention) and centrifugal (convention) forces are constantly shaping language learning and are intrinsically interdependent from one another. The invention force never diminishes but plays a fundamental role in the creation of social language. “So, in real

sense, personal language is the product of society and social language is the product of the individuals who speak it” (p. 305). He states that children do not imitate adults’ speech sounds; “rather, they begin to specialize in the sounds that caring adults respond to best, putting their inventive energies into controlling the most useful articulatory mechanism.” (p. 307). Children make sense of the whole system of symbols and rules as these two forces interact and shape each other in authentic social contexts. Hence, this implies that language develops from wholes to parts and not from parts to wholes. Meanings develop in the context of social transactions. Additionally, learning a language is easy when it is real, natural, meaningful, interesting, and useful (Goodman, 1986; 1989).

Goodman (1989; 2003) not only has developed a theory that accounts for language development but has established the principles for a language curriculum at schools. He affirms that teachers need to become co-learners and be sensitive professionals to understand how much they need to get involved to help their students. Learners need to actively participate and take risks while they set their goals and evaluate themselves during the process. He also proposes the study of this curriculum by having in mind the learning cycle processes of perceiving, ideating and presenting. The perceiving phase is the engagement in the object of study, the ideating phase is the making sense of the world; and the presenting phase allows learners to engage in transactions that help reconstruct perceptions and ideas. Yetta Goodman (2003) asserts that “these learning phases are recursive and interrelated, they never occur in isolation” (p. 33).

Constructs from these theories have also become fundamentals for the development of different methods for second language learning and teaching. The audio-lingual method was influenced by Skinner’s reinforcement theory, and Krashen’s monitor theory was influenced by innatist and social theories. Social theories of learning have also inspired L2 theories such as the acculturation theory, and Freeman & Freeman’s (1992; 1998) whole language theory for second language teaching was inspired by Goodman’s

whole language philosophy. Those theoretical constructs have also contributed to the development of current social views of learning for culturally diverse students in monolingual classes such as Legitimate Peripheral Participation (Lave & Wenger, 2001) and Funds of Knowledge (Gonzalez, N.; Moll, L.; Amanti, C., 2005). For example, Cummins (1996) explains *the linguistic interdependence principle* which claims that culturally diverse students who acquire literacy skills in their L1 or L2 usually develop a deeper conceptual and linguistic proficiency that is strongly related to the development of literacy in the majority language (English). They form a “common underlying proficiency” which helps them transfer cognitive or literacy skills from one language to the other. When they learn literacy skills in their L1, they not only know about this L1 but create that common proficiency which helps them understand literacy skills in their L2.

### Second language theories

Krashen (1985; 1987) developed five hypotheses in order to explain the learning/acquisition process of second or foreign languages. These hypotheses have become musts in the L2 teaching field: a) the acquisition/learning hypothesis states that people have two independent forms to develop their linguistic competence in the L2. Acquisition is an unconscious and informal process, and learning is a conscious and gradual process, developed in formal settings. b) The natural order hypothesis states that learners have a tendency to acquire certain linguistic structures in a specific order. c) The monitor hypothesis states that acquisition and learning are used in different ways. Acquisition controls fluency and learning controls accuracy by constantly monitoring our speech. d) The Input hypothesis explains that a language is acquired when the input is comprehensible and is “a little” more advanced from the learner’s current knowledge

level (i+1). e) The affective filter hypothesis refers to the important role psychological factors play during the learning process.

Krashen's hypotheses have offered important contributions to the understanding of the process of learning a second language from the learners' point of view. In Krashen's theory, there is an explanation for how and when learners acquire, learn and control language. There is an implicit understanding of the social role in this model since stimulus and input are needed for language development, but there is not a full explanation of the fundamental role of the social context in such a process. Focusing on the important role that socialization, interaction and transaction play in the L2 learning process, some theories and approaches have offered important contributions to that process.

Shumann's (1978) acculturation model explains that external factors (social context) as well as internal ones (psychological factors) play a fundamental role in the process of learning. A social and psychological integration of learners within the culture of the second language must exist so that learners develop their new language. The social distance, that is to say, the amount of contact with speakers and the target culture, and the psychological distance, the amount of individual interest in learning the second language, influence the acquisition of the second language. Acquiring a new language is only one aspect of a bigger process of acculturation. During the second language learning process, there exists an intermediate period between the native language and the target language when learners develop what Selinker (1972) called interlanguage. Selinker coined this term to refer to the personal linguistic system created by the learner. This personal system is a transitional process between the native language and the second language. This term reflects Goodman's invention and convention relationship. The personal invention of the child is shaped by the social convention in the same way that the learner's interlanguage is shaped through social interaction by the second language.

Empowered by many of the aforementioned social theories and specially guided by Goodman's psycho-socio-transactional language theory, Freeman & Freeman (1992; 1998) designed a whole language approach to respond to the needs in the L2 teaching field. These authors proposed the principles for SL/FL learners' success which summarize the most important contributions offered by social theories of learning and, in turn, contribute to the teachers' decision-making process. These principles reflect an optimal teaching-learning situation and should direct L2 teachers at the moment of planning instruction, selecting materials, interacting with students and assessing their progress. Among these principles we can mention: a) language should be taught through content, b) learning goes from wholes to parts, c) lessons should be learner-centered, d) lessons should have meaning and purpose for learners, e) learning takes place in social interaction, f) lessons should include all four modes of language, g) lessons should support students' first languages and cultures, and h) faith in learners expands their potential.

#### L1 and L2 writing as process oriented models

In the transmission model of education, the act of writing was seen as a one-step act in which the written product was the central issue. Little attention was paid to the process by which the writer creates that written product. In contrast, a transactional model of education assumes writing as a complex transactional process made out of different steps. This does not mean that writing is just a process, but a process with a result: the written product. This kind of approach is known as the stage process model and Rohman's prewriting/writing/rewriting model and Britton's conception/incubation/production model are examples of this approach. The popularization of this stage process model could be understood as a paradigm shift in composition studies. Applebee (1986) affirms that this process approach allows us to see

writing in terms of “what the writer does instead of in terms of what the final product looks like” (p. 96).

A big difference is in how the transmission model of education and transactional model view writing. The first view studies the product and the second one considers the process and the product. However, new trends in composition studies and scholars such as Flowers and Hayes (1981) have criticized the Stage Process Model, arguing that this model does not consider the cognitive processes in the writer’s mind but the gradual steps through which the writer must go. Flower and Hayes (1981) propose a Cognitive Process Theory of Writing which attempts to describe the different mental processes which occur during the act of composing. Hence, this theory of writing seems to be useful for conducting research and offers comprehensive detail from the writer’s point of view.

According to Murray (2003) the writing process itself can be divided into three stages: prewriting, which is everything that takes place before writing; writing, which is the act of producing a first draft; and rewriting which means researching, rethinking, and redesigning. Although many scholars critique the stage-process to be a linear and gradual process in which writers go from one stage straight ahead to the next, Murray (2003) claims that this model “is not a rigid lock-step process” (p.4), implying that writers are freely allowed to move back and forth through the stages during the act of writing.

L2 writing is not a less complex process. It requires a further step. It is not just putting thoughts on a piece of paper using a language other than your own. Writing in a second or foreign language implies at least two important considerations. On the one hand, it deals with the knowledge the writer has about the process of writing itself, and on the other, it is dependent on the writers’ knowledge of and proficiency in the foreign language. As Jones and Tetroe (1987) state, second language writers “must deal not only with the usual problems of composing, but also with the problems of doing so in a language in which they are not as competent as they are in their first” (p. 34).

Additionally, there are differences between writing systems and thought patterns that

writers must take into consideration. In other words, besides knowing the second language system, writers need to know the process of composing in their first language in order to be able to assume the process of writing in the second or the foreign language.

Arndt (1987) suggests that despite the languages, L2 composing is very similar to L1 composing. However, Carson (2001) states that the writing process in an L2 should not be treated in a similar way to the L1 writing process and Moragne e Silva (1989) affirms that the process of writing in an L2 “may be considerably more complex” than the composing process in L1 (p. 132). Williams (2005) says that research in L1 and L2 composing processes has found these to be “generally similar, yet with some significant differences” (p. 31). For example, L2 writers spend less time planning, are less accurate in language use and their processes are slower and longer than L1 writers. L2 writers have more linguistic resources during their composing process. In fact, Woodall (2002) declares that one of the most fundamental differences between L1 and L2 writing is that L2 writers have at least two languages at their disposal. At some point, in their composing process, L2 writers use their L1 in order to compensate for the difficulties in the L2 (Cumming, 1989), something that monolingual writers do not do. Moreover, unlike L1 writers, L2 writers may have little oral language (L2) to draw upon in developing literacy, and thus cannot be moving from oral to written forms like L1 writers do. Furthermore, L2 beginning writers may already be literate to some degree in L1 and can therefore potentially rely on that literacy to create texts (Edelsky (1986), as cited by Leki, et al., 2008).

As a dissimilar and most salient characteristic of L2 writing compared to L1 writing, language-switching (L-S) has been investigated (Cumming, 1989; Friedlander, 1990; Woodall, 2002; Wang & Wen, 2002; Wang, 2003). Language switching might represent a pedagogical controversy among SL /FL teachers who have emphasized the need for L2 writers to think and write in the L2. This emphasis is based in their belief that the use of L1 will inhibit acquisition of the L2 and will interfere with the generation of

L2 structures because of incorrect transfer (Friedlander, 1990). It also represents a debate among scholars who investigate the use of L1 in L2 writing. The debate itself is based on their interpretations as to whether the use of L1 in L2 writing is beneficial or not, the frequency of the language-switch related to writers' L2 proficiency, and the purposes of the switches. Some studies suggest that using L1 while composing in L2 could be beneficial for L2 writers. Lay (1982) reported that the more frequent a writer language-switches to his L1, the better the texts in terms of organization and quality. Friedlander (1990) suggested that L2 writers transferred L1 skills and strategies to approach the L2 process of writing; he also suggests that using the L1 when planning culturally related topics could be a great help for L2 writers. Jones and Tetroe (1987) suggested that the writing strategies a writer employs, such as transfer from L1 to L2, play a central role in L2 writing and that "the quality... of planning transfers from L1 to L2" (p. 56).

Moreover, writing in a second or foreign language represents diverse challenges for students since many of them do not establish differences in the process of writing in the first language and the second/ foreign language. For example, students may have some culturally constructed thoughts and patterns in their first language which they attempt to transfer without much success to the foreign or second language writing process. In establishing differences between the process of writing in the first and the second language, Grabe (2001) states that students have many implicit frames for presenting information and arguments in their L1 which cannot be transferred directly to the second or foreign language writing process. These and some other differences such as writing purposes and writing performances between a first language and a second language have led some scholars to propose the idea of developing a second language or foreign language writing theory (Grabe, 2001). To this respect, Carson (2001) claims that one adequate and explanatory theory which will account for the way L2 writers interact with the text is badly needed. In an effort to connect second language writing and second language acquisition, this author affirms that "an understanding of the development of L2

writing ability requires an understanding of SLA in general because L2 competence underlies L2 writing ability in a fundamental way” (p. 191).

Benson and Heiddish (1995) assert that many SL teachers are unaware of the importance of the writing process in a second language and that “teaching writing as a manageable and changeable process can be a powerful idea for many ESL composition students” (p. 317). This suggests the importance of giving composition a significant role within our foreign or second language classes and understanding our roles as instructors in giving students tools and real opportunities to get involved in a writing process in our SL classes. However, some misconceptions about the process of writing in a second or foreign language still prevail in our classrooms. Lots of evidence has pointed out the fact that the writing assessment in the second language has become the order of the day once again (Hamp-Lyons, 1990).

Many SLA instructors and language teachers still believe that the only and most efficient way to teach writing in our classes (if it can or should be taught at all) is pushing our students to think and write entirely in the second or foreign language. This belief is based upon the idea that if foreign or second language writers do any of their work using their first language, acquisition in the second language will be inhibited; interfering with the generation of L2 structures (Friedlander, 1990). Kibler (2010) states that from “second and foreign language perspectives, prohibiting or restricting first language use is common practice” (p.123). This is a recurrent scenario in some academic settings since students are not allowed to use notes or dictionaries as useful tools in their L2 composing process assessment, although one of the tenets of SLA states that “having linguistic knowledge and using that knowledge are not the same” (Williams, 2005, p. 9). Furthermore, Friedlander (1990) states that a number of studies have indicated that second or foreign language writers transfer skills and strategies to approach the process of writing in the second or foreign language and that using the first language when planning culturally-related topics could be a great help. Likewise, Flower (1989) declares

that “writers are constantly giving themselves instructions for how to write and what to do and then monitoring how well their current effort is going” (p. 32). This mental operation which helps in overcoming difficulties in intricate mental process is what Vygostky (2002) called inner speech. This inner speech may be reflected in the writer’s use of his/her L1 during L2 composing (Woodall, 2002).

If L2 writers have two languages at their disposal during a cognitive process which demands high mental operations, they are likely to language switch to their L1s when composing in their L2s as part of their personal strategies to cope with the L2 composing process. Hence, it is fundamental for us, as language teachers, to understand how and why L2 writers language-switch. Before limiting them or pushing them not to use their L1s during the L2 writing process, we need to be aware if culturally diverse students’ linguistic diversity can be used as a resource for learning rather than an obstacle to be overcome within the L2 writing process.

Another characteristic of paramount importance in second language writing is the context in which this L2 writing occurs. The situational setting in which the L2 is taught/used is the most important distinction to define a language as a Second Language or as a Foreign Language. According to Williams (2005), second language learning refers to the process of learning a new language in a country where that language is spoken, for example, a Venezuelan learner learning English in the U.S. On the other hand, foreign language learning is the process of learning a language that is not spoken in that country, such as learners of English in Venezuela. These two different contexts will strongly shape the way and purpose in which students write.

People learn to write in an L2 for a variety of reasons and in different contexts. The settings, the goals, motivations and cultural and linguistic backgrounds in which ESL student-writers and EFL student-writers learn to write differ greatly. ESL writers planning to live and work in the target culture, need to learn the SL for professional and academic success. In contrast, EFL writers usually learn to write in the L2 in order to

fulfill academic demands and rarely need to use the L2 writing skills once they graduate from school. Kamimura (1996) states that “students in a foreign language context have only limited opportunities to use a target language in an academic setting.... and this might make marked differences between their first and foreign language composing behaviors” (p.49).

Liu & Hansen (2002) describe the different scenarios, based on linguistic and cultural backgrounds, across foreign and second language contexts that may affect the student-teacher interactions in class. They say that in foreign language settings, “the classrooms tend to be linguistically and culturally homogeneous” (p. 33) in which students share the same native language and teachers may or may not share their language. On the other hand, the second language setting seems to be more complex, since “the classroom tends to be heterogeneous” (p. 34) in which teachers may fully, partially or may not share the native language of students. These distinct scenarios have pedagogical implications for class activities and may impact the writers’ composing processes. Research has suggested that FL and SL writers showed different development of writing skills (Sasaki, 2004).

Cimasko, Reichelt, Im, & Arik, (2009) describe the factors that shape FL writing instruction around the world: the status of the language, students’ purposes for learning the FL; and the economic, historical; and political factors. Unlike SL writers, FL learners do not have many opportunities to use the L2 with authentic purposes; they have very limited input, and there is also a lack of authenticity in FL class activities which may result in important ethical and pedagogical debates for teachers and learners. Furthermore, a reduced number of classroom hours, inadequate teaching materials, limited technology, large class sizes, and lack of teacher preparation also constrain FL writing (Williams, 2005). Cimasko et al. (2009) state that the role of English as a lingua franca in the world problematizes the teaching of other FLs. The FL setting with respect to the SL setting seems to be more vulnerable.

Most of the research and practical experience with FL writing issues are based on ESL writing research. Although there is a great diversity of FL pedagogical interests -the impact of feedback in FL writing, the influence of process instruction, the effects of grammar treatment and the effects of computer use, among others- which mirrors a number of interests in ESL, (Williams, 2005; Reichelt, 2001; Cimasko et al., 2009), in the area of FL writing there are still some important constrain that negatively affect the research done. Reichelt (2001) and Polio (2003) argue that there is a significant problem within the body of FL writing research such as the little research that has been done in relation to the research in the SL writing field, the lack of familiarity among researchers with the corpus of published research in the area, serious research design flaws, and a current inconsistency in the ways researchers analyze students' writing. Reichelt (2001) also states that this inconsistency reveals not only a lack of clarity but makes comparisons across studies more difficult. She recognizes that the FL writing field has potential to develop into a cohesive field and encourages researchers to familiarize themselves with the corpus of published literature so that they can develop further professional discussions and criticize, respond and reply to previous studies.

### My position as an SL Teacher and as an L2 Writing Teacher

The philosophical and theoretical stance that we assume, as language teachers, shapes the way we perceive and understand our students, the events that occur in our classrooms, our planning, and our own teaching practice. Some second language teachers have based their decisions on behavioral theoretical constructs in the belief that learning is a mechanical process which results from repetition and memorization. Those teachers believe that success in the second language is regulated by the memorization of fixed patterns and long lists of verbs and their different forms in present, past and participle. I

myself experienced learning English by completing transformational drills and memorizing patterns that sometimes I could not use in real contexts. The learning process was hard and, at times, frustrating. Learning did occur but at a very slow pace. I also had the opportunity to learn a new language (Aruba's national language: Papiamentu) by means of socialization and interactions while living in Venezuela and then, experiencing life on the island (Aruba). I understand how those two processes work and know how learners feel. My personal experience in learning languages has also shaped my perceptions of teaching.

As a language educator, I believe that there are better ways to teach and learn languages than this transmission model. My day-to-day decisions are strongly influenced by theoretical and philosophical constructs that underlie social theories in general, and specifically, Goodman's psycho-socio-transactional theory. They have helped me realize that learning is fundamentally social and that students' assessments need to be contextualized. Beyond assessing products, we need to assess students' learning processes. Goodman (2003) rejects the common assumptions that reading and writing need to be studied separately; instead he sees oral and written as languages parallel semiotic forms. "Whatever is true of language in general, is also true of written language" including the invention and convention forces that interact to generate language development. "Like oral language, written language is learned in context of its use" (p. 303). These theoretical constructs have also helped me see events in different ways and also have enriched my understanding to make connections among those theories, to reject certain postures, to find out positive things from other theories and to become deeply interested in the L2 writing as a complex process.

My experience in Venezuela as an FL English teacher led me to reflect about certain fundamental issues on the L2 writing field such as the authenticity and purpose of writing in the FL classroom. The lack of authenticity and the limited occurrence of writing outside the FL have led many writing teachers and researchers to question and

debate the purpose and inclusion of writing in EFL classes. Reichelt (2001) states that in the U.S. there is “a lack of a unified sense of the purpose of writing within the FL curriculum” (p. 578). She also claims that FL writing professionals need to tackle several important pedagogical and political implications as a necessary condition to examine their assumptions and encourage informed pedagogical decisions about writing instruction. Among these implications I can mention: the influence of English as “the new world language” (p. 579), the relevance of FL writing in languages other than English, the role FL writing plays outside the classroom, and, inside the classroom, whether writing will be used in order to support acquisition or to work on accuracy, fluency, vocabulary and meaning. All of these elements become fundamental for our decision-making process. The dilemma then is this: why do we, as FL teachers, need to include writing in our classrooms?

My position, as an FL teacher, is that questioning the purpose of FL writing per se, without considering all of the complex factors that intervene in the FL writing process is useless. It could become a paradox, since if we use the same criteria to debate about the other modes of languages such as speaking, reading, and listening we might find ourselves with a bigger dilemma: why do we teach an FL at all? My position in this respect is strongly influenced by my experience as foreign language learner and teacher in Venezuela and in the U.S. I advocate and encourage writing in our FL classes as a way to foster literacy. As Emig (2003) states “writing represents a unique mode of learning” (p.7). Beyond learning and scaffolding the L2, students may also discover themselves as writers. Modern technology such as the internet and phone texting offer extraordinary opportunities to FL students to expand and develop their writing skills for authentic purposes and with authentic audiences in an FL, through the use of e-mails, as well as through social networks such as MySpace or Facebook. As Cimasko et al. (2009) state, the effects of globalization should cause an increased emphasis on FL learning.

### Research Questions

Considering these important issues and the fact that this study will render a descriptive account of four participants when composing in the L2 in respect to language-switching, it is my desire to conduct a qualitative clinical study of four L2 writers, using a think aloud technique in order to understand:

- a) What are the purposes of any language-switching that occurs during the participants' L2 composing process?
- b) What are these students' perceptions about their L2 composing processes and their use of L1 in L2 writing?
- c) What are the tensions these writers experience in their L2 composing processes during the study?

### Purpose of the Study

My study aims to explore the potential use of four (Meg, Katie, Carlos and Roberto) L2 adults' native languages (L1s) during their L2 writing processes using think aloud protocols. My goal is to render a descriptive account of their L2 writing processes and to understand the purposes for which these participants language-switch during their L2 composing processes. Additionally, I intent to depict the perceptions, understandings and tensions these four participants have about their personal L2 composing process and their L1 use when composing in the L2. Unlike code-switching, which usually refers to the use of more than one language in one communicative episode, language-switching refers to the act of switching from L2 to L1 during an L2 composing activity (Qi, 1998). Wang's (2003) suggests that "researchers who investigate L-S should be cautious that not all L1 use in L2 writing can be identified as L-S behaviors" (p. 369); since in previous studies "L-S has been misinterpreted simply as an alternative definition of L1 use" (p. 369), I am more inclined to follow Woodall's (2002) L-S definition. In this study a

language switch will be defined as a spontaneous, non-instructed switch from L2 to L1 during the L2 composing process. This switch begins with an utterance in the L1 and ends with the next utterance in the L2.

By combining think aloud protocol techniques with qualitative techniques such as interviews, reflective sessions, observations and field notes, this study will help me, on the one hand, understand the cognitive process which occurs in the participants' minds and, on the other hand, will allow me to understand the participants' insights and perspectives which occur during their particular composing processes. L2 composing process studies as well as language-switching studies have, for a variety of reasons, mainly been conducted from a quantitative point of view, focusing on the writing process itself, covering only part of the complex L2 processes. I consider it fundamental to approach a study from a qualitative lens and incorporate the writers' perspectives, a description of their behaviors and attitudes, to offer a more detailed account of what goes on during their composing process. As a way to complement the research done in the L2 writing field, Sasaki (2002) suggests a need for qualitative research to examine "the details of EFL writers' individual writing processes" (p. 79). Hence, it is my desire that this qualitative clinical study contribute to the L2 writing research field and, in turn, serve to challenge the common practices and assumptions among L2 teachers with respect to the use of students' native languages during the SL learning process and, in particular, the use of their L1s during the L2 composing process.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF LITERATURE ABOUT LANGUAGE SWITCHING

According to Leki, Cumming and Silva (2008), research in L2 writing has mainly focused on three broad issues: a) the contexts in which the L2 writing occurs, b) curriculum and assessment, and c) basic research on second language writing which includes: writer's issues, composing processes and texts. Research has shed light on different aspects of the L2 composing process such as the relationship between L2 proficiency and quality of writing (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Cumming, 1989), the allocation of time during the composing process (Roca de Larios, et al., 2008), writing patterns in L1/L2 (Zamel, 1982; Jones & Tetroe, 1987), planning in L2/L1 (Sasaki, 2000), restructuring within the L2 formulating process (Roca de Larios, et al., 1999), cultural patterns in L1 and L2 (Uysal, 2008), comparison of L1/L2 composing processes (Moragne e Silva, 1989), backtracking (Manchón, et al., 2000) and Language-Switching (L-S) (Friedlander, 1990; Qi, 1998; Woodall, 2002; Wang & Wen, 2002; Wang, 2003; Weijen et al, 2009), among others. In the following section I describe salient studies regarding the use of L1 in the L2 composing process (L-S) in terms of methodological designs and its most relevant findings.

Some misconceptions about the process of writing in a second or foreign language still prevail in our classrooms. Leontiev (1981) was interested in studying the common claim among educators that students needed to think in a L2 if they wanted to learn it. He suggests that this view is based on the mistaken assumption that thinking in a L2 and in the L1 involves a different kind of thinking. From my own experience as a language learner, I can attest that many SLA instructors and language teachers still consider that the only and most efficient way to teach writing in our classes is pushing students to think and write entirely in the second or foreign language. This belief is based upon the idea

that if foreign or second language writers do any of their work using their first language, that will inhibit acquisition in the second language and interfere with the generation of L2 structures (Friedlander, 1990).

In turn, this belief is rooted in the studies made on contrastive rhetoric (CR) which assumes the possibility of negative transfer from L1 to L2. Contrastive rhetoric also assumes the validity of the Sapir-Whorf hypothesis of linguistic relativity. The basic idea of this hypothesis is that each language is characterized by a set of rhetorical conventions unique to it and that these rhetorical conventions influence and determine the way people in those cultures think and write. The assumption is that students from different cultures are influenced by their cultural patterns and that this causes them to write in ways that are not native-like (Casanave, 2007). However, an opposite view is that only considering the student's written piece in his L2 does not necessarily indicate that he had negative transfer from his L1, since there are other factors that can cause negative transfer from the L1 such as the student's poor abilities to write in their L1. A number of studies have referred to cultural patterns and the transfers L2 writers make from their L1 to their L2. Edelsky (1982) states that writers transfer their knowledge about writing from the L1 to the L2 writing, and Jones and Tetroe (1987) suggested that ESL writers transfer good and weak writing skills from their L1 to English. It is my belief that it is not only fundamental to know the L2 writing process and investigate the reasons why L2 writers switch between their L1's and L2's but to understand the L2 writer's perceptions about this phenomenon. In the following section I present some of the most relevant studies in the field of language switching (L-S).

### Lay's Study

Lay (1982) was one of the pioneers who studied the use of L1 in L2 writing. Her study involved four Chinese participants and her purpose was to investigate the amount

of participants' L1s in their L2 composing and to discover patterns in the use of their L1s. In her study she reported that her participants seemed to use their L1 while writing about a topic acquired in their L1 and that the use of L1 helped writers to solve lexical problems. She also reported that the more frequent a writer language switches to their L1s, the better the texts in terms of organization and quality and that the use of L1 in L2 writing depends on the relations between the writer's experience and the topics. However, little is known about the overall methodology she used since she failed to describe all her data and methods in her study report.

### Cumming's Study

Cumming (1989) conducted a study using think aloud protocols to find out what aspects of the writing process writers pay more attention to and the kind of planning strategies L2 writers did. For this study, the researcher conceptualized a three factorial design which included writing expertise, ESL proficiency and tasks. The study involved twenty-three young adults who were carefully selected from a volunteer group so that the researcher could control potential intervening variables such as native language, culture, age, sex, among others. All participants were students in a French-English bilingual program in a major university in Canada. Participants were then classified based on their L2 (English) proficiency and L1 (French) writing expertise. Writing expertise was rated through holistic ratings and by self-ratings. Three levels of expertise were distinguished from this classification: experienced, average student and basic writers. ESL proficiency was measured by interview tests developed by the university. Two levels of L2 proficiency were found: intermediate and advanced.

After receiving instruction in think-aloud techniques, students met individually with the researcher to write three tasks in English for periods ranging from one to three hours. Participants were asked to think aloud in the language(s) they were currently

thinking. These sessions were taped-recorded. The tasks consisted in an informal letter, an expository argument and a summary of a booklet. These tasks were expected to refer to different levels of demands. Transcriptions of the think aloud protocols were selective but systematic. Transcription only included participants' decision making verbalizations excluding all other verbalizations such as the sounding out of phrases before or while writing or the reading of the written text. All verbalizations in French were verified by a second transcriber and differences perceived were resolved by consensus. The quality of texts produced by participants from the three tasks was rated holistically in terms of content, language use, and discourse organization. Texts were analyzed a second time for coding decision statements participants indicated they were paying attention to as they uttered the statements. A third analysis was made to code all the decision statements in all the think aloud protocols for the problem solving behavior.

In his study Cumming (1989) reported that students switched frequently from one language to the other according to their train of thought and he views L-S as a unique L2 strategy for problem solving. However, in Cumming's analysis, L-S was not the main topic to discuss and was embedded in a category he called "heuristic search-strategy" in which he referred to L-S as a code-switch (p. 94). In the study, he also found two different kinds of planners: the advance planners, and the emergent planners. The first ones framed their composition in advance and had previous background in technical writing, and the second ones, who enhanced their mental representations as the text progressed and who had a background in literary writing. Cumming suggests that writing behavior and "planning" in particular could be socially constrained.

#### Friedlander's Study

Friedlander (1990) designed a study with the purpose of testing a hypothesis that states that L2 writers will plan for their writing more effectively and write better texts

with more content when they are able to plan in the language related to the acquisition of knowledge of the topic area. In his study, 28 Chinese speakers at Carnegie Mellon University (CMU) were divided and randomly assigned to match and mismatch conditions. In the match condition, writers had to plan in Chinese for the Chinese related topic and in English for the English related topic. In the mismatch condition, writers had to plan in English for the Chinese related topic and in Chinese for the English related topic. A subgroup of students provided verbal think-aloud protocols during the two tasks. Students were also interviewed after their writing sessions. Students' task consisted of brainstorming and generating two written plans (list of points), one in Chinese (L1) and one in English (L2) to respond to two letters personally addressed to them, before writing the two essays in English. The Chinese topic was a festival called *Qingming* and the English topic referred to their adaptation in a new cultural environment and a different educational system in an American University (Carnegie Mellon).

These topics were presented in the form of letters written by the director of international student programs to the subjects who would provide important information to help the program prepare a group of American students for a future visit to China and to prepare a new orientation program for future new foreign students. As part of his analysis, Friedlander translated all materials into English and then focused on the time each student spent on task, how much they spent on the plan, the draft, and the revision, the length of plans and texts in terms of number of words. Trained raters evaluated the plans and essays using a holistic six-point scale and all data were analyzed using the SAS General Linear Models Procedure.

Results were presented through statistical charts, by group variables (match and mismatch groups), by topics (Qingming vs. Carnegie Mellon topic), and by language (Chinese vs. English). In the match condition group, students produced more details, wrote longer and better plans and essays and raters considered these essays superior in quality compared with those in the mismatch group. The results by topics reflected that

although writers produced shorter plans on Qingming, those plans were rated as superior to those produced on the English topic. The results by language independent of topic reflected few significant differences. In general, Friedlander indicated that writers benefit when they match the language to the topic. Using the first language when planning culturally related topics appears to allow writers to better retrieve ideas. From his study, he concluded that “ESL writers would be able to produce better texts and their writing would be enhanced if they plan in the language related to acquisition of knowledge of a topic area” (p. 123). ESL teachers need to be aware of the choice of topics related to the L1 or L2 in order to encourage students to use L1 or L2 to generate ideas for their L2 writing.

Although Friedlander’s main goal was to test the hypothesis stated before, through the think aloud protocols he found that some writers language-switched from English to Chinese and from Chinese to English. Such switching was linked to culture-specific terms and concepts, but mainly those writers used their L1 because of vocabulary difficulties or for terms that were clearly culture-based.

### Qi’s Study

Qi (1998) designed a case study with one participant to determine the conditions by which a high L2 proficient person switches to L1 as the language of thought in an L2 composing task. The participant involved in this study was a Chinese graduate student who went to Canada to study in a master’s program. She had been studying English for more than ten years at the moment of the study and her proficiency in English was measured by the TOEFL test in which she scored over 600.

As Qi (1998) defines a composing task as the “thinking processes that involve generating ideas or solving problems while developing the procedure or the result of a task” (p. 414), the composing tasks given to the participant included three types: a text

composition in English, a written translation from Chinese to English, and a Math problem-solving in English. Each one of these composing sets involved two tasks with different level demands: one less cognitively demanding and one more cognitively demanding. For example, the text composition consisted of writing a letter to a friend telling whatever the writer felt comfortable with and writing a composition in which the writer needed to argue her position in relation to a specific topic such as “divorce.” The translation task consisted of two written pieces that the researcher translated from English to Chinese and that the participant had to translate back to English. The math problem-solving consisted in two groups of problem-solving questions chosen from a book. One group of questions demanded only one of the basic operations and the other group demanded a set of operation beyond these four basic operations.

After being instructed in the think-aloud technique, the participant was required to work on the three composing tasks during three consecutive days. Each day, she was asked to work with one type of composing task with intervals of about four hours between the two tasks. The less demanding task was always required first. The participant did not use computers to write her papers since there was not availability to do so. She completed the three types of composing writing by hand. All the think-aloud sessions were tape-recorded, transcribed and coded. In order to validate his interpretations, the researcher conducted retrospective interviews with the participant at the end of each work session. The analyses involved examining the types of factors or patterns that might have influenced the participant's language-switching behavior during the composing tasks.

Analyses of the think-aloud protocols revealed that the participant used different approaches to complete the different tasks. In the letter assignment, the participant almost had no time to plan but she developed her ideas at the same time she composed her text. In contrast, in the argumentative essay, she spent almost a quarter of the composing time planning before starting her text. This planning required more time thinking and hence

more possibilities for the participant to language-switch. As the level of knowledge demand for each type of task was higher, the L1 use as compared with her L2 use increased considerably and consistently across all three types of tasks. Qi (1998) suggests that, for the participant of his study, the levels of knowledge demands have influenced her cognitive processing behavior, that is to say, when an L2 task is relatively (high-level) cognitively demanding, the participant tends to use her L1 for cognitive processing. In other words, L-S may be caused by high-level problem solving demands. Qi (1998) also concludes that L-S “facilitates rather than inhibits L2 composing processes” (p. 429).

#### Woodall’s Study

Woodall (2002) designed a protocol analysis of L2 writing from 28 adults (9 L2 Japanese, 11 L2 English, and 8 L2 Spanish) to study how language switching (L-S) was affected by L2 proficiency, task difficulty and language group. Woodall defines an L-S as the spontaneous, non-prescribed use of the L1 in L2 writing. For this research, Woodall studied 28 university students who were grouped by their L2 proficiency (14 intermediate and 14 advanced). L2 proficiency was determined by the students’ enrollment in ESL or foreign language classes. In addition, from the 28 participants, 13 were learning an L2 that was cognate to their native language (Spanish/English), and 15 were learning an L2 that was non-cognate to their native language (Japanese/English). Students were asked to think aloud their thoughts while producing two writing samples, a personal letter (easy task) and a persuasive essay (difficult task), whose prompts were created following Bereiter and Sacardamalia’s dual writing model which implies an easy writing task (knowledge telling) versus a difficult one (knowledge transforming). The frequency and duration of L-S were recorded in a form based on a coding scheme developed by Perl (1979). That form allowed the observer to indicate the general writing activity at the time of the L-S.

Each student wrote individually in a private conference room and was provided with paper, pens, and a bilingual dictionary. The think-aloud protocol was described and demonstrated prior to writing, and each participant practiced the procedure before beginning the actual writing task. Each session was observed, coded and videotaped by the researcher and each protocol session was observed at least one additional time by the researcher and a native speaker of the participant's L1. Statistical measures (ANOVA) were used to analyze L-S data. To measure the effects of L-S on text quality, the writers' L2 texts were graded independently and blindly by six raters who were asked to judge each text as a first draft using a holistic rating scale and when scores differed by at least two points, texts were graded a second time.

According to his results, less proficient L2 writers switched to their L1s more frequently than more proficient L2 writers, that is to say, that the more proficient a L2 writer is, the less he needs to language-switch to his L1. He also suggests that the duration of the language-switch will increase depending on the difficulty level of the task, that is to say, more difficult tasks increased the duration of the L1 use in L2 writing. Woodall also suggests that the cognate learners tended to get higher scores on their essays when they used their L1s for longer periods of time; the opposite was true for the non-cognate learners.

#### Wang & Wen's Study

Wang & Wen (2002) designed a study with a group of ESL/EFL writers with the purpose of establishing the relations between the uses of L1 in L2 writing, L2 proficiency and writing task. In this study, 16 female English major students in a Chinese university were selected from a voluntary group of 22 students. The researchers excluded the top and poor students among the 22 and chose four students belonging to each academic year

(freshmen, sophomore, junior and senior). These 16 volunteers had taken a compulsory English writing course in their major.

The writing tasks in this study consisted on two different writing genres. Students were asked first to write a story from a cartoon prompt and an argument from a prompt that asked the students' views on beepers and mobile phones a week later. For the two tasks, students were required to write no less than 200 words within 45 minutes. Each student had a 2 hour training session to get familiar with think aloud protocols. Students had the chance to think aloud and write in a quiet office. If students paused longer than 8 seconds without thinking aloud, a beeper signal was given to remind them to verbalize their thoughts. A retrospective interview was done right after the writing session was over. During that interview, the researchers encouraged writers to remember the purposes or motivations for what they did. All the sessions were audio-taped.

The think aloud tapes were transcribed and coded according to the various concerns the writers had and that the researchers identified. These categories were: task examining, idea-generating, idea-organizing, text-generating and process controlling activities. After this codification, quantitative analyses of the think aloud data were done. Researchers counted all Chinese and English words in each think aloud protocol and input them to the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) for descriptive and inferential analysis. Researchers also measured the effect of the writing task on L1 use through a paired-sample T test and examined the effect of L2 proficiency on L1 use by studying each group of students separately as they had different English proficiency.

Wang & Wen's findings reveal that students used their L1 during the L2 writing. Out of the 32 think aloud protocols, only one was completely in English- it is worth noting here, that there was no further discussion of this particular protocol. Students switched more frequently to their L1 during the first writing task than during the second. As the researchers categorized the protocols and analyzed the relations between the categories and the L1 use, they found among the five categories, students were most

likely to use their L1s when they were controlling their writing processes. As a general conclusion, results suggest that the amount of L1 use in the L2 composing process declines with the development of the writers' L2 proficiency. However, this decrease was neither regular nor constant; specifically, the decrease in the use of L1 between the juniors (group 3) and seniors (group 4) was smaller than between the freshmen and the sophomores.

### Wang's Study

Wang (2003) conducted a study focusing on language-switching with different language proficiency L2 writers. The study aimed to explore the relations between L-S frequency and L2 proficiency, and the L-S purpose. The participants of this study were 8 adults Chinese-speaking writers enrolled in an ESL school in Toronto. Students at this school are placed at different levels on the basis on their scores on a nationally standardized test called *Canadian Language Benchmarks Assessment*. For the study, the 8 participants were carefully identified through interviews, questionnaires, and classroom observations. Four students were identified as high level (HP) and four students as low level of English proficiency (LP). Students in the HP group also evidenced their proficiency by the scores they got in the TOEFL and TWE.

Data were mainly collected through two writing sessions; think aloud protocols, observations and retrospective interviews. Students were asked to verbalize everything either in Chinese or in English that went through their minds while composing. They were provided with pencils, paper and a bilingual dictionary during the writing sessions. The writing tasks consisted on an informal letter and an argumentative essay. Students met individually with the researcher in a private room for each writing session and wrote while thinking aloud. During both writing tasks, they wrote for about 30 minutes each session. The think aloud protocols were tape-recorded.

After each writing sessions, the researcher conducted retrospective interviews with the purpose of obtaining more information about the writers' patterns. The researchers explicitly asked students to explain how they planned their writing and what they were thinking during their pauses. The topic of L-S was not mentioned during the first interview in order to avoid carry-over effects on the second task. During the second retrospective interview, the researchers explicitly asked them to discuss why they switched to their L1s during their L2 composing. A questionnaire followed the interviews. All these data were recorded, transcribed and analyzed. Think aloud protocols were transcribed and coded following a three step pattern: a) segmenting utterances into units, b) identifying L-S sequences and c) categorizing L-S.

Findings suggest that participant's frequency of language switching varied slightly by writers' language proficiency. HP and LP writers switched to their L1s for three common purposes: idea generation, lexical searching, and metacomments. However, some differences were observed in their pattern of switching. HP writers tend to switch to their L1s mostly to plan and organize the overall content of the writing. In contrast, LP writers seldom switched for global considerations. Wang also suggests that highly proficient L2 writers can benefit from using their L1s, and that in fact, these highly proficient writers switched to their L1 more frequently than the low proficient writers during the two writing tasks. According to Wang, this result contradicts Woodall's study (2002) mainly because of the different ways in which they both manipulated and coded the language-switch. For Woodall (2002) a language switch was defined as the use of L1 in the L2 writing process, whereas for Wang (2003) a language switch was a "problem solving behavior" (p. 366). As a final consideration, Wang states that his study showed that the amount of bilingual writers' L-S is not reduced when their L2 proficiency has developed, as it is usually indicated in previous studies.

### Weijen, Bergh, Rijlaarsdam and Sanders's Study

Weijen, Bergh, Rijlaarsdam and Sanders (2009) recently conducted a study with a twofold purpose: to determine if the L1 is used to carry out specific cognitive activities during L2 writing and to determine the effect of L1 use on text quality and whether this is influenced by learner characteristics. For this study, 20 first-year English major students whose first language was Dutch voluntarily agreed to participate. Under think-aloud conditions, students were required to write four short argumentative essays in their L1 (Dutch) and four short argumentative essays in English (L2). The L1 essays were collected to determine the participants' general writing proficiency. Each student attended four individual sessions in which they wrote two essays on the computer. They were given 30 minutes to write each text but they were free to finish their writing before. All writing sessions were audio and video-taped. All writing tasks were designed for a made up essay contest in the local university newspaper, and topics were varied between tasks. Assignments also described the goal, the topic, and the target audience of the essay. Students were given four topics based on the participant number (odd/even) to write in English and then needed to write in their L1 on the other four topics. L2 proficiency was determined by a timed vocabulary test during the last session. Students were also given a Dutch version of test.

All L2 think-aloud sessions were transcribed and divided into segments by the researchers, based on the writers' behavior. The protocol segments then were coded using a coding scheme based on Hayes and Flower's (1980) model of writing. The coding was carried out by six coders who each coded 16 protocols. Some of the categories are: Rereading the assignment, planning, generating ideas, metacomments, pausing, formulating, evaluating, among others. As Weijen et al (2009) did not instruct student writers to use their L1 during their think aloud sessions, for the analysis they wanted to determine whether students used their L1 spontaneously. They also focused their analysis

on a number of conceptual activities for which writers are more likely to use their L1 while writing in L2: generating ideas, metacomments and planning. So researchers determined the proportion of L1 use for each cognitive activity in which a segment that contained one or more L1 words was considered an occurrence of L1 use. L2 essays were also rated by a group of L2 proficient raters on a holistic scale.

Findings from this study suggest that all writers use their L1s while writing in L2 to some extent, although that L1 use varies among writers. In addition, some activities, such as self-instructions and metacomments are more likely to occur in L1 than others. Findings also suggest that experiencing cognitive overload while writing in L2, this might cause them to revert to L1 use. This might explain why skilled writers are less likely to use their L1s. Proficient writers are less likely to use their L1 while writing in L2 than weaker writers and this seems to confirm that “general writing proficiency overshadows the influence of L2 proficiency on L2 writing” (p. 245). In relation to the effect of L1 use on text quality, these researchers concluded that L1 only appears to be negatively related for L2 text quality for Metacomments.

#### Other Studies

There have been some other significant studies within the L2 writing field which have enriched and contributed directly and indirectly with the development and understanding of the language-switching phenomenon. One of these is Roca de Larios, et al. (1999), who studied the restructuring within the formulating L2 writing process. In this study restructuring refers to the process of searching for alternate syntactic plans once the original one does not satisfy the writer’s needs for a variety of linguistic, ideational and textual reasons. They state that the use of L1 (L-S) during this restructuring process is of prime importance “as writers expand, elaborate, and rehearse ideas through their L1 and also backtranslate at times into their mother tongue to verify

that their intentions are being fulfilled” (p. 25). Manchón, Roca de Larios, & Murphy, (2000) studied the backtracking phenomenon within L2 writing. In this study, they suggest that due to their limited capacity of working memory and the high level of attention texts demand, L2 writers need to look back or rescan their written texts by reading, paraphrasing or translating the text into their L1. As this backtracking process may be done in the writer’s L1 or L2, it can be considered as an instance of L-S.

Guerrero (2005) also offers an interesting discussion of the historical and theoretical foundation of the concept of inner speech. Based on the studies of Vygostky, Sokolov, Leontiev and Cohen among others, she explores the relationships and connections of inner speech in the native language and in L2. As a silent self-directed speaking instance, inner speech is the main instrument for verbal thought and its use, during a highly demand cognitive process such as the L2 writing process, it is likely to occur (Guerrero, 2005). Murphy & Roca de Larios (2010) designed a study with seven advanced EFL student writers, with the purpose of exploring the writers’ strategies for lexical searches during the formulation writing process in L2. Specifically, they focused on the writers’ use of their mother tongue during those lexical searches. Results reveal that even at advanced levels of L2 learning, L2 writers have to work hard to find for the most appropriate words to express their intended ideas. They suggest that “as far as the sub-group of lexical searches is concerned, even writers who are at an advanced level of L2 proficiency resort to their L1 for different types of task” (p. 78). In a different study regarding classroom management, Kibler’s (2010) explores the ways in which first language use has the potential to facilitate communication in the classroom and also to allow students to demonstrate their rhetorical and linguistic expertise during L2 writing.

All the previous research studies presented here have contributed to determine fundamental issues within the L2 writing field and specifically in relation to the L-S topic. So far we know that L2 writers use their L1s at any point during their L2 composing process and that L2 proficiency, task difficulty and level demand are related

to the use and frequency of L1 in the L2 writing. We also know that the frequency and the duration of the language switch influence the quality of the L2 texts and that L2 writers may produce better texts if they plan in the language related to acquisition of knowledge of a topic area.

However, analysis of these studies has been mainly done through statistical measurements and although some studies have included retrospective interview sessions such as Qi's (1998), Wang & Wen's (2002) and Wang's (2003) studies, little from the participants' points of view has been shown, reported and discussed. Besides, most of the studies have focused on participants sharing only two languages; that is to say, participants in the different studies are homogeneous in the sense that almost all of them had a native language plus English as an L2 with few exceptions such as Woodall's study which included learners of Japanese and Spanish as second languages. It was my intention to design this qualitative clinical study, combining think aloud protocol techniques with qualitative techniques such as interviews and reflective sessions, with the purposes of incorporating the participants' insights and perspectives and to provide a description of their behavior and attitudes to offer a more detailed account of what goes on during their individual composing process. Participants' personal perspectives on the use of their L1s during the L2 composing process can contribute to a great extent to our understanding of the L-S phenomena and the L2 writing process in general.

Also I want to investigate two pairs of participants who speak different native languages; that is to say, my study will render a description not only of writers having English as a second language but native English writers who speak Spanish as a foreign language. There is an intrinsic connection between L2 proficiency and the geographical context where the L2 is learned, and hence, a connection between this and L-S phenomena is worth discussing. In the following comparative chart, I summarize the most relevant characteristics of the studies presented here, including my qualitative clinical study.

Author	Purpose of Study	Participants	Languages	Design	Writing Tasks	Findings
Lay (1982)	To determine the amount of L1 use in L2 composing and L1 use patterns	04 Chinese participants	L1: Chinese L2: English			Writers use L1 when topic was acquired in L1. More L-S leads to better texts
Cumming (1989)	To study: Aspects of writing and planning strategies	23 young adults	L1: French L2: English	Three factorial design: writing expertise, tasks and L2 proficiency. Think-aloud	3 writing tasks with different levels of demand.	Writers frequently switch from language according to train of thought. L-S is for problem solving.
Friedlander (1990)	Test a hypothesis: L2 writers write better texts when they plan in the language of topic acquisition	28 Chinese students	L1: Chinese L2: English	Match: To plan in L1 for L1 topics. Mismatch: vice-versa. Think-aloud/interview	Two tasks: brainstorming and generating two plans to respond to two letters.	Students wrote longer and better plans in match conditions. L-S was linked to culture specific terms
Qi (1998)	To determine the conditions by which a high proficient L2 person switches to L1 in L2 composing.	01 Chinese student	L1: Chinese L2: English	Case study. Think aloud techniques. Retrospective interviews	Three types: a composition, a translation and a math problem.	More demanding tasks involve more possibilities for L2 writers to L-S.
Woodall (2000)	To study how L-S was determined by language proficiency, task difficulty and language group	28 adults	L1 and L2: Japanese, English, Spanish	Protocol analysis Statistical analysis (ANOVA)	Two writing tasks: a personal letter and a persuasive essay	Less proficient writers switch more frequently. Duration of L-S depend on task difficulty. Cognate language learners scored higher when used their L1 for longer periods
Wang & Wen (2002)	To establish the relationships among uses of L1 in L2 writing, L2 proficiency and writing task.	16 female English major students	L1: Chinese L2: English	Think aloud Retrospective interviews	Two writings tasks: a story and an argument.	Writers use their L1 in L2 writing. As L2 develops, L1 use declines.
Wang (2003)	To explore the relationships among L-S frequency and L2 proficiency and L-S purpose	8 adult Chinese writers	L1: Chinese L2: English	Think aloud Observations Retrospective interviews	Two writing tasks: a letter and an argumentative essay.	L-S frequency is influenced by L2 proficiency. Highly proficient writers switch more frequently than low proficient writers.
Weijen, et al (2009)	To determine: the relation between L1 use and specific cognitive activities. The effects of L1 on text quality.	20 first year English major students	L1: Dutch L2: English	Think aloud	Four argumentative essays	Metacomments are more likely to occur in L1 than others. Proficient writers L-S less frequently than low proficient writers
My study	To understand what happens in four students' L2 writing processes. To explore L-S patterns.	04 undergrad students (02 and 02)	L1: English L2: Spanish L1: Spanish L2: English	Qualitative clinical case study: Think aloud, reflective sessions, interviews, field-notes	02 writing tasks: a personal letter, an argument/persuasive essay	

Table 2-1. Summary of previous L-S studies and my qualitative clinical study.

## CHAPTER 3

### RESEARCH METHODOLOGY AND DESIGN

The use of research approaches under the qualitative paradigm in the social sciences has increased considerably. This paradigm of inquiry seeks to understand and interpret social phenomena from an insider's perspective, and contextualize those phenomena into particular instances, as opposed to quantitative inquiry which seeks to make generalizations from specific phenomena and propose causal explanations. The qualitative design allows the researcher to contextualize, understand, and interpret social phenomena since the underlying assumption is that reality is socially constructed and social phenomena are complex and difficult to measure. Glesne (2011) states that qualitative practices "seek to interpret people's constructions of reality and identify uniqueness and patterns in their perspectives and behaviors" (p.19).

I am led to research models under the qualitative paradigm due to the nature of its characteristics:

a) Qualitative research allows us to study, describe and reconstruct the phenomena in a descriptive and detailed way with the purpose of establishing behavioral patterns and understand the community or the individuals. Reality is socially constructed. Qualitative approaches avoid setting a priori hypotheses; rather, they are generated from the collected data.

b) Description is a fundamental technique to understand and explain what is going on.

c) The process is more important than the result. During the process the researcher observes and looks for behavioral patterns. Qualitative inquiry looks for contextualization, to understand and interpret a given event or phenomenon.

Currently, different models are used to conduct research in the social sciences. Within the qualitative model of inquiry, the terminology used to designate the different models is diverse. In this respect Glesne (2011) and Merriam (2009) describe different approaches such as life history, grounded theory, case study, critical ethnography and feminist ethnography, phenomenology and action research among others. Each one of these approaches has special characteristics which account for different aspects of human behavior.

In the educational field, psychologists, anthropologists and ethnographers study and analyze the learners' interactions in natural settings. They pay special attention to the relationships and the processes of learning of all the participants in a community. The ethnographic model of inquiry has been long developed by generations of anthropologists and adapted to be used in the research of educational issues (Goetz & LeCompte, 1984). According to Glesne (2011) ethnography comes from the Greek *ethnos* meaning a people or cultural group and *graphic* meaning to describe and that this word literally means to describe a people or cultural group. Merriam (2009), states that "ethnography" is a form of qualitative research employed by anthropologists to study human society and culture" (p. 27).

This type of methodological approach allows researchers to get involved in-depth with the group or individual that they study in order to understand how they learn. Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein (2006) state that "ethnographic methodology considers the entire culture in which people live and interact, answering the broad question: 'What's going on here?'" Ethnographic researchers notice, record and interpret rituals, rules, behavior, materials and language within specific, particular settings" (p. 94). Though this research is not an entirely ethnographic study itself, I did use some fundamental ethnographic tools and principles during the data collection and analysis such as systematic observations, personal interviews and post-writing reflection sessions in order to observe, understand and learn about the participants' identities as persons, writers and

L2 users as well as to understand more about their entire L2 writing process from their personal points of view. The principles of the ethnography have helped me describe the participants' personal histories and their writing behaviors, that is to say, describe and understand their personal cultures.

### A Qualitative Clinical Design

My study has a qualitative clinical design, meaning that I approached data collection from a qualitative perspective within a clinical setting in order to observe the participants' writing processes very closely. According to Whitmore et al. (2004), in qualitative clinical studies participants "are individually engaged in experiences like Piagetian tasks..." (p. 295). The primary data collection method was a think-aloud technique in which students verbalized all their thoughts while they wrote responses to two prompts. This method gave me access to the particular cognitive processes that occurred in each participant's mind during the writing act. In my design, I also adapted common interpretive methods such as interviews, observations and reflective sessions with the purpose of observing in depth and exploring with the students their perceptions, beliefs and reasoning about their own second language composing process. Interviews, as well as reflection sessions, in which the informants and I reviewed a videotape of their think-alouds, enabled a more complete picture of what occurred during each informant's composing process and allowed me to understand the meaning these second language writers constructed from their unique and personal writing experiences.

Approaching the clinical setting (the think aloud during their L2 composing) from a qualitative perspective allowed me to study the think aloud protocol under a new lens, since this kind of technique is very frequent in second language research studies under the quantitative paradigm. Collecting data about cognitive processes is challenging since there is no concrete evidence of what goes on in the writer's mind during the composing

process, and although the use of think aloud techniques has been criticized for potentially distorting the nature of the writing process and for causing problems of validity and reliability (Faigley and Witte, 1981; Polio, 2003; Wang, 2003; Woodall, 2002; Zamel, 1983), the use of this technique was the most fundamental and appropriate research tool for the purposes of this study. As Krapels (1990) states, I believe the think-aloud technique provides useful data in this kind of research. In addition, the inclusion of the participants' personal perspectives and insights gave the study a qualitative trade mark. Figure 3-1 represents my methodological approach:

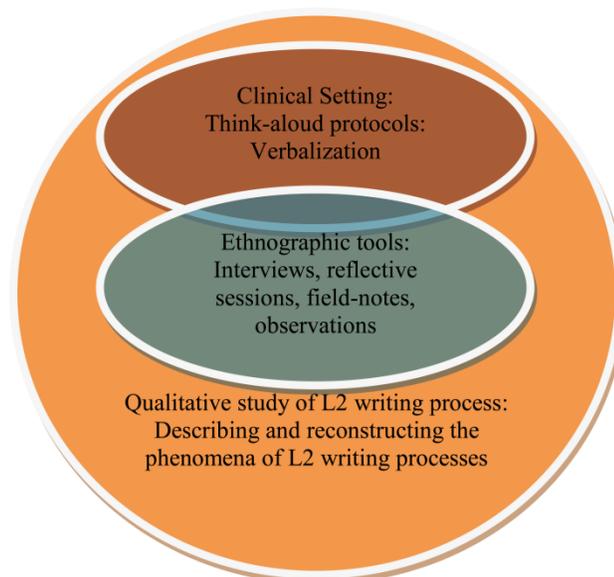


Figure 3-1. Diagram of a qualitative clinical think-aloud study.

### The Study

This study renders a description of four college undergraduate participants' composing processes in their second languages. The four participants in this study had

different interests and second language proficiency levels; they were also at different stages in their majors. They completed two writing tasks using a think-aloud technique, followed by one reflective session after each writing session. These reflective sessions were done through a stimulated recall technique. Additionally, I informally interviewed each participant at the beginning, that is to say, before the two writing activities and at the end or after they had completed the two writing activities and the reflecting sessions.

The total frame of time for recruiting participants and collecting these data was twelve (12) months. The actual period of time devoted for each participant was between three weeks and five weeks: three weeks, including the final interview for the two native English speakers, five weeks for the first native Spanish speakers and four weeks for the second native Spanish speaker during the Spring and Fall 2010 semesters. In the Spring semester of 2011, I contacted the participants via e-mail and met with them personally for member checking, that is, to clarify transcriptions and check part of the analysis done. These follow-up meetings, which lasted less than an hour, represented an attempt, on my part, to validate my perceptions as a researcher, and to get as close as possible to the participants' personal realities. To sum up, each participant was interviewed at the beginning, completed two writing activities, reflected on those writing activities through a stimulated recall technique, was interviewed at the end and met me once for member checking.

#### The recruitment process

The criteria to enroll the L2 participants for this study were basically three: a) to be an undergraduate at the university, b) to be a native English speaker with speaking/reading/writing skills in Spanish or a native Spanish speaker with speaking/reading/writing skills in English, and c) to be willing to voluntarily participate in the study. During the month of April 2010 and having obtained permission from the

Head of the Department of Spanish and Portuguese of a Midwestern university (I will call it State University from now on), I visited two writing classes and I recruited two native English speakers/writers who voluntarily agreed to meet with me to learn the details of the study. Having only three weeks left of the semester, once they orally agreed to participate in the study, I scheduled the initial interview and the think-aloud training for that same week.

All work sessions were set individually. As I had to adjust my planning according to their availability, I decided to schedule the two writing tasks and the two reflection sessions for week two, so that I could establish and use the same format for these two participants. During that second week, the two native English speakers had to do the first writing task on day one, the first reflection session and second writing task on day two - this being the busiest day of all - and the second reflection session on day three. As the spring semester finished by the second week of May, I could not recruit the native Spanish speaking participants until the fall semester of 2010 and though this pattern of data collection set the tone for the future participants, I had to make some arrangements due to their particular schedules. I conducted the final interviews with the two native English speakers by November 2010.

During the fall semester of 2010, my recruiting process was focused on obtaining two L2 participants who could fit the profile I was looking for, that is to say, undergraduates, with English language skills, and who were willing to voluntarily participate. At the beginning it was hard to recruit these participants since most of the international native Spanish speakers of State University are graduate students. Through conversations with the Director of the Writing Center, I obtained a list of 4 potential candidates who were active users of the Writing Center services. I enrolled one student from Costa Rica from these four. It was not until November 2010 that I recruited the last participant, a student from Mexico, through the Spanish Department.

These native Spanish speakers were scheduled to work separately since I did not recruit them at the same time, so I began working with the first recruit right away. Though I wanted to collect data in a three-week period with these native Spanish speakers as I did with the native English speakers, it was not possible to do so due to their hectic schedules. The participant from Costa Rica completed the first interview and the think aloud training in week one. In the second week he did his first writing activity, and during the third week, he reflected on writing task # 1, and wrote his second writing task the same day. In week four he reflected on writing task #2. His final interview was in week five.

Once the student from Mexico agreed to participate in the study, I met him for his first interview, the think-aloud training and the first writing task during the second week. The first interview and the think-aloud training were done the same day, and the writing task was done on a different day during the same week. Unlike the first native Spanish speaker who could write his first writing task in one week and reflect on this writing task the following week, I could not schedule the first reflection session with the participant from Mexico for the following week because it was the Thanksgiving break and the university was closed. The first reflection session and the second writing task were scheduled for the same day during the third week, and the final reflection session and final interview was scheduled for week four. The detailed schedule that I followed with all the participants during the data collection is shown in Appendix A.

To sum up, data were collected during the months of April-May and November 2010 with the two native English speakers and during the months of September, October, November and December with the native Spanish students. Despite the time constraints and differences in time length during data collection, all participants followed the following pattern: they wrote writing task # 1 on day one, reflected about writing task #1 and wrote writing task #2 on day two, and reflected about writing task #2 on day three.

## Place and participants

The interviews, writing tasks and the reflective sessions occurred in a small private room located in the Language Media Center of the State University. This private room, which is intended for conducting research, was a small, carpeted area with nine or ten wooden desks organized in a semicircle that faced the front door. Next to the wooden front door, there was a table in which a 42" monitor sat and served as the main screen for the DVD player, the VHS device, and the computer. I placed the video camera to the right of this table. There were two big desk chairs where we sat to watch and reflect about the writing activities or where I sat to observe the students' composing processes. There was a white-board on the left wall and a big dark curtain that covered the entire rear wall. The room was nicely illuminated with six day-light lamps on the ceiling. Figure 3-2 portrays the layout of the room:

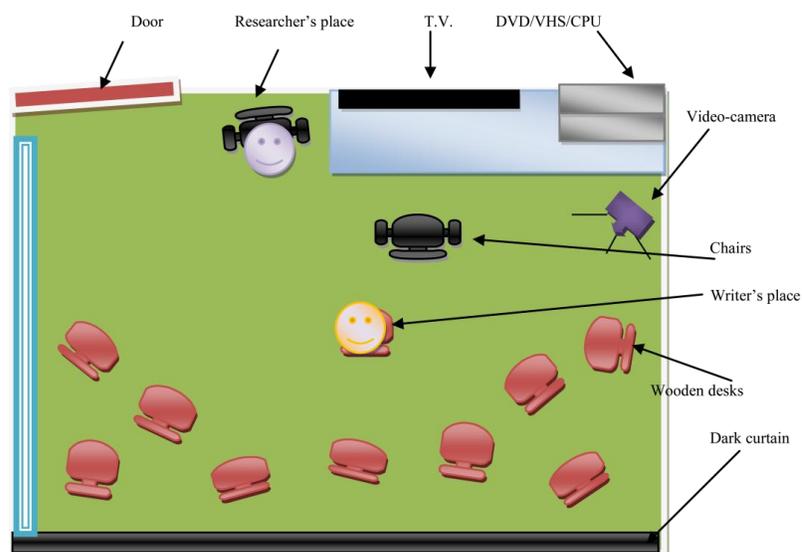


Figure 3-2. Diagram of room layout where participants wrote the two writing tasks.

The four participants in this study were two native English speakers and two native Spanish speakers. The two native English speaking participants, Meg and Katie, were required to write in Spanish as part of their academic responsibilities as undergraduate students in the Department of Spanish and Portuguese. At the time of this data collection, both students were taking a Spanish writing class. The two native Spanish informants, Carlos and Roberto, were expected to write in English to fulfill academic expectations in their academic courses. Carlos and Roberto were undergraduate students at the same State University, pursuing different majors at the time. Meg, Katie, Carlos and Roberto were the pseudonyms I used to refer to these students, using the initial letters of their real names and respecting cultural correspondence, for example, Meg and Katie are popular names within the American culture. Once I came up with these names and asked them what they thought, they all agreed with them.

The Spanish and Portuguese Department at this university offers two elementary level classes (Elementary Spanish 001 and 002) and two intermediate level classes (Intermediate Spanish 011 and 012). Depending on the level of their previous high school Spanish language studies, students are given a Spanish placement-test to place them either in the elementary or intermediate levels. For non-native English speakers, the University requires the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), which is one of the most recognized tests worldwide to validate L2 proficiency.

Though I neither controlled nor designed the recruitment in terms of L2 proficiency, but in terms of college level, native language and willingness to voluntarily participate, it is my belief that both couples of participants were not beginners as second language learners. Katie and Meg were at least at a lower intermediate L2 proficiency level, and Carlos and Roberto were more advanced L2 learners. My observation was based on their personal backgrounds and the requirements they had to pass to reach the point where they each were in their college studies at the moment of the data collection and considering their personal backgrounds as L2 learners. On one hand, Katie had

fulfilled the Spanish language level classes at the Spanish and Portuguese Department, a prerequisite for taking that particular Spanish writing class. Meg had been placed in the intermediate Spanish class after passing the placement test. On the other hand, Carlos and Roberto had taken the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL). The TOEFL passing grade for the University is 80 for the Internet-based test and 530 for the paper-based test. The participants varied in academic interests, second language proficiency, and majors, so I will briefly introduce each one of them in the following section.

Meg is an eighteen year-old, freshmen student from Naperville, Illinois, majoring in Spanish. Meg considered herself to be a high level Spanish speaker. She started studying Spanish when she was in sixth grade and she has obtained A's ever since. At college, a placement test placed her in the Intermediate 012. She says that Spanish comes naturally to her, and that her best friend Lisa, her boyfriend Marcos and his family are from Mexico. She is immersed in a Spanish-speaking context very often, using Spanish to communicate with her friend's and boyfriend's relatives and listening to Spanish music such as Bachatas and Reggaeton. Meg is very passionate about foreign languages in general and she expressed this in her initial interview when she stated, "...so I'm just around Spanish all the time... I've been to Spain, I lived in Brazil for a month, so I know Portuguese too, and I just like Spanish a lot better than English..."

Katie is a twenty-year old sophomore from northern Iowa, majoring in English with a minor in Spanish. She plans to get involved with publishing companies once she graduates from college. Katie started studying basic Spanish during junior high, but it was during her freshman year that she became more interested in the language. She was given a placement test and was placed in the elementary 002. So far she has taken three Spanish language levels at the State University besides the Spanish writing class she was taking at the time of the interview. Katie does not feel very confident with her Spanish proficiency, especially in writing. Although she considers herself a strong writer in English and is passionate about writing, she says that writing in Spanish is harder when

she tries to use her first language expertise in her second language writing, "... I wanna use words that I'm not experienced to it like I wanna... my English is more advanced than my Spanish and I try to incorporate that to my Spanish writing and I get confused..."

Carlos is a twenty-one year-old senior from Costa Rica, majoring in Music. He came to the U.S. with the purpose of fulfilling his higher education and plans to continue his graduate studies in the U.S. Carlos attended a Conservatory in Costa Rica where he studied not only music but Italian and English but, according to him, his foreign language classes were pretty basic. When he was twelve, his mother registered him in a private English school, but he was not interested in learning English until he was fifteen, when he enrolled in a different private English school where he learned the basics of oral communication. Even though he learned a lot in that class, at the end of it he still struggled to orally communicate in English. He was required to take English classes in the ESL Program of the State University during his first semesters. In order to cope with his lack of proficiency in English during his first experiences at the university, he tried to socialize as much as he could, "... siempre estaba tratando de hablar con todo el que pudiera, que si yo me sentaba en el comedor entonces yo le hablaba a todo el mundo, a todas las personas que estuvieran allí, entonces así yo me empecé a familiarizar más con el idioma... (... I was always trying to talk to anyone I could, if I was sitting in the dining table, I tried to talk to everybody there, that was how I got familiar with the language...)

Roberto is a twenty-eight year old senior student from Mexico, majoring in Political Science with a minor in Spanish. Unlike the other three participants, Roberto is married and has two daughters. He moved with his family to the U.S. when he was six and attended a bilingual school in El Paso, Texas. Although he has lived in the U.S. most of his life, he considers Spanish to be his native language. After he finished high school he started working in a cattle processing plant to make a living and provide for his family. After finishing her B.A. in Fashion and Design, his wife encouraged him to start

studying at college. Roberto is fully competent and fluent in both languages but prefers to speak Spanish most of the time except in school and in places where no one speaks it. However, as he did not receive any formal instruction in Spanish writing, he does not consider himself to be a strong writer in Spanish because of his lack of expertise with Spanish orthographic accents, "...En realidad, en los dos me siento bien nomás sé que en español nomás... lo único a veces es los acentos..." (... Actually, I feel pretty comfortable in both [languages] but I know in Spanish... the only thing is... the accents...)

### Writing tasks

Each participant was asked to complete two writing tasks in their second language using a pencil or pen and a notebook I provided. These writing tasks were intended to last no more than fifty minutes each, and participants had the chance to stop writing at any time when they felt they had finished their task. Bilingual and monolingual dictionaries were available at their disposal. The actual duration of these writing tasks differed with all participants ranging between thirty-two to sixty minutes. The writing sessions were videotaped as they were a fundamental tool for the following reflection sessions. As I explained before, on day 1 they completed their writing task, and in a different day they reflected about their previous composing process. Before they reflected on their writing activities, I watched and analyzed their videotapes with the purpose of asking questions about their particular processes.

The writing tasks had different purposes and levels of difficulty; that is, the first writing task consisted of writing an informal letter (considered an easier task) and the second writing task was composing an argumentative essay (considered a difficult task). To reach these levels of difficulty, these prompts were designed following Bereiter and Scardamalia's (1987) study. The topics for the two writing tasks were familiar to the

participants' own personal backgrounds and asked them to write about their opinions regarding a widely-discussed controversial issue in town at the time – a city government decision to limit entrance to bars to 21 years of age, known in the local media as the *21 Ordinance*.

In the first writing task, the participant was expected to write a letter as a response to a friend who had shown interested in studying a semester in the participant's home university. In that letter, the participant was expected to provide his/her friend with useful information about life in her/his home town and university. To increase the difference in difficulty between the two writing tasks, I included a list of specific information in the first writing task such as the description of the city, the weather, transportation, night-life, university campus, facilities and resources (see Appendix B) which were easy to follow.

For the second writing task, the participants had to respond to an invitation from the editor of the University Student Newspaper to write a column stating their opinions on a very controversial topic in town: whether they agree or disagree with the 21 Ordinance. It was implicit here that their audience for that essay was the editor and eventually the newspaper readers. In this argumentative essay, participants had to state their positions on the controversy and discuss the pros and the cons of the topic (see Appendix C).

My decision to design different levels of complexity in the two writing tasks was based on previous studies that suggested that more demanding tasks require more planning, more problem-solving and more opportunities “for writers to adopt a more knowledge-transforming approach” (Roca de Larios, et al, 2008, p. 35) and eventually, more possibilities for language-switching. Argumentation is seen as one of the most cognitively demanding writing tasks (Grabe & Kaplan [1996] as cited by Wang & Wen, [2002]). It was my assumption that significant differences might emerge in each participant's performance on the two writing tasks.

One of the most notable struggles I faced at the beginning of these writing tasks was that as the directions of these prompts were in both English and Spanish, Meg, the first participant to write (writing task #1), took an English version of prompt one (see Appendix D). This made her start speaking using her native language (English) which she herself pointed out during her first reflection session. Her reflection (in using her first language due to the prompt written in her first language) encouraged me to make sure she picked the second prompt (the argumentative essay writing task) written in Spanish, her second language. I followed this procedure with the rest of the participants, who were given prompts written in their second language. It should be noted that the translated version of the prompt was available in case they might need it. Had I designed a quantitative study, I would likely have had to get rid of these Meg's data.

#### Data collection methods

The think-aloud technique was the main data collection tool during the writing sessions, and different ethnographic tools, such as interviews, post-writing reflective sessions, video and audio-taping, field notes, personal reflections as a researcher, participant observations, written artifacts from students and their emails were also collected. In the following section, I will describe these data collection tools.

#### Think Aloud Protocols

The think aloud protocol is a technique by which writers are encouraged to verbalize all their thoughts and insights during their composing process for the sake of research. Basically, this kind of technique allows the researcher to find out what goes on in the writer's mind during the writing process and hence it allows us to understand how time is employed during the composing process, what the language of thought is during the L2 writing and what strategies writers use to cope with difficulties they may find,

including the use of the writer's native language during the composing process in an L2. Seen in this way, this technique can be extremely informative about cognitive processes in general. However, think aloud protocols have also been criticized; they are said to cause problems of validity and reliability since this technique itself could influence the way writers write and interfere with their normal composing process by slowing down people's thinking processes or interrupting their trains of thought (Faigley and Witte, 1981; Polio, 2003; Wang, 2003; Woodall, 2002; Zamel, 1983). Other studies in contrast have evidenced the versatility and benefits of using think-aloud techniques to collect data (Hayes & Flower, 1983; Raimes, 1989; Krapels, 1990; Sasaki, 2000; Sasaki 2002). Hayes and Flower (1983) state that think aloud protocols offer three fundamental advantages such as a) they provide direct evidence about the processes, b) they promote exploration due to the rich data and c) they can detect processes that are invisible to other methods.

I met with the participants individually to instruct them in the think-aloud technique before they completed the writing tasks. I explained the technique to them stating that the idea was to verbalize everything and anything that went through their minds, that is, all their thoughts while writing, even when these thoughts did not refer to the composing process itself (off-task comments), or while reading during the composing process. I also explained that I was going to use a beeping sound to remind them to keep verbalizing when they forgot to do so. After explaining the procedure of the think-aloud protocols, I asked them to write a mock text about their families for ten to fifteen minutes. I made sure that they audibly verbalized and I myself made a beeping sound any time when they stopped verbalizing for more than 5 seconds. At first they were surprised and looked at me when I beeped but after a while, they just smiled and kept verbalizing whenever they heard my beeping.

This training period was very informative, that is to say, I told them to stop and ask any questions they might have about the technique at any time, and I also asked them to stop writing/verbalizing whenever I felt I needed to explain important aspects such as

to speak louder, to verbalize more when they were hesitant and that it was okay to actually verbalize the fact that they may not have a clue what to write about, among others. So, during this instruction, they had the chance to start and stop writing and verbalizing many times. As I was interested in investigating the potential use of L1 during their L2 writing process, I decided not to model the think-aloud technique with the purpose of not influencing their choice of language (Manchón et al, 2000). During this instruction period, I did not mention the term language-switching to see if they would unconsciously language switch. I asked all participants one more time whether they needed to practice thinking aloud more, but no one seemed to need it.

During the actual think aloud, I had to use my personal beeping a couple of times with the native English speakers when they paused for more than 5 seconds on different occasions. I used a personal watch to keep time. I hoped that my beeping would not interfere with their thinking process. There was no need to use the beeping with the native Spanish speakers. The whole process was video-recorded with a Model DCR-SR45 Sony handycam, as the main source for analysis. My first attempt to code the think-aloud transcripts was to use a protocol form similar to the one used by Woodall (2000); however, I soon realized that this was not appropriate for the analysis I wanted to do. Instead, I introduced the think-aloud transcripts into the Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software called *Atlas.Ti* in order to organize, code and categorize the participants' L-S patterns, purposes and behaviors.

### Interviews

Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein (2006) define an interview as “a conversation in which key figures in your study talk to one another or to you” (p. 75). According to Merriam (2009), the main purpose of an interview is to obtain a special kind of information which

is in the informants' minds. In all qualitative-oriented studies, the informal interview constitutes an essential technique for data collection (Villalobos, 1999).

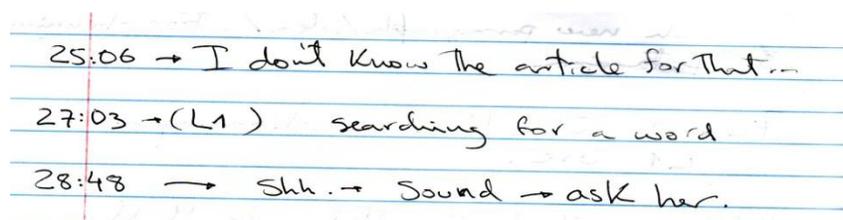
In this study, I used semi-structured interviews with the participants at the beginning and at the end of the research period, that is to say, before and after they completed the sequence of writing tasks and reflections. This allowed me to have a pattern of comparison about the students' assumptions and perceptions before and after the writing process. The first interview mainly focused on their backgrounds as writers and L2 users as well as their interests and personal and professional goals (see Appendix E). During the first interview, I did not explicitly mention the topic of language switching in order to avoid carry-over effects in their first writing task. I wanted to explore whether students used their L1s spontaneously. During the last interview I did refer to their experiences in participating in the project and asked them about their new perspectives about the process of writing in a second language and their use of their L1s (see Appendix F). For all these interviews I used an Olympus DS-3400 digital voice recorder which I placed on top of the table in the Media Language Center. In addition, I also met the participants one more time for member checking. In these individual meetings, we had a very informal conversation about the transcriptions and the analysis I had made so far and they had the chance to read these and listen to their audio-tapes. During the conversations I took notes which I expanded later. For the purposes of presenting this study, I translated to English all the Spanish spoken data

### Reflective Sessions

Many researchers have used reflective sessions as a way to collect data and understand the reasons why writers do what they do during their writing processes (Gas and Mackey, 2000; Sasaki, 2002; Wang, 2003; Uysal, 2008). This technique, which basically consists of offering writers clues (the video-taped data) with the purpose of

motivating them to recall their writing experiences, is known by different names such as *Stimulated Recall Interview* and *Retrospectives Protocols* (Gas and Mackey, 2000; Uysal, 2008). Gas and Mackey (2000) suggest that this kind of technique can be used “to uncover the cognitive processes in L2 research” (p. 19). Wang (2003) states that the use of stimulated recall is highly recommended in order to understand the reasons why L2 writers language switch “by offering L2 writers opportunities to interpret and reflect upon, rather than simply report, their writing experiences” (p. 369).

As I have already described, participants in this study completed two writing activities on different days. After each of the writing tasks, I watched the video-tape to determine significant moments during the composing process such as language-switches, non-verbal behaviors, inaudible voice, my failure to understand what they said, silent pauses and beeping, among others. I first transferred the video clips into my personal computer and wrote corresponding notes of the significant times in my notebook in relation to the video timeline, so that it was easy to locate the examples. For instance, when I found an interesting example in the video to discuss and reflect about, I usually wrote the time and a comment in my notebook. This comment could refer to the writer’s own words, a reminder for me to ask the writer something or a personal reflection about the participant’s behavior, such as in Figure 3-3: “25:06—I don’t know the article for that...”, “27:03—(L1) searching for a word” or “28:48—Shh- sound – ask her”.



25:06 → I don't know the article for that...

27:03 → (L1) searching for a word

28:48 → Shh. → sound → ask her.

Figure 3-3. Actual sample of the researcher note-taking.

After the writing event took place, I met the participants and asked them to read and check their written text so that they could express their perceptions about the text itself. I usually started with the question: “How do you feel about the text you wrote?” This gave them the chance to read their written texts and reflect about them and it also gave me the chance to set the tone for our reflection. It is worth noting here that I conducted these reflective sessions in the participant’s first language, that is to say, I initially spoke English with Meg and Katie and Spanish with Carlos and Roberto, unless they voluntarily switched for their L2s, as in the case of Meg and Carlos who occasionally switched to their L2s respectively. For the purpose of presenting this information in this study, I have personally translated to English the data I collected in Spanish.

I followed specific questions designed to help them reflect on their writing process in general (see Appendix G). After this interview was done, I invited the participant to watch and reflect on the specific moments I had selected previously. I first located the examples in the video and asked them to watch and then reflect about it. The duration of these reflection sessions ranged between 29 minutes and 45 minutes. This particular activity allowed me to understand in depth what was going on as they were composing their texts, the language of thought during writing, and the purposes of those language switches. Reflection leads students to insight and growth through self-evaluation of their own learning (Anthony, et al, 1991). This post-writing activity gave me a much better understanding about their thinking and behavior while composing in their second language. Those interactions were audio-taped and transcribed and their written texts (See appendices J, K, L, and M) were also collected as part of the data to analyze.

## Observations

According to Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein (2006), Goetz and LeCompte (1984), and Villalobos (1999), participant observation is one of the primary qualitative tools for data collection. The researcher dedicates the most amount of time possible with his participants in order to observe and understand their behaviors. The observer's role is to describe and analyze each single detail of the cultural behavior of the participants to understand them. The time for the researchers to carefully observe and the way they accomplish that task will influence their data. Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein (2006) state that "what you see depends on how you look" (p.84). A researcher needs to develop a specialized eye in order to know where, what and when to observe. Merriam (2009) presents a checklist of elements to be considered in a classroom setting, such as the physical setting, the participants, the activities, interactions and conversation, and ourselves as teachers.

My role as a researcher allowed me flexibility to accomplish different tasks such as observer and conversational partner. I carefully observed the sessions during which the participants were writing and thinking-aloud without intervening in their composing process. During that time I sat in a desk chair next to the table and I took notes on the current behavior they showed while writing. As I video-taped all the writing sessions, I had the chance to go over the video tape and observe more carefully the entire sessions. Although I had the chance to do some note-taking during the participants' composing process, in which I collected information about their physical behaviors, non-verbal attitudes (hands, eyes, mouth, body), noises they made while writing, external disrupting events such as the phone vibrating, among others, I had to go over my notes and the video-tape in order to incorporate more information into my notes when the students finished their writing.

After observations, researchers must rely on their memories to account for the details observed. In this respect, Merriam (2009) stresses that “there is an important reflective component of field notes. This reflective component is captured in observer commentary; comments can include the researcher’s feeling, reactions, hunches, initial interpretations, and working hypothesis” (p. 131). Glesne (2011) also states that “the field notebook or the field log is the primary recording tool of the qualitative researcher” (p.71). Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein (2006) say that “as teachers, we already have systematic ways to observe and interpret our students’ interaction and behavior; research questions and field notes are simply more formalized versions of what we already do” (p. 116). “Your notes will speak to you when you read them regularly and often. As you review them, you will begin to see recurring themes, images, metaphors and they will suggest patterns” (p. 59).

### Transcriptions

According to Mclellan-Lemal (2008), “transcripts generally refer to text records prepared from audio or video recordings” (p. 102). The transcription of audio and video sources as a method for making data available in textual form for subsequent coding and analysis is a popular, fundamental and widespread practice within qualitative research (Poland, 2003). Most of the data for this study came from the audio-taped interviews, reflection sessions and video-taped think-aloud protocols I collected from the participants, so after data collection, transcribing those data constituted a major task for me. I wanted to make sure that all the transcriptions were made following the same conventions and procedures; hence, I decided to do all the transcription by myself. Mclellan-Lemal (2008) states that qualitative researchers usually invest a great deal of time figuring out how data are to be collected and analyzed but less on the procedures for preparing, transforming and managing them, that is to say, transcribing them.

The fact that I collected and transcribed all these data meant that the transcripts truly reflected what was said in the interviews, reflective sessions and think-aloud protocols. However, there were few instances in which the quality of the audio was not entirely good or when the participants whispered or mumbled certain words or phrases that I could not hear or understand. In these few cases, I first highlighted the inaudible words or phrases and asked participants to meet me in order to go over the audio/video-tape and try to get their personal interpretation of what was said. This kind of member checking helped solve most of the cases I would not have been able to solve by myself. In this respect, Glesne (2011) states that “by sharing working drafts, both researcher and researched may grow in their interpretations of the phenomena around them” (p. 212).

For each of the four participants, I transcribed two interviews, two think-aloud protocols, and two reflective sessions which comprised more than sixteen hours of audio/video data and in turn corresponded to more than five months of hard work. I approached transcription following two steps. I first transcribed the interviews and reflection sessions using a denaturalized transcription style since my main focus was on the substance of what was said, that is, the personal perceptions of the participants. I avoided involuntary vocalizations such as hesitations and false starts and did not use special written conventions; however, these transcriptions do show the original word order and grammar. A denaturalized transcription implies the elision of idiosyncratic elements of speech such as pauses, stutters, and involuntary vocalizations (McLellan-Lemal, 2008). For this first part of the transcriptions, I used a special laptop with a foot pedal transcription system called Start-Stop and headphones which I borrowed from the university.

I then transcribed the think-aloud protocols using a naturalized transcription style since my main purpose with these data was to portray a detailed description of what was said and how it was said. McLellan-Lemal (2008) states that “naturalized transcription captures as much detail as possible” (p. 105). Furthermore, in these transcriptions, I also

adapted certain conventions to reflect when participants wrote, read, paused, spelled out and talked, among other things. A complete list of conventions used for the think-aloud protocols transcriptions is shown in Appendix H. As the special transcription system presented certain failures in uploading the videotapes, I continued the second part of the transcriptions using my personal laptop with headphones on in which I played and stopped the think-aloud sessions as needed while I typed the transcriptions into a desktop computer. A sample of Katie's think-aloud transcription can be seen in Appendix I.

### Analysis

I considered all the different pieces collected from the participants, that is to say, their written texts, the think aloud transcripts, the interviews, the audio and video-tapings, the reflective sessions, my field notes and the students' written texts for analysis. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992), data analysis is "the process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field-notes, and other materials that you accumulate to increase your own understanding of them and to enable you to present what you have discovered to others" (p. 153). For Glesne (2011) "data analysis involves organizing what you have seen, heard, and read so that you can make sense of what you have learned" (p. 184). My main purpose was to make connections among all the sources available and the research questions because "in qualitative research, no single piece of data stands for itself as evidence. Sorting data involves making connections among several related sources" (Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein, 2006, p. 141). I used a constant comparative method which implies a continuous comparison of all the data sources (Merriam, 2009).

As a main tool for organizing data in this research, I used a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software program called *Atlas.Ti*. The program encouraged me to be efficient. The versatility of the use of this computer program allowed me to easily

retrieve chunks of data as needed to compare and analyze. Glesne (2011) states that “the computerized speed allows the researcher to play with the data, sorting and trying out hunches to a much greater degree than manually possible” and that these programs “also provide clear audit trails that may be seen as contributing to the trustworthiness of the analysis” (p. 206)

As my first research question refers to the writers’ L-S purpose, I first coded and analyzed the think aloud transcripts as to find out whether these four L2 writers language-switched and determine their L-S purposes. For this initial analysis, I created two codes: L-S (language-switching) and Non-L-S (non-language-switching) to categorize all the writers’ use of their L1 during their L2 writing process and to discriminate an actual L-S from those uses of the L1 which were not considered L-S. In two windows on the laptop screen I had the think aloud videotape and the transcription, so that I could watch, hear and read their words at the same time. As I watched the videotape of each writing session I assigned any of these two codes to each word, phrase or sentence in the student’s L1 so that I could later retrieve all the L1 words the students used during their L2 writing process.

In the Non-L-S code I included those instances which did not fit into the L-S definition, that is to say, the non-spontaneous and instructed L1 use such as when writers used their L-1 to read their native language prompt, to refer to proper names in their L1, or to read from the dictionary in their L1s. As I have stated earlier, in this study a language switch is defined as a spontaneous, non-instructed switch from L2 to L1 during the L2 composing process and these L-S sequences were identified in the form of single words, short phrases or group of sentences.

*Atlas Ti* allowed me to retrieve all the instances of L-S of each participant, so I could keep track of the total number of words each participant verbalized, the total number of words in L1 and in L2 and the total number of language-switches. As I was interested in estimating the total number of words and the total number of L1 words in

each transcript, I filtered and excluded all false starts, ellipsis and hesitations such as “um” or sibilant sounds “shh” they made during the think aloud. This decision was based in the fact that the Word program, which I used to transcribe the think-alouds, assumes and counts these ellipsis, false starts and hesitations as real words and this could reflect an erroneous estimate of the total number of words. Contractions such as “we’ll” or “I’m” were counted as only one word to make the estimate more accurate and systematic.

Second, I reviewed the transcripts of each participant individually and retrieved all the L-S events so that I could compare these L-S events with the corresponding videotape and then decide what code to assign to each L-S depending on the purpose for which that L-S was used. As I watched what the writer was doing in each L-S event, I assigned new codes referring the actual activities or behaviors the writers showed in that specific moments such as looking for a word in the dictionary, wondering what to do next, planning and organizing their written text, revising, examining the task. So I created general codes, such as: a) Generating L2 Content in which I included the sub-codes referring to mechanical translation and lexical searches. Within the lexical searches I also sub-coded problem focusing, self-questioning, and metalinguistic concerns, b) Controlling the Process of Writing, to refer to those moments when the writer planned and organized what to do, c) Revising, to refer to those instances when the writer edited, mechanically backtranslated and purposely backtracked during the L2 writing process, d) Task Examining, to refer to those moments in which the writer was reading the L2 prompt to comprehend what the assignment was and e) Others, which refers to those comments which were not related to the task such as one comment Katie made when her cellular phone vibrated during her writing process. Moreover, although the beeping sound I used with Meg and Katie does not refer to a L-S purpose, I also created a new code named Beeping to analyze whether my beeping affected or influenced their L1 use or not. It is worth noting here that although I used the same general codes for all of the participants, I distinguished each one of them with a specific nomenclature using the

event, the participant's initial and the activity number such as L-S (K1) which refers to an L-S instance corresponding to Katie during the first writing activity or REVISING (M2) which refers to an L-S in which Meg was revising the text in her second writing activity. The software also allowed me to quantify the number of words each writer devoted to L-S with respect to the total amount of words they used in the writing task and the total number of switches. I also established a percentage estimate of the language switches regarding their purposes; that is, I could estimate the percentage of each purpose (Generating L2, Controlling process of writing, Revising and Task-examining) within the total number of language-switches. The following list is an example of all codes during Katie's first writing activity:

- L-S (K1)
- Non-L-S (K1)
- GENERATING L2 CONTENT(K1)
  - ✓ Direct Trans (K1)
  - ✓ Lex Search (K1)
    - Self- Q (K1)
    - Problem-Focusing (K1)
    - Metalinguistic (K1)
- CONTROLLING P /W (K1)
- REVISING (K1)
  - ✓ Mech Backt (K1)
  - ✓ Purposeful Backt (K1)
- TASK-EXAMINING (K1)
- OTHERS (K1)
- BEEPING (K1)

The next step was to code the reflection sessions of the four participants. I created new codes to refer to Meg, Katie, Carlos and Roberto's personal perceptions about their writing experience, such as: a) L1 USE, b) PROMPT, c) THINK ALOUD DIFFICULTY, d) SELF-WRITER, e) TIME CONSTRAINTS, f) L2 WRITING PROCESS, g) L2 PROFICIENCY, h) L2 LEARNER, and i) TENSIONS. In these reflective sessions I looked for specific examples, such as excerpts that referred to language switching (L1 USE) or diverse problems they encountered during the writing process (TENSIONS). I also coded their personal interviews with codes such as a) FAMILY, b) HOBBIES, c) EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND, and d) WRITING HABITS with the purpose of organizing their specific information regarding these topics. As Chiseri-Strater & Sunstein (2006) state "You need your informants' words to support your findings" (p. 124). During this analysis, I also included other data such as the participants' L2 written texts, which I manually counted to verify the total number of words of each one of them (excluding those words that were crossed out), and my field-notes to compare and contrast them. These constant comparisons helped me organize all the data in broader categories such as participants' personal portrayals, educational and L2 backgrounds, identity as writers, L2 writing process, L-S occurrences, and Tensions. As qualitative data analysis is dynamic, it is important to categorize and analyze all these data as they emerge.

### My Role as a Researcher

My role as a researcher was of an observer-participant. The degree of each one of those roles depends on specific variables, such as the kind of inquiry, the context of the study and the researcher's theoretical perspective (Glesne, 2011). My role during the clinical setting, that is, during the writing task and think alouds, was mainly as an observer. During those observations, I took note of every single detail that occurred while

they wrote such as the participant's behavior, the language they were using, matching the time with any L-S instance in order to discuss it later, among others. My intention was to interfere the least during their L2 writing process; one exception to this was when I had to use my beeping a couple of times with the native English speaking participants to remind them to verbalize. During the reflective sessions and interviews, I became more of a participant since those were informal conversations intended to deepen a bit more into their L2 writing processes.

From the onset of the study, I knew I needed to build trust and rapport with the participants so they could feel relaxed when reflecting and providing information during their reflections and interviews. Getting closer to them and gaining their trust and confidence was essential to understanding their personal perceptions, and to better portray them as persons and writers. To accomplish this rapport, I introduced myself, from the start, as a student from the same university they were attending and as a person who shared their same interests as second language users. I asked them to call me by my name and I called them by their nicknames they were comfortable with. In every informal conversation we had, I always treated them as peers, and we exchanged opinions about our personal lives and our academic duties during the semester.

As the main task of a researcher within the qualitative paradigm is to describe and interpret the events and cultural behaviors of the participants, it is of paramount importance to be aware of the personal assumptions and considerations that the researcher brings to the research site. These assumptions may affect and bias the analysis. As a foreign/second language speaker and writer and L2 writing teacher myself, I had preconceptions about the L2 writing process and the L2 writer's habits that could potentially prevail in my analysis. I assumed, for example, that a learner of English as a foreign language in Venezuela tends to language-switch more often than a learner of English as a second language, and that as an L2 learner I always wanted to impress others by using exclusively my L2, even though sometimes I needed to switch from one

language to another to compensate for my lack of L2 proficiency. Lerner (2002) states that: “we bring a set of assumptions or an ideological framework that can overwhelm our attempts to understand what we observe” (p. 54). Lerner also refers to the need of negotiating these assumptions in order to give them the chance to stand by themselves as he put it: “we must articulate these assumptions.... in order to allow our observations an existence of their own, apart from (or alongside) our powerful biases and preconceived notions” (p. 54). I was aware of my own preconceptions but at the same time I was also aware of the need to negotiate with the participants and moderate the influence of those preconceptions during the data analysis. As a way to compensate the participants’ time for this study, I offered them my help as a reader for their academic papers; however, I had no requests for help.

The qualitative clinical think aloud perspective was an effective methodological approach for my study. The data included transcripts from think alouds, reflective sessions, interviews, and field notes from my observations. The Computer Assisted Qualitative Data Analysis Software called *Atlas.Ti* supported my detailed and systematic analysis of the data. My role as a researcher was described in the last section.

## CHAPTER 4

### THE NATIVE ENGLISH SPEAKERS

This chapter aims to describe the two native English speaking participants in this study, Meg and Katie, and their L2 composing processes. I will render a portrait of each and describe their performances during the two L2 writing tasks. In doing so, I will describe the purposes of their language switches and their tensions, perceptions and understandings of their personal L2 writing processes.

#### Meg: The future Spanish teacher

##### A personal portrait

“Yeah... Spanish... I’m pretty sure that’s what I wanna do” These were some of Meg’s words when she described her expectation to become a Spanish language teacher in the future. Meg is an eighteen year-old-freshman from Naperville, Illinois, majoring in Spanish. She is 5’8”, has black long hair and wears glasses. Her personal trademark is a habitual smile that makes her look happy all the time. Meg is passionate about foreign languages in general and likes to practice her Spanish with her boy-friend and with Kelly, her Mexican friend. As she put it, “Sometimes it’s Spanish, and especially when it’s like, family party with his relatives and stuff is Spanish, and then with my best friend, his mom doesn’t speak any English so I speak Spanish mainly when I’m at their house.” Meg considers herself to be a high level Spanish speaker and said that the Spanish language came naturally to her. In her free time, Meg liked running and listening and dancing to Spanish music such as Reggeton and Bachata.

Meg is the second child in a family of four children. She has two brothers and a sister. At the time of data collection, her older brother studied English at the University of

Illinois and her younger brother was a junior in high school. Her younger sister, the youngest in the family, was a sophomore and attended the same high school as her brother. Meg said her sister is a very strong reader. Meg's father is the general manager of a packaging company, and her mother is a businesswoman who plans to open a clothing store in her home town. Meg's family have always lived in Naperville, and she tries to visit them twice a month as she enjoyed her mother's food a lot.

Meg completed her elementary and high school education in her home town, and although she was good at and liked other subjects at school, she said the class that she enjoyed the most was her Spanish class. Meg was really attracted to learning foreign languages ever since she was in sixth grade, when she started learning the basics such as numbers and colors, but it was not until her sophomore year that she could orally communicate in Spanish. Reflecting about her natural ability to learn and use foreign languages she commented, "... I've been speaking Spanish I mean learning it since I think I started sixth grade, I took an *Intro to Languages* and it was like, I think Spanish, French and maybe Italian or German or something and in seventh grade I took Spanish and then I ever since I got an A in it, and all is like, okay this is so easy and it just came so naturally to me so then I took, I just got taking it and taking it and every single class that I would take in Spanish I would just get an A, so it was just so easy to me and my best friend is from Mexico and my boyfriend and his family they're from Mexico, so I'm just around Spanish all the time, I've been to Spain, I lived in Brazil for a month so I know Portuguese too, and I just like Spanish a lot better than English..."

Meg came to State University with the firm intention to start a major in Art History but during her first semester, she changed her mind and started majoring in Spanish in order to teach Spanish someday. A test placed her in the writing course intended for advanced Spanish students who have fulfilled the language class prerequisite. Meg planned to study education to eventually become a high school Spanish

language teacher. At the moment of data collection she was taking Rhetoric, Spanish Writing, Spanish Reading and Spanish Linguistics.

#### The second language user

As a second language user, Meg was very motivated; she liked to take advantage of any chance she had to use Spanish. She constantly forced herself to write, read, speak or listen to anything in Spanish. She labeled herself a “high level” Spanish speaker, considering the few chances opportunities to practice in the U.S Midwest. However, Meg also recognized that she had a lot of work to do with her Spanish and that she had some struggles with Spanish sometimes, “I mean my Spanish obviously isn’t perfect so I still struggle with it.” During her first interview, she reflected about her natural connection with foreign languages, especially with Spanish, “It just was easy for me I mean I do I love languages, Portuguese I love it, I love Italian, I took Italian last semester I loved it, that was one of my easiest classes, I wanna start learning French like I can I can pick up on languages if I like hear someone speaking French or I mean if I like especially with like looking at languages, if I can see something in a different language I can kind of like decipher what they are trying to say so, but I mean with Spanish I just I don’t know, it comes so naturally to me so I just like kept taking it and I mean it would just make more sense to me like, like looking at a backpack I don’t think ‘backpack’ I think ‘mochila’ like I don’t know my brain just functions in Spanish.”

Meg’s Spanish skills improved because she liked to use Spanish for real purposes as much as she could. Goodman (1989; 2003) as well as Freeman and Freeman (1992; 1998) suggest that learning language is easy when it is used for authentic purposes. Meg said that she enjoyed texting her boyfriend and posting messages in his Facebook profile in Spanish. She also enjoyed writing song lyrics, or letters in Spanish and talking with Kelly. When describing her Spanish environment she said, “I’m constantly like either like

listening to Spanish music, like watching Spanish soap-operas like I'm always surrounded by Spanish, it's sometimes a little awkward because I like kind of mix in Spanish structures to it, and I don't see anything like I mean even when I'm just speaking with my friends and stuff I say like like I can't even think like instead of saying 'last night' I'll say 'yesterday night' or like I'll just you know my words just get really confused."

### The writer

Meg said she usually needed some time to get ready to write and usually prepared an outline prior to writing; she confessed to be an "outline-kind of person." During our first interview she said, "I'm an outline kind of person, I can't start just from nowhere, I have to like have a basic idea." Meg also said that it was her fourth grade teacher who encouraged her to become a better writer. She did not remember what he did, but she remembered that she started liking writing a lot more ever since that year. As she put it, "I started liking writing in fourth grade, my teacher, I hated writing and then my teacher in fourth grade made me like it, he like encouraged me to write more and be a good writer." She said that she felt more comfortable writing in Spanish than in English: "I guess I hate writing in English now like I have a paper due tomorrow (laughs) in English and I'd rather write a Spanish essay than an English essay." I asked her to expand more on her comment, "I mean I think it's because in English they make you write about more complex things and you really have to analyze everything and I just I just don't I don't know, I just find it harder and like forming my sentences." Meg's perception of the complexity of English writing tasks could be explained by her native English speaking and writing proficiency; her expectations were for more elaborate and complex written texts in English that she was not able to accomplish with her current Spanish proficiency. In addition, her full understanding of how her native language worked allowed her to

develop a deeper level of critical thinking. Although she was competent in her L2, she was still in the L2 learning process as she suggested before.

Meg perceived that her processes to write in English and Spanish were different. She was more attracted to Spanish language and she said she felt more confident writing in Spanish since she thought English writing needed more complex syntax. Although my question referred to her perceptions about writing in Spanish and English, her comparison was directed to the languages differences. In this respect she said, “I think it’s different I think Spanish is more beautiful and it’s and it like flows more than English, the English language is so confusing, I mean, you probably can agree to that, it’s really confusing in the way structure... it is just confusing to me.”

Meg was so drawn to Spanish, and felt so much more comfortable writing in Spanish that even for English classes she was likely to write academic papers in Spanish “Sometimes what I would do is write it in Spanish and then translate it into English.” However, she also confessed that the translation process was very hard since she sometimes did not know how to translate certain ideas from one language to the other, “It was difficult... it’s hard to it’s hard for me to translate Spanish into English, I feel that there’s some phrases and words in Spanish that we don’t express in English.”

#### Meg’s L2 writing process

During this study, Meg participated in two Spanish writing tasks, using a think aloud technique. The first task was a personal letter as a response to a friend who had shown interest in studying a semester in her home university. The second was an argumentative essay responding to an invitation from the editor of the university student newspaper stating her opinions on a very controversial topic in town: the potential passing of what was referred to as the “21 Ordinance”: “*Should the legal drinking age be reduced to 18 in the city bars, or should it remain 21.*”

During both L2 writing activities, Meg showed interesting writing behaviors. In the following section, I will provide an overview of Meg's L2 writing habits, especially those regarding revising, planning, writing expertise and L1 use, as her most salient personal characteristics of her L2 writing habits. Next, my three research questions organize a discussion of findings about Meg's L2 writing process in terms of language switching (L-S) purposes, Meg's perceptions about L2 writing and L1 use, and Meg's tensions during L2 writing.

Though an ideal process of writing is thought to be composed by three recursive sub-processes such as planning, writing (formulating/translating) and revising, some writers could skip one or more of these sub-processes due to individual or cultural writing habits. Roca de Larios et al (1999) claim that "formulation is the only non-optional component of writing" (p.14). During Meg's L2 writing process, she evidenced all these sub-processes with particular characteristics. Although Meg constantly revised and edited her text as she wrote, I did not observe her revising the entire text as a final step of her composing process as other participants did.

According to Hayes & Flower (1983), planning includes "the whole range of thinking activities that are required before we can put words on paper" (p. 209). They also suggest that planning is a unique thinking process that is used by writers over and over during the composing process (Flower & Hayes, 1981). Meg's planning habits differed greatly from the first to the second writing task. In the first writing task, Meg wrote a six-paragraph letter of 318 words and her plan took no more than 2 minutes out of 33 minutes, whereas in the second assignment, a five-paragraph argumentative essay of 354 words, she spent almost a third, or almost 19 of 60 minutes, of the composing time planning before starting her text. This difference in time can be appreciated according to the different length of the two plans she wrote. The first one was short and occupied 8 lines on the same page as her letter, but the second plan occupied the entire page. In Figure 4-1 are the outlines she prepared for the two writing tasks:

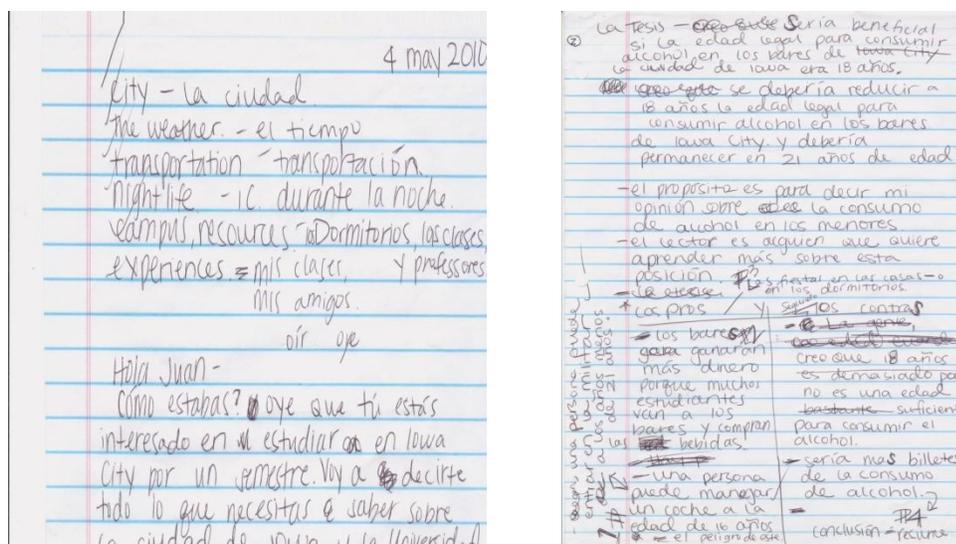


Figure 4-1. Meg's outlines for the two writing tasks.

Meg reflected about the reasons why she spent more time planning during her second writing task, “I think it’s because it was, I guess there was more to talk about its argument so there is, you know you can talk about the pros and then you can talk about the cons so I had to like make a list of all like the good sides and then I had to make a list of all bad sides, and I just had like be organized with what I wanna talk about in my paragraph ‘cause with the first essay it was more like, it was just a letter, an informal letter and I could just write about whatever.”

As a writer, Meg usually transferred her writing skills from her L1 to her L2 writing process. L2 writers transfer L1 skills and strategies to approach the L2 process of writing and these transfers, from L1 to L2, play a central role in L2 writing (Jones and Tetroe, 1987; Friedlander, 1990; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992). As part of this expertise from her L1, Meg tried to figure out the best way to start her argumentative essay and this implied her constant search for ideas and L2 lexical searches. After jotting some ideas to

organize her writing and develop a thesis statement she had three false starts, shown in Figure 4-2.

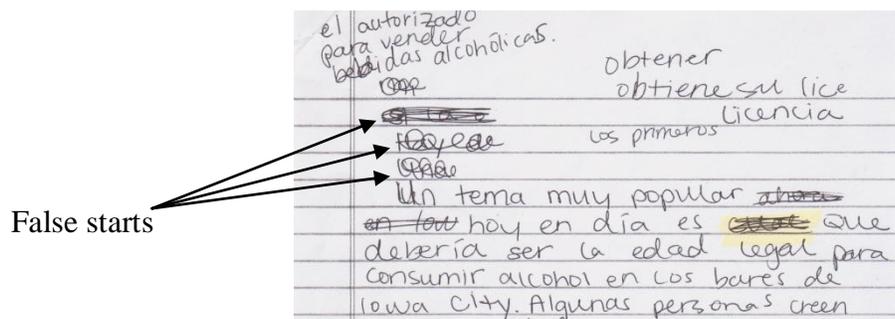


Figure 4-2. Excerpt from Meg's second L2 written text with 3 false starts.

Meg constantly showed her writing expertise during both writing tasks as she planned, organized and revised her written text. The following excerpt from her think aloud protocol shows Meg's expertise as she organized her ideas in the various paragraphs for the second essay. Regular font represents when she spoke without writing or reading and bold font represents L-S instances.

- “okay... these should be... paragraphs by themselves... um... but that should be the... the sec- and maybe this can be the first paragraph... paragraph one... and then... los bares ganarán... okay... las fies-... las fiestas... en las casas... that... would be... that could be third paragraph... three: ... and then this one could be: ... paragraph two... maybe I can combine them... and then this one can be the last one... as the contrast and statement... so probably paragraph four... and then just add the conclusión...”

Previous research studies suggest that more demanding tasks require more planning, more problem-solving and more opportunities “for writers to adopt a more knowledge-transforming approach” (Roca de Larios et al, 2008, p. 35). In Qi’s (1998) study, the levels of knowledge demands influenced his subject’s L2 cognitive processing behaviors; that is to say, when an L2 task was relatively cognitively demanding (high-level), the participant tended to use her L1 for cognitive processing. This seems to be true in Meg’s case during her two L2 writing tasks in which she frequently used her L1 to approach the L2 writing process. During her first think aloud, I identified 81 L-S sequences. From a total of 1,676 words, Meg verbalized 649 words in English, which represented a 39% of the total number of words, and 1,027 words in Spanish, which represented 61 % as it can be observed in Figure 4-3:

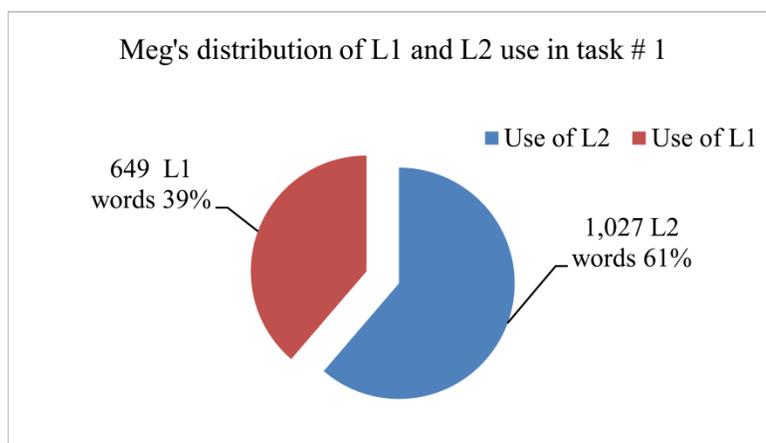


Figure 4-3. Meg's L1 and L2 use distribution during writing task # 1.

It is important to note that the directions for the prompts were in English and Spanish. For her first writing task, she took the English version which influenced Meg to

use her L1 (English) during the beginning of the first L2 writing task. As she commented in her first reflection session, the English prompt strongly influenced her to use her L1, “I think it’s because the prompt was in English, I think if it was in Spanish I would’ve outlined in Spanish.” Meg first jotted some bullets with the ideas from the English prompt and then she translated them to Spanish. I asked her if that was her natural behavior when she wrote in her L2 and she answered, “No I’m... ’cause normally my prompts are in Spanish, so I just automatically I read it in Spanish so I started thinking in Spanish so I start outlining it in Spanish, but if it is in English then I start thinking in English about it.” Manchón et al (2009) state that “switching to the L1 is without doubt one of the most characteristic features of L2 writing” (p. 114), and as can be seen, L-S may be influenced by different external factors. In this study, the beeping sound I made to alert Meg to think aloud and the language in which prompts were written influenced and encouraged her to use her L1 during her L2 writing process.

During the second writing task, the argumentative essay, I identified 136 L-S sequences in the form of single words, short phrases or group of sentences, meaning Meg’s language switches increased during the second writing task. It is worth noting here that although the percentage of L1 use decreased from 39% to 24% from the first to the second writing task, the total number of words in her second think aloud protocol increased to 2,804, which is higher than the number in her first writing task (1,676). This fact directly influenced the decrease of the percentage of L1 use in the second writing task. During her second writing activity, Meg verbalized 683 words in her L1 (24%), and 2,121 words in her L2 (76%). It is interesting that the number of words in the L1, as well as the number of L-S increased. These data suggest that as the level of knowledge demand in the argumentative essay was higher, her use of L1 increased in the second writing task. Figure 4-4 compares Meg’s use of L1 and L2 during her second writing task.

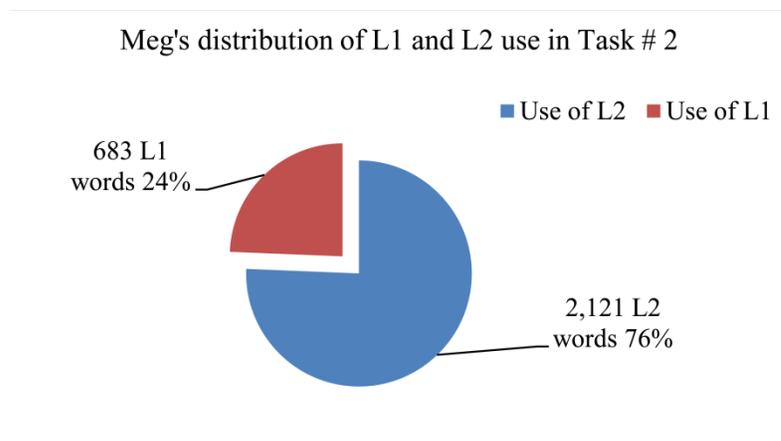


Figure 4-4. Meg's L1 and L2 use distribution during writing task # 2.

This being said, next I discuss findings about the nature of Meg's L-S purposes, her perceptions about her own L2 writing, her use of L1 while writing in her L2 and the tensions she faced during that process.

#### Meg's purposes for language switching (L-S)

During the L2 composing process, the use of the L1 may appear in different forms, can be influenced by different factors and may serve different purposes such as to generate ideas in the L2, to control the L2 writing process and/or to revise and edit the written text as in Meg's case (Manchón et al, 2009). In this study, Meg participated in two Spanish writing tasks, using a think aloud technique, in which she frequently language-switched from Spanish (L2) to English (her L1) for three different purposes such as a) Generating L2 Content, b) Controlling the Process of Writing, and c) Revising. Figure 4-5 illustrates Meg's L-S purposes distributed in percentages:

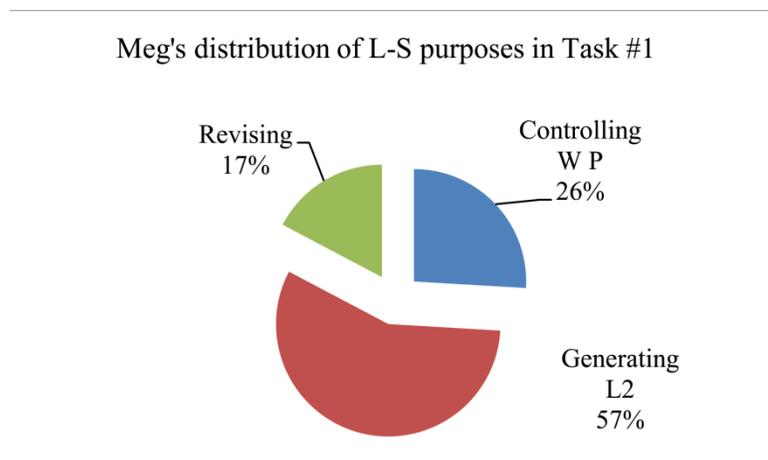


Figure 4-5. Meg's L-S distribution of purposes during her first writing task.

### Generating L2 Content

Meg's primary purpose for L-S during her first writing task was to generate L2 content. In 81 L-Ss, Meg switched to English to generate L2 content in 46 instances, or 57 %, mainly through direct translations and lexical searches. Within the lexical searches I found specific examples of self-questioning, problem-focusing and meta-linguistic concerns among others, all of them with the ultimate goal of generating L2 content. During her first writing task, Meg translated to generate lexical units in her L2 via L1 use. She first thought the idea in English and then translated into Spanish which is the opposite of what she says she does when writing in her L1. Qi (1998) states that the use of L1 in the L2 writing process facilitates the development of a thought cross-linguistically without slowing down the pace of thinking and Lay (1982) states that L2 learners translate key words into their L1s to get a stronger impression and association of the ideas for their writing.

The following are two examples when Meg translated to generate L2 content during her first think aloud protocol. In the following excerpts italics represents her

reading aloud, the regular font represents when she spoke without writing or reading, underlining represents her composing, and L-S instances are shown in bold font.

- “... **the temperature**... la temperatura es...”
- “**a lot of people... take... the bus... um... okay... mucha gente... mucha gente... utilice... um... los autobuses”**

Murphy and Roca de Larios (2010) suggest that the main struggles for L2 writers during the L2 composing process probably take place during formulation, that is, “when writers try to put ideas into linear form through the selection of appropriate words from the mental lexicon by means of syntactic, ideational, or rhetorical constraints which are to be met” (p. 63). Depending on their L2 proficiency, L2 writers will devote significant time to lexical searches, which, in turn, can be initiated due to lack of lexical L2 knowledge or with the purpose of refining a lexical choice. While in this process, Meg encountered different challenges or problems that pushed her to switch to her L1 in order to solve them. Qi (1998) claims that “when an L2 task is relatively cognitively demanding, the participant tends to use her L1 for cognitive processing” (p. 424). The following examples refer to problem-focusing instances, when Meg faced specific problems and was stuck for a while. As she did not know what to do, she showed her inability to solve the problem by stating “I don’t know to...”

- “...**oh I don’t know how to end this**... hasta pronto... tu amiga M\*...”
- “**I don’t know what to say let’s think**... *in Spanish... a friend you met*... **okay**... um... su... **tell him....okay then**...”

Meg also showed many instances of L-S as she reflected about the language itself, meaning moments when she tried to make sense of the morphological, lexical, syntactic and semantic set of rules to be applied when generating L2 content. Wang (2003)

suggests that these comments are linguistic concerns about the appropriateness or qualities of one single element or text production.

- “... *hay menos personas aquí... y no hay mucha.... mucho... mucha... okay I do not know the article for that word... I don’t remember if it is feminine or not... diversidad...*”
- “...mucha nieve... *nieva nieve... um... durante el invierno hace muy frio... that does not sound right...*”
- “cold frio... *frio... um... what’s... what’s the verb for that... hace calor... hace frio...*”

When reflecting about her use of L1 when referring to grammar, Meg explained, “I think it’s because... and I notice like again with grammar and stuff if I like have a question about grammar, if I like don’t know something in Spanish then I get really frustrated and I have to switch back to English and see if like maybe I can think about it in English and then I translate it to Spanish.”

As it can be seen, Meg generated L2 text via her L1 through two main mechanisms: translating and lexical searches. Murphy and Roca de Larios (2010) suggest that L2 writers sometimes prefer to use their L1s during the L2 writing process to avoid potential overloading from their working memory capacity. When Meg finished working on her outline and decided to start her text, she said she was unable to generate ideas in her L2. She knew what the problem was and focused on it. The excerpt from her think aloud reflected this episode:

- **okay I don't know how to start this off...um... una tema muy... okay...  
una... no un tema... un tema... un tema... muy... popular...**

When she reflected about this she said, “I guess I was just so lost with how to start it and, I guess when I get really confused or really lost I just automatically use English to like really organize my thoughts and lay out my thoughts.” Meg’s words were very clear; whenever she was hesitant in her L2 writing process, she made use of her native language (English) to cope for the lack of L2 or lack of ideas. Meg also used her L1 when controlling her writing process in L2 and when revising her text to edit it. As a revising technique, she usually back-translated the text with the purpose of checking her intentions were fulfilled. She reflected, “...because I had no idea how to phrase that ‘cause you know I thought like how I do that I write it in English I mean in Spanish and then I translate it into English to see if even like the words for Spanish make sense even though, if I said it to an English speaker it would’ve made sense you know.”

#### Controlling the Process of Writing

During her first think aloud, Meg also switched to English to control the process of writing, that is, the need to use her L1 to organize and plan what she wanted to write in her letter. Of the 81 switches, 21 were intended to control her writing process which represented 26% of the total number of switches. She reflected, “I don’t know maybe like may be for the general organization I think about it in English, and then I just translate it in my head and then like when I start writing I mean when I write I think in Spanish, but then if I stop to like think about grammar or stuff then I have to like think about something then I’ll think in English but if I’m just like writing and going and going and going is in Spanish.”

The following examples from her first think aloud illustrate instances of L-S for controlling her process of writing:

- “**um... okay what else (...) okay... um... [.hhhh]... so... the apartments... what else can I talk about the city... um... I... okay why I don’t talk about the bars and the night life... I guess I can... I can talk about the weather... um... okay... durante ...durante el invierno...**”
- “**okay... let’s see what else can I talk about the night life... *no hay muchas fiestas*... **ok go to the bars... um... okay no... salgo... mucho... entonces... no sé... cómo es...**”**

### Revising

Finally, Meg also used her L1 to revise the text in terms of language use and content. There were 14 instances in which she used her L1 to revise her text. These 14 times represented 17% of the number of L-Ss during her first writing task. To do this, Meg usually reverted to her L1 by purposely backtranslating the already-written text in order to get a mental picture of the written text in her L1 and to make sure her intentions were satisfied (Roca de Larios et al, 1999; Manchón et al, 2000). When she was reflecting about this, she commented, “... like I’ll read a sentence and like in Spanish and then I’ll go back and read in English that like sometimes all I do is like, because you know sometimes obviously sometimes Spanish phrases are like, like the subjunctive, it’s like when you translate it word for word it sounds really weird in English but to me I’m like used to that weird sounding if I read it word for word like translating it into English that I know if it’s like, do I make sense.”

- “...hay una gran variedad de clases que pue-... que puedes...que puedas... que puedas... um... hay una gran variedad de las cla- de clases que puedes... que puedes tomar... um...**okay... there’s ... the classes... are good and the professors... I took ... there’s a great variety of classes... um... let’s see...**

**um... okay... so I guess (...) okay I talked about... the city... and the comparison... the mall... the apartments...”**

- **“mi... experiencia... experiencia ... hab-... okay my experience has been... has been... había... has been... había sido... haber... yes...”**

During the second writing task, Meg showed the same pattern in terms of purposes of L-S. The entire process was dominated by the purpose of Generating L2 Content. In the total 136 language switches, 75 (55%) corresponded to Generating L2 Content, 50 (37%) were devoted to Controlling the Process of Writing and 11 switches (8%) were made to Revising the text. Figure 4-6 illustrates the distribution of these numbers in percentages:

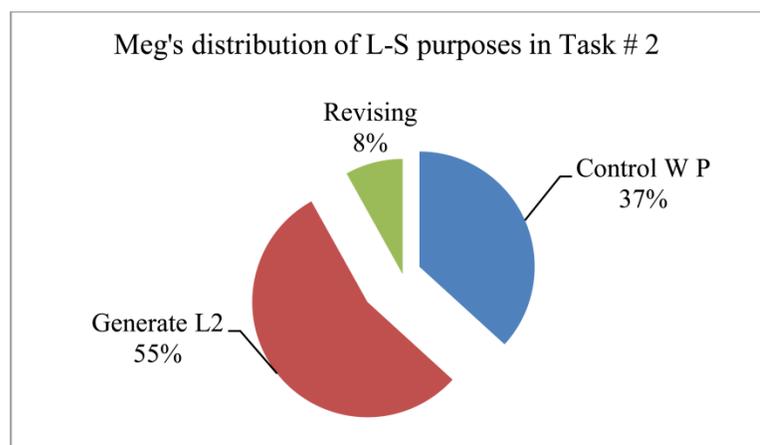


Figure 4-6. Meg's L-S distribution of purposes during her second writing task.

### Perceptions of her L2 writing process and her L1 use

Meg was very organized; she read the prompt carefully to understand what she was expected to do. She read the prompt a second time and started making an outline. Her plan was short and it mainly reflected the ideas described in the prompt such as city, the weather, transportation, night life, campus, and experiences. As her first prompt was written in English, she made sure to write the Spanish equivalents of those words such as “*la ciudad, el tiempo, transportación, I.C. durante la noche, los dormitorios, las clases, los profesores* and *mis clases, mis amigos.*” Meg took 2 and half minutes to read and write her plan, then started writing her letter addressed to Juan.

For her first writing task, Meg wrote a six-paragraph letter and followed her outline strictly as she wrote one paragraph for each one of the bullets in her plan. As she completed each paragraph, she read and checked each one of the bullets in her outline to make sure she responded to all the questions in the prompt. During her reflection, when I asked her to read her letter again to revise and reflect about it, she asked questions regarding the proper use of vocabulary, syntax, semantics in her L2, “I was not sure about that *cómo estabas*, does it mean ‘how’ve you been?’ or “*edificios* could that mean any type of building?” She constantly checked for my feedback and wanted to know whether the L2 use in her writing was correct or needed to be improved. Severino et al (2009) suggest that there is a tendency for non-native writers than native speakers to ask for more grammar help in tutoring situations. From my personal experience as an L2 learner and instructor, I can say that there is a strong tendency among L2 learners to pay special attention to L2 correction at the surface level, that is, attention to proper usage. L2 learners have high expectations about teachers’ feedback for error correction. Severino et al (2009) claim there is a tendency for non-native English writers (NNEW) in this case, non-native Spanish writers, to ask for more grammar help.

The notion of feedback implies a process-oriented model that entails a need to revise and edit multiple drafts in the composing process with the help of a teacher, a peer, or a tutor, as well as formative assessment that involves locally focused and continued feedback with the purpose of helping to improve students' writing. Writing teachers around the world offer feedback in the belief that it is helpful to their students (Williams, 2005). Although my main concern in this study was not to offer feedback on the participants' written texts but to understand the purposes for which these writers switched to their native languages during their L2 writing process, I satisfied Meg's demands in this respect by answering her questions or giving her the intended word she needed while revising her text. I must say here that this is not normally done in composing processes studies.

Meg's first revision to the letter only focused on format. Meg's expectations were to get to know all the possible L2 "errors" in her written text. Murphy and Roca de Larios (2010) state that "research suggests that L2 writers' main concerns during the revision process tend to be lexical in nature" (p. 62). Meg cared a lot about accuracy – the ability to produce error-free language. During the first reflection, as Meg read the letter in Spanish aloud, she switched to English to express her initial intentions such as in the case when asked, "...*hay muchos apartamentos porque los estudiantes no quieren vivir en los dormitorios, ya*, ok, let's see, I was trying to say there's a lot of apartments because the students don't wanna live in the *dormitorios* anymore... so where I just say *ya*..." This kind of purposeful backtranslating process is common among L2 users who, in spite of having their texts written in their second language, use their L1 for such revisions to get a mental representation of their texts in their native language and to verify that their intentions are being fulfilled (Roca de Larios et al, 1999; Manchón et al, 2000).

After she finished her first revision, she took a couple of minutes to read her text silently and then she expressed her dissatisfaction with the result. Her first comment in this respect was, "I am not very satisfied with it but, 'cause I don't feel my verbs were

very high level and it was just very basic...” Meg’s second revision was more oriented to the content of her letter. Meg commented on the possible changes she would make if she had the chance to do so. She said, “um I would probably change um I don’t know just like the ending, I guess just like add more, I just feel it was really incomplete, I feel I should’ve added more and talked about more things, like for example the weather, I could’ve talked about that a lot more and like in more detail, I feel that was like second grade Spanish vocabulary.” Meg was convinced that her letter did not represent who she was as a Spanish speaker. As I asked her what level (grade) she would have used she said that she would have liked to show the real level she speaks. As she put it, “My level that I speak, I don’t know I just with my experience I could’ve talked more about that but I just feel like um I didn’t know how to, I mean I did have like my points I outlined to make my stuff, but I just feel it didn’t flow that much, yeah I don’t know...”

Given that Meg’s L2 learning was in progress, every now and then she chose the wrong word during the constant monitoring of her L2 output. This fact was also reflected in her L2 composing process as she constantly revised and edited her written text in search for more appropriate lexical items or ideas. Evidence of this constant monitoring in her writing can be seen in Figure 4-7 where different segments were crossed out in her attempt to express her ideas as clearly as possible:

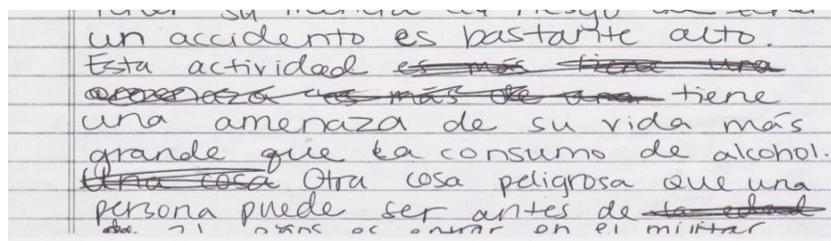


Figure 4-7. Excerpt of Meg's second L2 written text.

Meg also reflected on the importance of writing an outline during the planning. Flower and Hayes (1980) state that “plans allow writers to reduce ‘cognitive strain,’ that is, to reduce the number of demands being made on conscious attention” (pp. 31-32). As a writer, Meg cared about many details in order to fulfill her goals in the L2 writing process. Her awareness about the writing process was deep. “I think it’s ‘cause I have to like, you know like, see I like, where my purpose was who I was gonna be writing it to, and then what my thesis was ‘cause when we write for others, always will be always have to have who are we writing to, why are we writing it, what the thesis is, what type of essay it is, see always have to have an outline so I guess I’m used to doing that.”

Meg believed the L-S phenomenon was something she had never paid attention to before. She said, during the second writing, sometimes she was aware she was language switching but some other times she was not. In this respect she said, “I don’t know I think um like when I said um *yo no sé cómo se ahh... cómo decir* ‘consumption,’ I wasn’t thinking about that, I was just saying it, I wasn’t really thinking about language switching or anything but then when I said like ‘okay I don’t know how to start this or I don’t know how to say this’ I knew I was speaking English.”

During Meg’s L2 writing process particular details attracted my attention as she verbalized, including her constant use of fillers such as ‘okay’ or sibilant sounds while thinking. As I was interested in understanding the L2 writing process from her personal perspective, I asked her to reflect about those episodes during her think aloud protocols when she produced hissing sounds (which was reflected in the transcription as [sh. sh. sh.] or [shoo-shoo-shoo]) or when she was thinking trying to elaborate a new writing episode because she was stuck or she had ran out of ideas. The following are two examples of these instances:

- **okay**... um (...) [sh: sh:] [shoo-shoo-shoo]... no creo que se debería reducir a dieciocho años ...

- muchas bebidas alcohólicas...si la edad de la consumo... [sh. sh. sh.]... **okay...**  
um... por eso... [sh. sh. sh.]... **if each...each... the amount of people... will reduce.**

During those brief seconds, she was not verbalizing aloud and I wanted to know whether she was thinking in English, her L1, or in Spanish, her L2. She commented: “Oh my gosh wow (laughs). I’m really trying to think about language, but I don’t even know what I was thinking, I don’t I mean.” Then she added, “I think when I was doing that I think I was writing and then I looked over what I wrote, that’s what I do, I write a sentence and then I just look at it, I was like I don’t even know if I read it I just look at it, because I like to visualize it you know so I just I kind of look at it and see if it looks alright.” Meg also reflected on her constant use of the word ‘okay’. According to her, that word helped her finish an idea or intention and begins a new one.

- um... **okay**... um... **okay I**...um... **okay... never mind**... um... *creo que se debería...* no creo... **okay I don’t think that...** *no creo que se debería reducir a...dieciocho años la edad legal para consumir alcohol en los bares de Iowa City... um... y debería... debería permanecer... en veintiún años de edad...**okay**...*

She said her constant use of the word “okay” helped her organize her writing, “I think I don’t think it’s a pause word, not even a language (laughs), I don’t know it was just like a I didn’t even mean it as like “Okay” like, I just meant to like like that is done, like you know.” Then she added, “I don’t think I meant it in English or Spanish I just think I meant like ‘next point’ like ‘let’s move on’, maybe I was thinking in Spanish though.”

Meg understood that L-S was a very common and normal strategy for L2 writers during L2 writing. She realized that L-S was a gift for her since it helped check her

intentions during the L2 writing process, “I mean it’s nice to have a language to, like another language, to verify the language you are writing in...” Then she added, “... it really helps me organize I guess it really makes me see things clear, more clear because it’s my native language, I don’t think is more practical to organizing, I just think it really helps that I have that I can like also look back to my native language and like see how the organization makes sense to me in my own language.” Meg also told me she realized that when she wrote a paper in English, the process was reversed; that is, she also switched from English to Spanish, “Yesterday I was writing a paper in an education class, a class about education and stuff like, and I think the phrase was something like I don’t know maybe I don’t even know what is said but I wanted to use *tal vez* instead of maybe...”

Meg also commented that most of her switches were done unconsciously.

Whenever she talked to herself to try to understand Spanish grammar rules, she used her L1. “If I have a grammar question I think about it in English, I question myself in English and I ask like what the article is ...” When trying to deepen her explanation about the use of her L1 she commented, “I think ‘cause it’s just my first language and I was like, I just didn’t even think about like saying it I just kind of said it, I didn’t realize I was saying it, it is just my first language...”

Meg confessed that during her L2 learning process she had some Spanish teachers that were strict and made her speak in Spanish at all times and some others that did not care much about it. She was aware of the benefits that L-S brings to the L2 writing process, and although she said it was important for foreign language learners to use as much L2 as possible during classes, she understood that speaking the L2 and processing her thinking in L1 for L2 production were two different things. During both writings tasks, Meg showed a consistent pattern in the distribution of percentages. Generating L2 Content was the most frequent purpose in her think aloud protocols, followed by Controlling the Process of Writing and Revising.

### Meg's tensions in her L2 writing during the study

Despite her high motivation and Spanish proficiency, Meg faced some difficulties during her experience participating in this study. Jones & Tetroe (1987) state that verbal protocols in general do not affect writing; however, Meg suggested that verbalizing aloud might have influenced her writing. She said thinking aloud while writing was difficult for her and thought her writing would have been more organized and her Spanish more sophisticated if she had not had to verbalize aloud. She also said, "I was more nervous the first time I did it, it wasn't scary, it just, it is just different to do." Meg recognized that she would not likely use the technique to think aloud unless she makes mistakes. She said, "...if I like keep doing it I could get used to it but I normally when I write I just think in my head and I just try, I don't really think aloud unless I like unless I make a mistake or something when I say 'oh my gosh' or something then I think I'll say that aloud." Given that the L2 writing process is a problem-solving phenomenon in which L2 writers' miscues emerge constantly as they try to generate ideas, organize their writing, and revise and edit their texts, I expect that Meg will surely think aloud in her ongoing daily life writing experience.

Meg also commented that she found the second topic a bit confusing at first; she said she felt the need to clarify with me but as decided not to since my instructions discouraged this behavior. She said, "Well first I was so confused because you know like now in (the city) they're talking about the age of the bars being nineteen and the reason is that 21, so the topic struck me and oh it is 18, so that the drinking age and I got really confused at first but then I figured it out and I just like went over those points in my head and like, I was gonna ask you (laughs) but I stopped (laughs), I was going to ask you if it was the age to get into the bar or to drink the alcohol at the bar, but you told me not to ask you (laughs)..."

As the study required the participants' constant thinking aloud I sometimes had to remind them to do so. I used a beeping sound any time they stopped verbalizing for more than 5 seconds. The following are two examples when I used the beeping sound with Meg. In the transcriptions, the beeping sound was reflected between brackets followed by an ellipsis in parenthesis which means a pause of more than 5 seconds.

- la edad (...) de (...) cuando {(...) Beep} [laughs] **okay I don't know**
- threat threat {(...) Beep} **threat I don't...**

Meg commented that the beeping surprised her at times and that most of time when she heard the beeping, she instinctively switched to English, her native language, "I think I was I just I was surprised, I was surprised, I was in my, when I get in my writing mode I obviously I just write and write and write, and then like I just like heard the beep and wow I went like that, and so like my first intuition oh like I need to, I don't know, use English." I consider my beeping strategy as an external influence that contributed to Meg's L-S.

The constraint of limited time to write was part of the usual tensions Meg faced when she was writing in her L2. She was aware of the need to have more time to prepare a good outline and get ready for her paper, "The hardest part was probably I guess just 'cause I'm used to with my Spanish writing class, I'm used to like having a night to prepare an outline and then writing it, the next day I know exactly what I'm going to write about and I so it was a kind of like a surprise, that was kind of hard." Meg was an organized L2 writer who cared about her written text and was aware of the composing process in general as she emphasized the importance of devoting time to prepare the writing task in advance. She constantly proofread what she wrote and made sure her final written text reflected what she had been asked in the prompt.

Katie: The future publishing company C.E.O

A personal portrait

“I hope to be a C.E.O of a publishing company; I plan on getting involved with the publishing companies...” Those were Katie’s words when I asked her about her future plans. Katie was planning on working in a publishing companies once she graduated from college; she applied for a summer internship in a publishing company in the capital of the state but she had not heard anything from them yet at the time of the study. Katie was a twenty-year old-sophomore from Harlan, Iowa, majoring in English and planning to minor in Spanish. She is almost 6 feet tall, with blonde hair and big blue eyes. She was reserved and did not want to talk much unless she felt comfortable doing so.

Katie’s family lives in Harlan, a small town in the western part of Iowa, where she lived her entire life before college. Katie has two siblings, an older sister named Lilly and an older brother called Dave. Lilly is married with a one-year old son whose name is Connor. Katie’s mom, Mary Jo, was 52 and the director of a nursing at a retirement community center. She loves to read and write and Katie said her mom has been a great influence in her literacy life. Katie said she inherited her mom’s desire to write and publish a book, “My mom likes to write, she hopes she is kind of looking into writing a book right now, so that’s where I get it from...” Katie’s dad, Jason, was 59 and had a trucking company. Katie said he likes to read more specialized readings like her brother, “My dad and brother are more, read magazines like car magazines and stuff like that...” Katie said that there has been a great interest in writing in her family since her grandparents. She said her grandfather was in the journalism field but, unfortunately, she did not know much about it.

Katie loves writing and reading fiction but said poetry was hard to understand. In her explanation of how different reading poetry from reading fiction is she said, “The rhythm and the stuff like that some like, I guess I like it, it’s just that sometimes is hard to understand for me...” She enjoys writing short stories for fun in English and feels there is a strong association between writing and publishing, “I don’t know, I like writing stories and stuff, I like writing, and I involve the publishing ‘cause I figure it’d be good idea that, become a publisher or be involved in the publishing...” Katie also said that although she considers herself a strong writer in English and passionate about writing, writing in Spanish is hard.

Katie attended the community district schools in her hometown. Besides her mother’s influence on her love of writing, she said she built a strong identity as a writer after one teacher told her she was a good writer during her senior year in high school, “Actually my English teacher when I was senior at... she once in a while she would pull me aside or something like that and talk to me about my writing and at one point she was in, at the beginning of the year that, she never gives perfect grades and she gave a perfect one time and pulled me aside and was very proud that I got a perfect on a paper and stuff so after that moment I kind of felt comfortable in English and stuff like that...”

Katie was admitted to State University to major in English and is planning a minor in Spanish. During her first semester, a test placed her in the Elementary Review, a class intended for students who had some experience with Spanish during high school. At that point she had taken three Spanish language levels at the university besides the Spanish writing class she was taking at the time of data collection. During our first interview she recalled her experience studying Spanish at college. “In my first semester I took Elementary Review, I think it was to refresh and get the background, and then I did the intermediate one in my second semester in my freshman year and then intermediate two in my first semester of my sophomore year and then Spanish writing...” Katie commented that she was passionate about writing and aware of her weaknesses in

Spanish; her intention was to become a better writer in Spanish so she thought it was a good idea to take a Spanish writing class, “I’ve never really been good at Spanish writing so I thought it would be a good idea to...” By the time of data collection, Katie was taking 17 credits including the Spanish writing class, Introduction to the Novel, Creative Writing, Linguistics and Interpretation of Literature. Katie’s expectation was that Spanish could open new doors in her professional career when she became a C.E.O. in an important publishing house.

#### The second language user

As a second language user, Katie said she struggled a lot with Spanish and that she felt she was a better speaker than writer in Spanish. Katie considered herself to be in a low-intermediate L2 proficiency level and said she would have liked to start learning Spanish when she was much younger, “Well like I learned a certain kind of Spanish when I was a freshman in high school so like it’s easier for someone to learn Spanish when they are younger you know, compared with someone in high school, like my brain is already kind of developed so it’s harder, so I guess it doesn’t come as fluent as my English.” Katie commented that she did not study any foreign language while in elementary school and that she started studying basic Spanish during junior high, but it was during her freshman year that she became more interested in the language. During junior high she learned the basics such as numbers, colors and basic vocabulary, and in high school she learned about grammar and verb conjugations. She commented that her experience in high school did not allow her to communicate in Spanish, and she also compared the level of Spanish during high school and at college, “I realized that in high school that they go over the basics and it’s more in-depth here so I felt a little behind when I was like starting Spanish...” Katie also said she liked to use Spanish in her daily

life but felt that her Spanish was not good at all some days, “I feel that some days my Spanish is better than other days...”

Katie commented that she saw a strong difference between the kind of Spanish she heard from her native Spanish speaking teaching assistants and from non-native Spanish speaking teaching assistants. She reflected about that in our first interview, “Sometimes I guess it depends on the situation ‘cause sometimes I had TAs that speak Spanish and can understand just fine but then some teachers I have that speak Spanish I can’t, it’s probably because they are natives and like they have, like my words and I speak my words separated and theirs kind of like blend together, so I have to like double take and oh did she just say that, was so sometimes it takes me a while to like get used to way they speak Spanish...” Then she added, “Her words like I don’t wanna say they run together ‘cause I don’t know if they run together, it’s just that to me it sounds like they run together and I can’t differentiate the words.”

Katie had a good understanding of the role that geographical context plays in the L2 learning process. She said that people who have the chance to be immersed in an L2 environment have more opportunities to learn the L2 easily and more naturally, “I would love to like study abroad somewhere like a Spanish speaking country ‘cause I feel like my Spanish would develop tremendously I feel more comfortable when it becomes more fluent like, you obviously can tell from kids that have gone to Spain or somewhere compared to kids that have not, they are more developed and then it’s repetitive ‘cause when they are over in Spain they are they have to speak in Spanish the whole time and so they just develop and it comes more natural and they are used to it, so I bet if I did experience in a Spanish speaking country for a long time, it’d become more natural to me.”

In our last conversation, Katie commented that she did not feel comfortable with the Spanish level she had by then. The lack of using her L2 in the Spanish class she was taking made her feel she was losing what she had learned, “I feel like in my past class we

interacted in Spanish a lot and this is more a lecture and you have a discussion which you are not required to speak in Spanish, so I feel like my Spanish is kind of lacking in this semester 'cause we don't write, I mean for our homework that we do we write one like paragraph once in a while, otherwise I don't write as much and then rarely speak in Spanish as much as I used to..."

#### The writer

Katie loves writing. She said writing was her way to experience different areas and places she had never been in before. She truly enjoys writing fiction, "I like writing fiction stories when I, I don't really, once in a while I do it for fun but usually if I have to do it for a class or something I don't find it hard or anything..." She said the short stories are mysteries, "Sometimes it's sort of mysteries and sometimes they're kids with problems that have to figure them out that sort of things..." She reflected on her process creating a piece she wrote recently, "I've been thinking about it for a while and then I can in my head for the past week trying to think of different ways to go into the story and different ways to wrap around what happens and stuff like that, the story's about friends that have a party and then one of them ends up dying and you don't really know what happened 'tl the end when one of them is in the court room and he admits to killing his friend, I think I put it in North Carolina, I don't know when I write stories I usually look at a map and then just randomly pick a city and kind of research the city for a while, so like in my story I have Raleigh, North Carolina and I have Wake County which is the actual county and like and I picked a judge that's from around there to make it credible seem realistic..." Like Meg, Katie showed awareness of the composing process as she emphasized the importance of devoting time to preparing the writing task in advance.

Katie considers herself to be a strong writer in her native language but said she lacked the proficiency in Spanish to feel more confident in L2 writing, "I'm organized

but I just sometimes don't get my agreements right and stuff like that I don't, in English I'm a good writer like I'm very strong, I'm very happy with my English writing it's not difficult..." During our first interview she constantly reflected about the way she perceived herself as an English writer and as a Spanish writer, "In English I'm pretty strong in my writing, I'm comfortable with sharing with people my writing and I get excited after writing like when I'm writing it. In Spanish I'm kind of hesitant just because I don't know as much as I do in English and I'm not as strong and I feel like my think-pro-... like... I remember when I was writing that I had to think through the verbs and conjugations and the adjectives before and after the noun and stuff like that and so it kind of takes away from the actual assignment of writing like I have in English 'cause it comes natural compared to Spanish."

Katie's reflection illustrates that L2 writing entails not only the knowledge the writer has about the process of writing itself, but is dependent on the writers' knowledge and proficiency of the foreign language to feel comfortable in that writing process. For Katie, the difference between writing in English and writing in Spanish was the speed and the time she spent on each, "I feel like English I can dive into a lot faster than in Spanish. In Spanish I have to think a little bit more and know exactly what I'm gonna write about. In English I can kind of move around a little bit and stuff like that..."

Williams (2005) says that research in L1 and L2 composing processes shows the L1 and L2 writing processes are generally similar but that the L2 writer's process is slower and longer than L1 writers.

#### Katie's L2 writing process

In the following section, I provide an overview of Katie's L2 writing behaviors, especially the most salient personal characteristics of her L2 writing habits, which were her planning and revising strategies, and the frequent use of her L1. Then, my three

research questions organize a discussion of the findings about her L2 writing process in terms of L-S purposes, her perceptions on L2 writing and L1 use and her tensions during L2 writing.

Like Meg, Katie participated in two writing tasks. Both tasks were intended to be written in Spanish, her second language, using a think aloud technique. The first writing task was to write a personal letter as a response to a friend who had shown interest in studying a semester in Katie's home university, and the second task was to write an argumentative essay responding to an invitation from the editor of the university student newspaper stating their opinions on a controversial local topic in town: whether they agreed or disagreed with the 21 Ordinance.

During both writing tasks, Katie usually transferred her writing skills from her L1 to her L2 writing process. L2 writers transfer L1 skills and strategies to approach the L2 writing process and these transfers, from L1 to L2, play a central role in L2 writing (Jones and Tetroe, 1987; Friedlander, 1990; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992). In the first writing task, Katie organized her outline by jotting a list of ideas from the prompt to develop potential paragraphs such as "la ciudad, el transporte, la vida nocturna, los recursos de la universidad and mi experiencia personal." She devoted a significant amount of time brainstorming and planning her letter and this was a recurring pattern as she did this in both writing tasks. Jones & Tetroe (1987) views "planning as a critical high-level composing activity" (p. 39) and state that "the quality of planning transfers from L1 to L2" (p. 56). Katie seemed to have brought that planning strategy from her writing background in her native language as Jones and Tetroe (1987) suggest.

The time she devoted to planning during her first writing task reflected the importance she gave to this stage in the writing process. She spent 8 minutes out of 39 minutes to plan her letter, which represented 23% of the total composing time. Cumming (1989) suggests that writing behavior and "planning" in particular could be socially constrained, and Katie seemed to be instructionally shaped to write outlines for her

planning. For the first writing task, although initially Katie had five bullet points in her outline to develop five potential paragraphs as seen in Figure 4-8, she produced a four-paragraph letter of 242 words. When I asked her to reflect why she decided to cross some ideas out from her initial plan and not to use such information, she said, “Well because I thought that yeah I could talk about the library that I knew but that’s what else did I have I don’t know what else to have but those were the only like two items compared to, maybe I love perfection, I just felt like I didn’t have many points to put in that paragraph for my writing...”

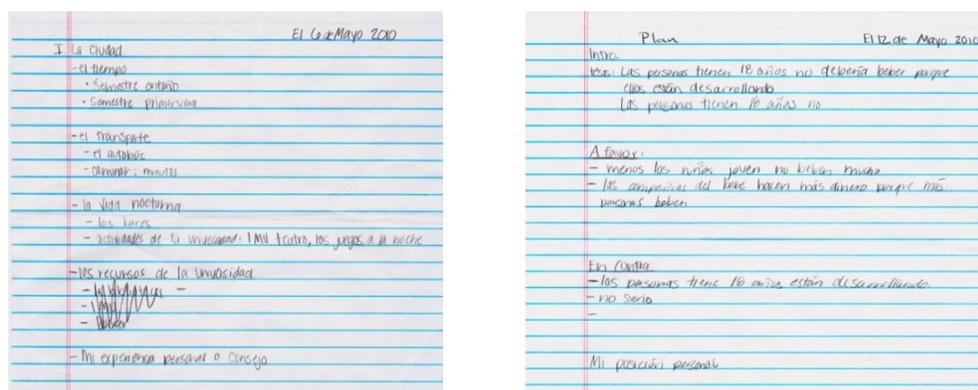


Figure 4-8. Katie's first and second outlines for the two writing tasks.

From the beginning of her first writing task, Katie made sure to understand what she was expected to write about. She read the prompt in Spanish and immediately back-translated to get a clear mental representation of what had been asked in the prompt. She double-checked her understanding by reading the English version as she confirmed this when she said: “**Okay... I’m gonna read the English (prompt) real quick to make sure I have it all... include any piece of information you think will be useful for your friend...**”

During her second writing task, she spent around 10 minutes to read the prompt, brainstorm and prepare an outline to start her argumentative essay. These 10 minutes represented 23% of the total composing time. Katie elaborated a five-paragraph essay of 357 words. This essay reflected the outline she had prepared in which there were bullets for an intro with a thesis statement, arguments in favor and against, and her personal position (Figure 4-8). Besides these four bullets, her written text had a fifth paragraph as a conclusion in which she summarized her discussion. Katie showed her writing expertise when generating her L2 text as well as while planning. The following is an excerpt of her second protocol as she brainstormed and decided what to do and how to organize her text:

- Okay... so... um... [hhhh.]... the pros... of having eighteen... drinking age... okay... so... okay... I'm going to... present the pros and cons of each position... okay... um (...) mi opinión there isn't... very many... but we'll see what happens...okay... um... so... I'm gonna take... the idea from up here about... the pros... and take it down there... okay... um... okay... um... so... unos estudiantes sostienen la idea de... um... [p/ /p/ /p/] **support the idea of...um... support the idea of... eighteen... what am I gonna say...eighteen drinking age... años la edad legal... para consumir... alcohol... um... um... la... okay... so... I wanna start the sentence different but I don't really know how... so... so some students support the idea... um... okay find two reasons...****

During both writing tasks, Katie also showed her expertise with revision. She read the entire piece aloud to check her intended meaning. At the end of the first writing task she clearly stated her intentions when she said: “**I wanna read... read this really quick...**” before reading the whole letter. At the end of her argumentative essay, she also

suggested her intentions to revise her essay when she said: **“so I’m going to... go back... and make sure (...) that I have the right word...to change it...”**

Another salient characteristic in Katie’s L2 writing process was her constant use of her L1. In the first think aloud protocol, Katie produced 2,167 total words: 1,159 in English (53%) and 1,008 in Spanish (47%) as can be seen in Figure 4-9. These numbers suggest that her thinking process during L2 writing was slightly dominated by her L1.

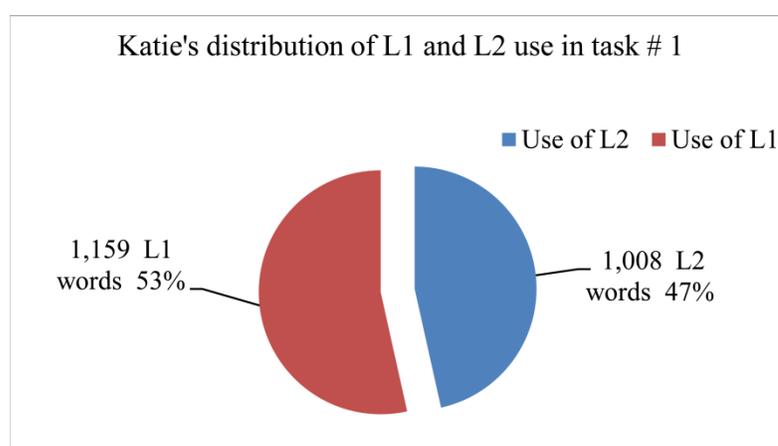


Figure 4-9. Katie's L1 and L2 use distribution during writing # 1.

During the second writing task, the entire writing process was dominated by Katie’s L1. From 2,236 words she verbalized in her second protocol, 1,404 words (63%) were in English and 832 words (37%) were in Spanish as represented in Figure 4-10. In this task, although Katie generated about seventy more words compared to the first one (2,167 words vs. 2,236 words), she produced almost twice as many L1 words (1,404 words) to generate 832 L2 words.

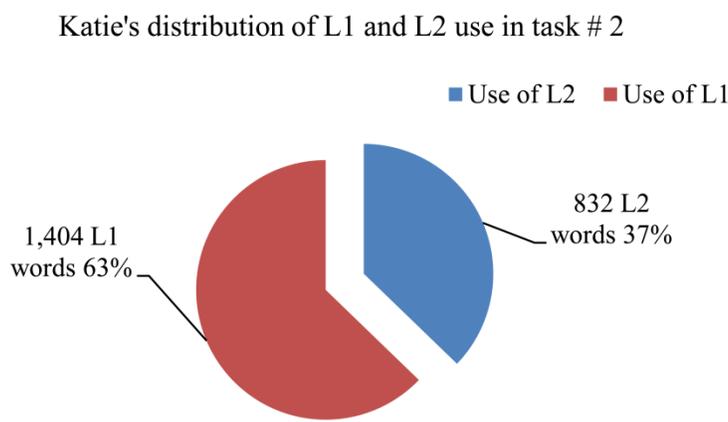


Figure 4-10. Katie's L1 and L2 use distribution during writing # 2.

Against this overview, I now discuss findings about the nature of Katie's L-S purposes, her perceptions about her own L2 writing as well as her use of L1 while writing in her L2, and the tensions she faced during that process.

#### Katie's purposes for language switching (L-S)

Language switching research suggests that L2 writers tend to language switch for varied reasons. They language switch to develop a thought cross-linguistically without slowing down the pace of thinking, to verify lexical meaning verification, or to search more appropriate lexical or syntactic items in the L2. During lexical searches, L2 writers engage in self-questioning, problem focusing and metalinguistic concerns. Also L2 writers switch to revise and evaluate their texts via back-translating, to examine the task, to control the L2 writing process, and for off-task comments (Qi, 1998; Murphy and Roca de Larios, 2010).

Of the four participants, Katie was the writer who language switched the most in terms of language switching sequences and for five different purposes. From the very beginning during the first writing task, Katie language switched to satisfy her needs as an

L2 writer. I identified 154 L-S sequences for three main purposes: a) Generating L2 Content, b) Controlling the Process of Writing and c) Revising. These were the purposes for which Meg language switched; however, unlike Meg's, Katie's first L2 writing was dominated by the category of Controlling the Process of Writing and not by Generating L2 Content. In addition to these three basic purposes, Katie also language switched for d) Task Examining and for e) Others, that is, other purposes such as off-task comments, which were not related to the writing task itself.

As it can be seen in Figure 4-11, Katie's L-S purposes were dominated by the category of Controlling the Process of Writing with 60 switches or 39% of the total number. The category Generating L2 Content occurred during 46 L-S sequences or 30%. Revising occurred in 37 switches or 23%, Task Examining occurred in 11 switches or 7%, and only 1 switch or 1%, in the last category, Others.

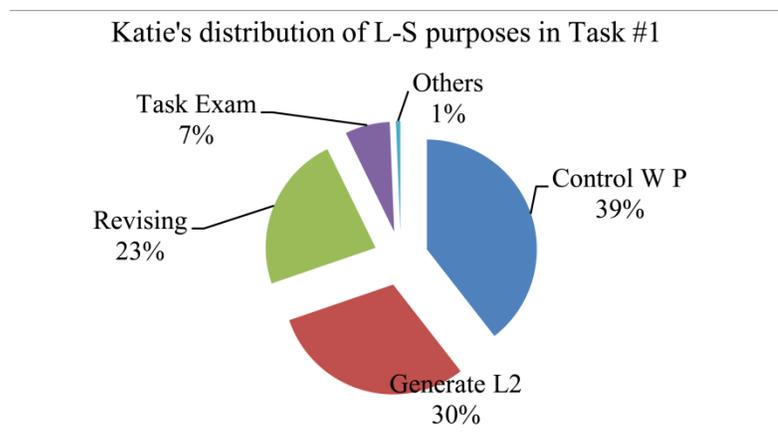


Figure 4-11. Katie's L-S distribution of purposes during her first writing task.

### Controlling the Process of Writing

Controlling the Process of Writing dominated the frequency distribution of L-S purposes in Katie's first writing task. Katie seemed to be very careful when she composed and monitored her process at all times. She constantly gave instructions to herself as to what to do and how to do it and as she did that she used her L1 to guide her process. Flower (1989) states that "writers are constantly giving themselves instructions for how to write and what to do and then monitoring how well their current effort is going" (p. 32). In the following excerpts, of Katie's L-S sequences for Controlling the Process of Writing, italics represent her reading aloud, regular font represents when speaking without writing or reading, underlining represents her composing and L-S instances are shown in bold font:

- **okay so... I wanna talk... about... well... have the night life... the university facilities... and... resources and accommodations... okay let me read cambus... accommodations... okay so I wanna write about... um... let see... the dorms and stuff...**
- **um... what else could I say... um... what I'm gonna say also... one more thing for transportation... um... I could say... okay... durante... talked about the bus... I talked about walking distance ten minutes... um... I don't know what else to add to that... so I'm gonna leave a space and I'll come back to that... okay... so...**

In the previous examples, Katie reflected her understanding of the recursive composing process. She checked what she had included so far, and at one point, when she realized that something was missing but could not solve the problem immediately, she left a space to come back later.

### Generating L2 Content

Katie also used her L1 to generate L2 content through different strategies such as lexical searches and mechanical translation. As a competent writer, Katie valued the use of the dictionary. She made use of it often as she tried to find the words that she did not know or could not remember in her L2 and to confirm her initial intuitions, “Just to look up words that I don’t know...” Murphy and Roca de Larios (2010) suggest that L2 writers usually verify the lexical meaning in their texts to refine their lexical choices or due to their lack of L2 knowledge. During those lexical searches, Katie used her L1 as a tool to efficiently save time during the search process. The following are three examples of lexical searches from her first protocol. The convention (...) represents pauses up to 5 seconds:

- **let me see if they have dorm... in here... dorm room (...) dorm room dorm room... okay.... dorm room (...) dormitorio... oh duh... okay... I knew that...**
- **across campus... qué es across... looking the word for across cause I don’t know that word... across... wow... across... across across across... across... A-C-R- O- S -S... across... al otro lado... on the other side... um... okay... I’m gonna use... okay**
- **I’m gonna look that up to make sure that was right...oh... to enter (...) enter... okay the word to enter... entrar... enter... okay... so I was right...**

As Murphy and Roca de Larios (2010) state, the presence of a lexical problem could be revealed by implicit clues such as “long pauses or repetitions” (p.67). In the above examples, Katie repeated certain words such as ‘dorm room’ or ‘across’ as she searched for words in the dictionary. She also evidenced the long pauses, indicated by (...) that Murphy and Roca de Larios refer to. L2 writers are engaged in a recursive

problem-solving process that demands high-level knowledge processing as they search for the appropriate words to satisfy their needs. During those lexical searches, it is common that writers question themselves as a way to cope with their anxiety or frustration of not being able to solve the problem they are facing in that moment.

During her entire L2 composing process, Katie monitored what she was doing and questioned herself as a way to mediate her desire to find the right words. She asked herself questions in her L1. Murphy and Roca de Larios (2010) state that L2 writers seem “to carry on an internal dialogue and frequently address questions to themselves” (p. 73). Also Qi (1998) states that L-S “may be caused by factors relating to high-level knowledge demands” (p. 428) like the ones faced by Katie. Qi claims that factors such as the need to find and verify lexical choices “may be so strong that language-switching could take place as if it were enacted by a force of automaticity” (p.429). The following are excerpts from Katie first protocol to illustrate her L-S sequences of self-questioning:

- **okay... in october... the weather... es... es much colder...es... what am I gonna say... in October the... a thing like that... weather is...**
- **night games... los juegos... um... how do I say night games... los juegos a la noche... a la noche... okay...**
- **okay I wanna say...um... can... un estudiante ... puede... can go... oh crap what I wanna say...**

There were some other instances in which Katie got involved in a self-directed speech act to reflect about the language itself. Guerrero (2005) states that as a self-directed speaking instance, inner speech is the main instrument for verbal thought, and is likely to occur during a highly demanding cognitive process such as the L2 writing process. Murphy and Roca de Larios (2010) state that “on occasions the L1 is also used for metalinguistic appeals, that is, memory probes using metalinguistic terms” (p. 74).

Such metalinguistic awareness helped Katie discuss the appropriateness of using certain words during her L2 composing process. The following excerpt illustrates an L-S instance of Katie reflecting about the verb “caminar” (to walk).

- normalmente (...) um... un estudiante... un estudiante... puede...walk...okay so caminar is an action we have to put... caminar... **no... okay... un estudiante puede caminar...**

Katie also used her L1 to pose specific problems during her L2 generation process. In some cases, when she was hesitant to use certain words, she explicitly said what the problem was such as in the following examples:

- los estudiantes (...) **play... I don't wanna say** jugar o practicar... um... juegan... play... los deportes...
- pueden hacer... **can do...** um... cosas diferentes... **I don't like the word** cosas... **okay...** diferente...

Katie also showed some instances of L-S when she translated from her L1 to her L2. As a direct and quick strategy to produce L2 content, Katie generated ideas in English, and translated them directly to Spanish, at the moment she was writing. As she was reflecting about this she said, “I don't know I think of all the sentences and then I translate it and narrate it” Manchón et al (2000) suggest that L2 writers are usually constrained by a limited capacity of working memory, so that, in this case, Katie could have used this strategy to compensate for that limited working capacity. The following are three examples of her mechanical translation strategy:

- **is ending... I wanna say that...** está... termiando (terminando)
- **for the night life...** por la vida nocturna
- **at the theater... okay so** al teatro...

When Katie reflected about her tendency to translate from her L1 to her L2 to generate L2 content she said, “I’m going to say this is common for beginners but for students who are more comfortable like with Spanish translation, don’t need to switch back and forth from English and Spanish.” From my personal experience as an L2 user, I must admit this strategy was one of the most common ones I used when I first started writing in my L2. Although it is practical and helps writers not to overload their working memory capacity, depending on the writer’s L2 proficiency, direct translation sometimes hampers the resulting text since it may not reflect the writer’s initial intentions, especially when the translation is done in two cognate languages. The following two episodes illustrate times when Katie chose the wrong word during a lexical search.

- Hola:... José.... [laughs]... yo estoy muy... um... **I am excited... okay**... yo estoy muy... **what is excited... okay...okay excited... okay... excited... excited (...)** **excite (...)** **estimule**... estimular... **I am excited**... muy (...)  
estimar... estimulado... yo estoy muy estimulado...
- mi consejo para tú... es... tiene... tiene... divertido... **have fun**...

During the first episode, Katie engaged in a lexical search that led her use the dictionary; she selected the words she thought reflected her intention to translate the phrase “I am excited” since she failed to remember the L2 Spanish word for “excited.” She chose the first word she found not realizing that the word has a different connotation in Spanish, such as the sexual connotation in English “to be aroused”. In the second example, Katie’s direct translation strategy caused her to translate “have fun” as two independent Spanish words “tiene divertido” when in Spanish the meaning of that verb can be expressed through only one word such as ‘diviértete’ when used in the imperative form.

## Revising

During the entire process, Katie constantly checked her written text to make sure she fulfilled her purposes. Manchón et al (2000) state that as L2 writers have to pay attention to various lower and higher level text demands during the L2 writing process, one of the common strategies to cope with the limited capacity of working memory they face is to rescan their written texts. To satisfy her immediate need to revise and edit, Katie mechanically back-translated those words and phrases. My assumption is that Katie would do this in her head if she were not speaking aloud. A mechanical back-translating strategy implies the writer's need to translate to the writer's L1 what he/she is actually writing in his/her L2, for example:

- frio... **it's cold (...)**
- el tiempo es... **the weather is**
- los recursos de la universidad... **resources of the university**

Katie revised her entire text once she finished writing. During that process, Katie also back-translated some portions of her text with the purpose of getting a mental picture of the text in her native language as Manchón et al (2000) suggest. Murphy and Roca de Larios (2010) also suggest that L2 writers do this in order for them to “get an idea of the match between the intention and the expression” (p. 72). Cumming (1989) states that there is a tendency of L2 writers to rely on their mother tongue to check for linguistic validity and this is a clear indication that writers cognitively associate conceptual relationships across languages.

- pero en el... **okay...** en octubre el tiempo es más frio que en el... **okay... in October... is very cold...than in summer... what did I... okay...** en octubre el

tiempo es más frío... **oh du:h... then... okay...** pero en diciembre lo es muy frío porque...

### Task Examining

One of the purposes of Katie's L-S was to examine the task she was given. This purpose occurred fourth in frequency with 11 switches or 7%. At the beginning of her composing process when she was reading the prompt, she language switched to make sure she understood what the prompt asked. She interrupted her reading and language switched to her L1 to rephrase what she had just read:

- un amigo a quien tú conociste en tu viaje en Latinoamérica está interesada en estudiar un semestre en los Estudios- .... Estados Unidos... escriba un carta en español... tu amigo diciéndole sobre la vida en la Universidad of Iowa... **okay so have a friend... to come in... from Latin America who is interested in... studying a semester in the United States and... write him a letter... to... help him... to share:... about the life in la Universidad de Iowa...**

### Other

Katie also language switched once during her first writing task due to an external factor when her phone vibrated. As an off-task comment, she instinctively used her L1 to comment about the issue. During this episode, Katie seemed not to be disturbed by her phone nor did she lose track of her flow of thought. She seemed to make an instant break to comment in English and continued to verbalize in her L2. As Qi (1998) suggests, factors, such as this one may influence the L-S as if they were “enacted by a force of automaticity” (p.429).

- yo estoy muy estimulado... que you... um... tú estás... visitando la... **my phone's vibrating...** la universidad de Iowa...

In the first writing task Controlling the Process of Writing dominated the frequency of Katie's purposes; during the argumentative essay Katie's L2 writing process was dominated by the category of Generating L2 Content. As the L1 use increased from the first to the second writing task, the language switch sequences also increased in Katie's case. In the second writing task, Katie language switched 180 times. Generating L2 Content occurred in 111 L-S sequences or 62% of the total number of switches. Controlling the Process of Writing occurred in 37 sequences or 21%. Revising occurred in 28 sequences or 15% and Task Examining which occurred in 4 sequences generated 2% of the total number of L-S. Figure 4-12 illustrates the distribution of these numbers in percentages:

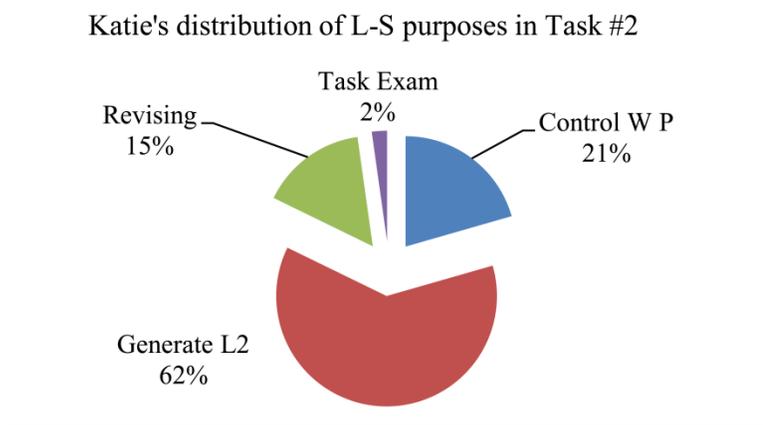


Figure 4-12. Katie's L-S distribution of purposes during her second writing task.

### Perceptions of her L2 writing process and her L1 use

Katie perceived she did a good job in her first task; however, she recognized she faced some difficulties. As she put it, “The writing I did good the only part I had trouble with is trying to think of how do you talk about the transportation of the school, just ‘cause I feel like I could elaborate a little bit more but didn’t know what to elaborate on...” She also commented that she found hard to generate L2 content due to her lack of vocabulary. “The hardest, I don’t know sort of sometimes I have trouble with vocabulary like when I don’t know a word.” Katie first impression of her performance during her first writing task was that she thought the activity was somehow difficult because she needed to speak aloud during the whole time and she was not used to it.

Katie was aware of the importance of planning in writing. She was an outline-oriented writer and highlighted how fundamental that was for her writing, “Well, I usually start with an outline and I guess when I read, well I’m supposed to read a couple of times like thinking and kind of brainstorming different ideas about it...” During her planning process, she translated the prompt to make sure she understood it. She said, “Maybe that’s my substitute instead of turning around and getting the English prompt I just translated it myself that time...” Katie was also aware of the importance of elaborating a thesis statement, “I need a thesis ‘cause every time I write, even in Spanish, I always have a thesis to write about.” As she has commented, she perceived herself as a well-rounded writer in her L1, and planning was a fundamental stage in that process.

Katie realized beforehand that writing an argumentative essay was more demanding than writing a personal letter as she suggested during our first interview, “I think something personal is easier to write than something that I’ve got to argue in the essay about something that I have to research on.” She also perceived that writing task as more demanding and less comfortable, “less comfort yes less comfortable, it’s less personal and it’s not it has my point of view in it but then I have to show someone else’s

point of view or different ideas of the topic like pros of under underage drinking by eighteen...” She would have liked more resources to support her arguments to improve her text, “I wished I had sources that I could back myself upon, the part where eighteen year-olds are still developing like mentally the brain, like I’ve heard that before but someone could read that and see, she doesn’t have any sources for anything like that.” This reflection also indicates that Katie had a process-oriented approach to writing and was used to preparing herself in advance to get engaged in any writing process. Reflecting on what she would likely do to improve her text she said, “I’d probably redo my pros part just because I feel like I didn’t have enough information to support my pros, yeah I only had two, and I don’t know, even in my against part I feel like I could have more points or things to write about, so I’d probably redo those if I had the chance to.”

Something particularly interesting in Katie’s L2 writing pattern was her constant need to embed her L1 when referring to numbers as she generated L2 content. Qi (1998) states that “it is well known that people tend to return to their L1 when computing math problems” (p. 424). He also suggests that L2 writers usually return to their L1s to develop a thought cross-linguistically without slowing down the pace of thinking. Although she was not computing any math problem during her second writing task, it was evident from her protocols that Katie preferred to use her L1 to refer to figures and numbers without slowing down the pace of her thinking process. She commented that using her L1 to express numbers was easier, “Cause I feel like my English numbers are a lot faster than my Spanish, ‘cause I noticed yesterday, when I was writing, I would say like twenty-one *años* and eighteen *años*, ‘cause it’s just faster to say that than *dieciocho*.” Katie also switched to her L1 to read in her L2 as shown in the second example.

- **okay I need to redo that...** las personas tienen **eighteen** años...
- la idea de **eighteen**... años... para... la edad... okay... en conclusión... de... sostiene la idea de **eighteen** años para la edad legal consumir... alcohol...

Katie was aware that she lacked L2 proficiency and she strongly believed her L1 helped her be a better L2 writer. It helped her organize her ideas in the text, “I think it helps me out to put my sentences together like I would say like, I’m excited for you to come and visit \* (the city).” Katie also said that using English helped her comprehend the text and the task at a stronger level when she was not hundred percent sure. “Probably it would be more sure I use English so I can say it in English and comprehend it at a stronger level that I would in Spanish, not all the time maybe just during the times where I’m not one hundred percent sure on what I’m saying.”

Katie was also aware of the fact that she language switched more during the second writing activity, “I think I spoke more English in this one to make sure it sounded, what do I wanna say, sounded up to standard, is that what I wanna say, so it sounded formal...” As she kept reflecting on this episode she added, “Maybe because since it’s an argumentative essay I feel that I can construct a better Spanish essay if I thought about it in English...”

Although Katie may have the common misconception that L2 writers should think entirely in their L2 when they write in their second language, she suggested that for her, the use of her L1 was beneficial. “In a way I feel like it’s not good just because I’m writing a Spanish paper and I should be at the level where I should be able to just think in Spanish when I write but I think for me, it helps me to think in English and in my mind translate it to Spanish and then write it down on paper.”

Throughout her whole L2 writing process, Katie’s pattern was to use her L1 as her main tool to compensate for her lack of L2; however, it seemed to be an unconscious process, “I’m going back and forth, I’d never realized it until you said something afterwards...” “I think I do that to double-check, to make sure that what I’m writing makes sense in my head. I’m thinking that if it makes sense in English it will make since in Spanish. When I translate it from English to Spanish I think I do this to make sure my sentence structure is correct and word choice is right.”

### Katie's tensions in her L2 writing during the study

Jones & Tetroe (1987) don't believe verbal protocols in general affect writing; however, Katie suggested that the use of the think aloud technique might have surprised her at first. Her first impression of the use of the think aloud technique was, "It was hard because I was not used to talking loud, all my thoughts, is just when I talk I kind of heard myself so, I don't think I need to speak aloud." Katie said that as she was not used to doing that, the first writing task was more demanding in terms of using the technique. She said that speaking aloud in her L2 represented a big challenge to her because that process needed to go along with the need to monitor her L2 accuracy as she checked for verbs and conjugations. As she needed to engage in highly cognitive demanding tasks such as monitoring her L2 while she wrote, she said her thinking process was slower, "If I had to verbalize like I did the other day but I had to do in Spanish I would be be slower..." In addition, Katie thought that the fact of monitoring her L2 output usually took her away from the assignment, "I remember when I was writing that I had to think through the verbs and conjugations and the adjectives before and after the noun and stuff like that and so kind of takes away from the actual assignment of writing like I have in English 'cause it comes natural compared to Spanish."

Katie also commented that during her first writing task she felt the time constraint affected her as I told her that the activity should last no more than 50 minutes which corresponds to the usual academic hour at State University. "I felt a little rushed at the end yeah, but I mean I could've said more but then I just ended it. For a task like this I think it took me a long time to think of things to talk about like the weather and the transportation 'cause it's something I don't care about or don't really talk about so apparently I needed more time to talk it, or like a writing assignment in my writing Spanish class, it usually takes me the whole fifty minutes."

Unlike Meg, Katie thought my beeping did not affect her writing process. She commented that she was so involved with the task that she did not realize she was not verbalizing, “I was surprised that I wasn’t talking aloud, like when you beeped I didn’t realize those (pauses) being that long.” She thought that more than affecting her writing behaviors, my beeping made her keep going, “It made me get going (laughs) no, no, it didn’t scare me, it is just a reminder.”

As I said before, Katie’s pattern was to resort to her L1 as her main tool to cope for her lack of L2. She seemed to compose mainly in her native language and then translate her intended meaning to her L2 whenever she was writing in her second language. Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) state that “the use of the first language enables many students to explore ideas fully on their own intellectual and cognitive levels” (p. 204). They also suggest that those FL students whose L2 proficiency is limited can benefit from their L1s use.

As an L2 writer, Katie brought some of her L1 writing skills to her L2 writing, such as her planning and revising skills, as well as her overall expertise in terms of content; however, in accordance with what she suggested, her lack of L2 proficiency made her L2 writing process slower, less fluent and simpler compared to her L1 writing process. Williams (2005) suggests that in general L2 writers spend less time planning, are less accurate in language use and their processes are slower and longer than their L1 counterparts.

As writing is a consciously learned skill through schooling according to each society’s cultures and needs, it is very likely that each culture shapes unique cultural writing conventions, and these conventions and patterns can be transferred to the L2 writing process (Uysal, 2008). The assumption is that students from different cultures are influenced by their cultural patterns and that this causes them to write in ways that are not native-like (Casanave, 2007). Both Katie and Meg showed these particular characteristics (planning-formulation and revising) in their L2 composing which might contrast with the

native Spanish speakers' L2 writing processes. The need for outlines as well as thesis statements was fundamental in these native English speakers' L2 writing processes and these seemed to be part of their cultural writing behaviors which have been shaped by their personal school experiences. It is not clear though, whether these characteristics (outlines as well as thesis statements) refer only to their L2 academic writing or to their general L2 writing processes or whether these L2 writing characteristics reflect their unique personal writing behaviors or it is the result of the great influence that instruction (schooling) has on culture.

Katie's lack of L2 proficiency was intrinsically related to the situational context where she, as well as Meg, learned her L2. Research has suggested that FL and SL writers showed different development of writing skills (Sasaki, 2004). Foreign language writers usually learn to write in the L2 in order to fulfill academic demands and rarely need to use the L2 writing skills once they graduate from school. Kamimura (1996) states that "students in a foreign language context have only limited opportunities to use a target language in an academic setting.... and this might make marked differences between their first and foreign language composing behaviors" (p.49). Katie's low L2 proficiency has been shaped by the lack of everyday contact with the target language and her difficulty in getting access to the kinds of opportunities for practice found in ESL contexts (Murphy, L. & Roca de Larios, J., 2010). Due to this lack of familiarity with the L2 and the few opportunities to use the L2 for authentic purposes, Katie and Meg's L2 proficiency development evolves in a much slower pace than ESL learners and hence, they needed to scaffold their L2 writing processes in their L1 more often.

#### Summary of the chapter

In this chapter I rendered a description of two native English speakers Meg and Katie, and their L2 writing processes in two think aloud tasks. I incorporated the writers'

perspectives, and a description of their behaviors and attitudes to offer a more detailed account of what goes on during their composing process. After analyzing their L2 writing processes, and taking into account their portraits, it is evident that Meg and Katie showed particular characteristics such as planning-formulation and revising in their L2 composing, which might contrast with the native Spanish speakers' L2 writing processes. The need of outlines as well as thesis statements was fundamental in these native English speakers' L2 writing process and they seem to be part of their cultural writing behaviors.

Data suggest that these L2 writers language-switched constantly during their L2 composing. It is assumed that this was mainly due to a lack of familiarity with the L2 and the few opportunities to use the L2 for authentic purposes and hence, they needed to scaffold their L2 writing processes with their L1 more often. In the next chapter I will describe and analyze the two native Spanish participants and their L2 writing processes and behaviors.

## CHAPTER 5

### THE NATIVE SPANISH SPEAKERS

This chapter describes two native Spanish participants Carlos and Roberto, and their L2 composing processes. I provide a portrait of each and describe their performance and writing habits during the two L2 writing tasks. In addition, I describe the purposes of their language switches, their perceptions and understandings of their personal L2 writing processes and their use of their L1 during that process. I also describe the tensions they faced during their L2 composing processes

#### Carlos: the musician

##### A personal portrait

“I am a flute player, that’s what I am.” Those were Carlos’s words when I asked him to describe himself. Carlos is a twenty-one year-old senior from Costa Rica. His slim body, short height and child-like face make him look much younger. His mother had a strong influence on his personality and from her he inherited his determination and willingness to improve every single day. “At home, my mom wanted me to be independent, to make my own decisions. At school my grades were good but when I began high school, my internal switch turned on and I became a very demanding competitor. I wanted to be the best and I think that my mom’s perfectionism influenced in my education. In high school I was outstanding and now at college, I always work hard to be excellent, to be the best...”

Carlos is the youngest of four siblings. His parents and siblings are from Nicaragua but due to Nicaragua’s social and political instability during the 80’s, they migrated to Costa Rica in search of new opportunities. In Costa Rica, his parents

established a well-known and profitable bakery as their family business in Heredia, the city where the family lives. Carlos said he belongs to a middle class family that has financially supported him to go to college, in his country and abroad. However, not all of his siblings took this opportunity. Carlos's oldest brother is a doctor and his sister is a music teacher, but his other brother decided not to go to college and preferred to be in charge of the bakery. Carlos said his parents are very hard working people. His mother is a very strong and perfectionist woman. She rules the house and is the decision maker regarding the family affairs and the children's education. She was raised by her severe father, a former General for the Nicaraguan Army Forces. Carlos said about her, "She is a beautiful person and has sacrificed her entire life for her children, but she is also very correct, strict and perfectionist in everything she does, she is very demanding." In contrast, Carlos described his father as a very calm, quiet and brilliant man, "My father is a very quiet person, very calm but he did not know how to head the family so my mother took such responsibility. He is a very brilliant person academically but he is not a businessman like my mother..."

Carlos did not have a close relationship with his father when he was younger and he thought that the huge distance between his age and his brothers' ages created a generational gap that has interfered in his family relationships. His closest brother is 10 years older than he. Though he gets along with all members in his family, he is closer with his mother and sister. He said, "I am very close to my mom, the truth is even since I came to the States, all these years, she calls me every day. She makes an effort and calls me every day for half an hour or for two minutes; it all depends, we are always in touch..." In relation to his sister, he commented, "I am also close to my sister too. As my mom was always busy at the bakery my sister took care of me when I was much younger, she was like my second mom..."

Although his mother's first expectation for Carlos was for him to become a bookkeeper so that he could help her expand the family business, she supported his

dreams to become a musician. He started studying music when he was twelve. In Costa Rica, Carlos attended a well-known conservatory during his junior and high school days where he studied not only music but foreign languages, math, sciences, social studies, arts and Spanish. During the first two years, he took a general music class in which he learned to read music and was introduced to the wind and string instruments. In his last three years, he specialized in flute, and after taking a comprehensive examination before three judges, he received a high school diploma that certifies him as a musician.

As he wished to deepen his knowledge, he decided to pursue a BA in Music at State University. As an admission requirement, he took the internet-based TOEFL in which he obtained 73, the minimum score required to be admitted at the university. Consequently, he was required to enroll in English classes in the ESL program of the university during his first semesters. For Carlos, the TOEFL was an eye-opening experience to realize his academic weaknesses, “When I took that test (TOEFL) I realized that my academic level was not so good, the readings, the written essays, I was not used to this system and the truth is I passed the TOEFL with the minimum required grade for admission.” By the time of data collection, Carlos was in his senior year and was finishing his last seventeen credits to obtain his Bachelor’s degree. With regard to his future academic plans he commented, “I’m planning to apply for a Masters in Music and eventually for a Ph. D. program, I’m considering four to five universities in the U.S.”

#### The second language user

Carlos started studying Italian and English as basic requirements to get his high school degree at the Conservatory. Those classes met twice a week for one and a half hours, and they mainly focused on grammar and vocabulary. For Carlos, the fact that the Italian teacher was an Italian native speaker made a huge difference in his learning, “The Italian teacher was a native speaker and that helped a lot, classes were more dynamic;

whereas the English teacher studied English in Costa Rica to teach at schools, it's not the same, it's not conversational English, it was very basic..." Besides the language classes he took at school, his mother enrolled him in a private English school when he was twelve, but he was not interested in learning English then. When he was fifteen, he was enrolled in a different private English school where he started learning the basics of oral communication. Even though he learned a lot in that class, at the end of it he still struggled to orally communicate in English.

During his first year at college, Carlos's major concern was the language barrier he faced as he did not feel capable of fully communicating in English. "At the beginning it was really hard, I did not have that self-confidence, I had to be very careful in choosing my classes. I took those classes which I was familiar with and took orchestra and chamber music so that I could socialize a bit more and after a month my English started to get better." He was required to take three courses in the ESL program: *Reading, Writing and Grammar*. He registered for *Reading* in the first semester as he thought that would help him cope with the readings for the semester. Carlos never refused a chance to socialize since he was clear that was the best way to improve his English communication skills. He was always willing to talk with his classmates and with random people he met on the street. By the time of data collection, Carlos said he felt really confident with his English proficiency and that more advanced classes at the university helped him to give a sound base in his English. "I now feel much better, I feel secure. After the first year I started taking more advanced classes like *Rhetoric* and *Literary Criticism*, those classes helped me develop the language I'm speaking now."

#### The writer

Carlos thought he did not have a solid base in writing during his school days back in Costa Rica. Writing was not emphasized much in class and in the few occasions in

which he had to write essays, attention was paid to grammar and penmanship. “I don’t think teachers graded our written essays in terms of content but grammar” Carlos said. “We never worried much about the text organization. For example, we did not have to write a thesis statement, there was no thesis statement, the text was just a chunk of paragraphs that were somehow related.” Because of his scarce experience with writing, Carlos was never interested in writing in his native language.

Carlos thought that the processes of writing in his native language and in his second language were different. Comparing his previous writing experiences in Costa Rica and in America he commented, “From what I learned in Costa Rica and here I think these processes are different. I think English writing organization is pretty good because if you have a thesis statement; that helps you know what you want to write about. In Spanish we needed to write a heading, a body and a conclusion but there was nothing like a thesis statement that led us to write...” Carlos said his writing was strongly influenced by his Rhetoric professor at the university. He felt he learned the fundamentals of writing and was introduced to the concept of thesis statement, “I was first introduced to thesis statements in my ESL writing class, but it was when I took Rhetoric that my ideas to writing expanded, I used to visit my Rhetoric professor for help when I was working with my first essay. She was really good and an excellent model, I now follow her style to write.”

As Carlos was not motivated to read and write back in Costa Rica, he perceived reading and writing as merely academic duties to be accomplished. He said if not for class, he would not write at all. He did not perceive himself as a writer. When I asked him about his self-perception as a writer, he said, “The truth is that as a writer I don’t consider myself as somebody who likes to put my thoughts on paper. I’m not that kind of person, I usually write papers good enough for classes, papers I feel proud of or that illustrate well my ideas, but at the same time I don’t envision myself as a person who could make a living by writing my own thoughts.”

### Carlos's L2 Writing Process

During this study, Carlos participated in two English writing tasks using a think aloud technique. The first writing task was a personal letter as a response to a friend who wanted to study a semester in Carlos's home university. The second one was to write an argumentative essay stating his opinions on a very controversial topic in town: the potential passing of what was referred to as the "21 Ordinance": *"Should the legal drinking age be reduced to 18 in the city bars, or should it remain 21."*

During both L2 writing activities, Carlos showed interesting writing behaviors that contribute to understanding his overall L2 composing process. In the following section, I provide an overview of Carlos's L2 writing habits, especially those regarding planning, text length, and his modest L1 use, as the most salient personal characteristics of his L2 writing habits. My three research questions organize the discussion of findings about his L2 writing process in terms of L-S purposes, his perceptions of L2 writing and L1 use and his tensions during L2 writing.

When writing in his L2, Carlos was very meticulous; he wanted to develop all his ideas in full detail and tried to make his text neat and clean. He started brainstorming, closed his eyes and started verbalizing as if he were talking to somebody else. He was fluent in his L2 and seemed not to need his L1 at all. He mainly verbalized in English. A pattern in Carlos's process was evident in the total number of words in his two written texts: planning short outlines and writing long texts. Carlos confirmed this pattern during one of our interviews. Cumming (1989) suggests that writing behavior and "planning" in particular are socially constrained.

Carlos devoted little time to read the prompt and plan his two written L2 texts. For the first writing task, he spent about 2 minutes out of 43 minutes in planning or 4% of the total composing time. For the second writing task, he devoted approximately 5 out of 55 minutes, or 9% of the total composing time. The fact that Carlos wrote plans for his

texts not only helped him organize his ideas better but set the tenor for their extension. Each one of the topics in his first outline became a paragraph in his letter. In his plan, he highlighted some topics from the prompt that he would later develop such as: to describe the city, the weather, transportation, night life, university facilities: campus, resources, and his personal experiences. Carlos also brainstormed and jotted some ideas when he was planning during his second writing task. This time he was comparing the tendency for teenagers to illegally drink alcohol in the States and in Costa Rica. Figure 5-1 shows Carlos's outlines for the two writing tasks.

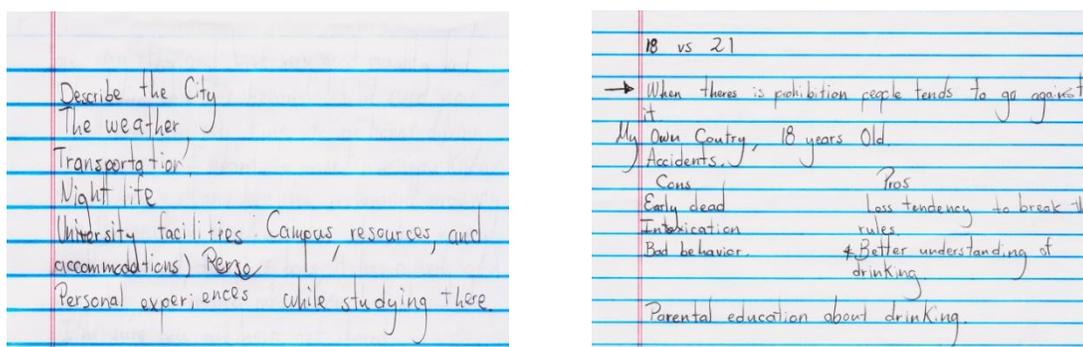


Figure 5-1. Carlos's outlines for the two writing tasks.

As Carlos had to verbalize aloud all his thoughts during these writing tasks, he commented that he was a bit apprehensive at first since he did not want to get stuck without ideas, so he decided to prepare this brief plan. Flower & Hayes (1980) state that planning is “one of the most effective strategies for reducing cognitive strain” (p. 44). In this respect he commented, “At the beginning I was a bit afraid of failing to verbalize if I got stuck without knowing what to write, but once I read the prompt that said ‘describe the following aspects...’ I realized that that would help me not to get stuck so I made this plan and it worked well because I just wrote, wrote and wrote and if I forgot anything I

went back to the plan and read.” Carlos’s reflection confirms Flower and Hayes’s assumption that planning is a problem-solving tool by which writers can reduce cognitive constraints. By writing this outline, Carlos avoided feeling overwhelmed by having to verbalize aloud and trying to decide what to write at the same time.

Although the relationship between culture and writing has not been sufficiently investigated in second language writing research, Contrastive Rhetoric has found that speakers of different languages backgrounds organize their L2 writing in a specific way related to their L1 writing background (Kaplan, 1966; Uysal, 2008). The assumption is that students from different cultures are influenced by cultural patterns that cause them to write in ways that are not native-like (Casanave, 2007). Spanish speakers/writers are said to compose long L2 texts influenced by the way they write in their native language and this seems to be Carlos’s case. Carlos said that this length did not surprise him at all since that was a very common characteristic in his writing, “I think they (English native writers) tend to write a bit less, when I write I always end up writing a lot.”

For his first writing task, Carlos produced a seven-paragraph letter. During his reflection, he considered his text to be long since he tried to provide enough details to fulfill his goals. He also said this was long because the writing was very informal. The total number of words on his letter was 664, which is twice as many than Meg’s letter (318 words) and almost three times more than Katie’s letter (242 words). However, Carlos was not completely satisfied with his letter. He said he would have liked to have written in more detail about some aspects, but he was exhausted by the end. He confessed he decided to use the abbreviation “TTYL” (Talk to you later) to end his letter due to his fatigue of writing extensively.

Carlos’s second written text was also long; he wrote a seven-paragraph essay of about 700 words which was twice as many words than Meg’s (354 words) and Katie’s (357 words) argumentative essays. He also started his second L2 writing task with a short plan as he did in his letter. These two characteristics, writing brief outlines and long texts,

could be understood as Carlos's personal strategies to write in L2 but also could be assumed as a culture-specific aspect as Cumming (1989) suggests. In this respect Carlos commented, "... I think it's something related that in my own country, we have like more of a free writing like, whether than have such a like, such a specific structure."

Carlos's L2 writing was also particularly interesting due to his L-S habits. L-S is one of the most salient characteristic of L2 writing compared to L1 writing. According to Cumming (1989), L2 writers use their L1, at some point in their composing process, in order to compensate for their difficulties in the L2. However, none of Carlos's 2,012 words in his first think aloud protocol was verbalized in Spanish, his L1. This absence of L-S can be due to different causes such as the degree of task difficulty, Carlos's high L2 proficiency or simply, his desire to impress me with his L2 proficiency. Hayes and Flower (1983) suggest that in order to be cooperative, participants "often try to please experimenters" (p. 215).

As I stated before, my own L2 learning experience might bias my perception of the situation and as a means to avoid this, during his first reflection, I directly asked him if he was trying to please or impress me by not language switching during his first writing task, "No I wasn't, no, actually what happens with me like for example right now, the reason why I'm speaking in English is because since I wrote this in English it's so difficult for me to think in Spanish..." The absence of L1 use in Carlos's first protocol is particularly interesting since most of the studies about L-S have shown that L2 writers tend to switch to their L1 to some extent during their L2 composing process. One of Wang & Wen's (2002) participants was an exception. Their findings revealed that out of the 32 think aloud protocols, only one was completely in English; however, they did not further discuss that particular protocol.

In contrast, during the second writing task, the argumentative essay, Carlos switched to Spanish on two occasions. He used his L1 in 11 words which was not

significant compared with the total number of words he used (2,477 words) in his second think aloud. Figure 5-2 illustrates this proportion in percentages.

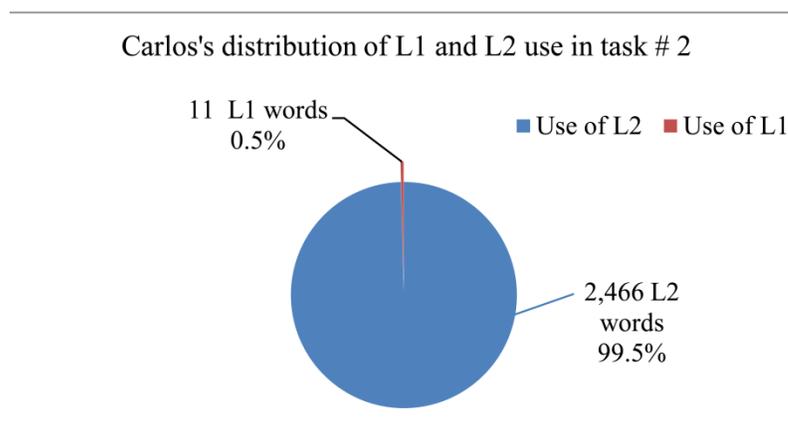


Figure 5-2. Carlos's L1 and L2 use distribution during writing # 2.

This being said, next I discuss findings about the nature of Carlos's L-S purposes, his perceptions about his own L2 writing and his use of L1 while writing in English, and the tensions he faced during that process.

#### Carlos's purposes for language switching (L-S)

This L-S study aims to understand the purposes for which these writers use their L1 during their second language writing process. In Carlos's case, he used his L1 during a lexical search, trying to find a word to generate L2 content. Cumming (1989) states that expert writers use their L1 frequently during word searches. When Carlos was about to write his personal experience about alcohol consumption, he was hesitant to use the word "anecdote" since he was not sure about its spelling. As he faced this lexical problem, he kept repeating the word "anécdota" (anecdote) while he was trying to find it in the

bilingual dictionary as can be seen in an excerpt of his second think aloud. In the following excerpts italics represent his reading aloud, regular font represents his speaking without writing or reading, underlining represents his composing and L-S instances are shown in bold font:

- “...anecdote... um... an-... ane-... ane-... ane-... um... **anécdota...**  
**anécdota... anécdota...** um (...) **anécdota** (...) **anécdota** (...) **anécdota...**  
**anécdota**... .. anclar... xx... anden... anec-... **anécdota... anécdota...**  
anecdote... um (...) anec-...”

Murphy and Roca de Larios (2010) state that the presence of a lexical problem could be revealed by implicit clues such as “long pauses or repetitions” (p. 67). Carlos reflected on this episode, “I think I did it to find a word right, yeah I couldn’t find because I was not very sure how to write it down or if that was like Spanglish. Actually, like it came to my mind like ‘anecdote’ but then I was not very sure, I was like oh is this Spanglish, like sometimes I do that like without realizing I will use something that is Spanglish, that I think it’s English and then it’s actually not, so then I thought ‘anecdote’ will be one of these words, since I couldn’t find it then I had to, of course translate ‘anécdota’ and then go to the dictionary and try to find it...” A lexical search is a common strategy in L2 writing; even highly proficient L2 users resort to their L1s not only for problem solving (Lay, 1982; Cumming, 1989; Murphy & Roca de Larios, 2010) but for refining their lexical choices and making better texts.

There is no doubt that Carlos’s low L-S occurrences have to do with his high L2 proficiency and this, in turn, is closely related to the chance he had in learning English as a second language. The context in which L2 learners learn an L2 is fundamental to understanding the whole situation, and the settings, the goals, motivations and cultural and linguistic backgrounds in which ESL student-writers learn to write differ greatly.

Carlos came to the States with the purposes of continuing his studies in Music. He started learning English as a foreign language in Costa Rica, with few opportunities to use his L2 for authentic purposes, but after he moved to the States, his English skills for communication increased rapidly since English was the language he used at all times while in school and to socialize in his daily life. This, of course, has positively affected Carlos's L2 writing skills. During the entire study, Carlos had the chance to reflect about his L2 proficiency. He said, "My English was not very good at first and after I came here, just by starting to talk to other people, with all the classes, the environment, everything has been easier and more natural."

#### Perceptions of his L2 writing process and his L1 use

Carlos was not completely satisfied with his written texts at first. Reflecting about the personal letter, he said that he would have liked to offer more information on certain aspects such as his home university. Reflecting about his argumentative essay, Carlos first commented that he thought he had a clear thesis statement and three main reasons to support this thesis. He said he wrote one paragraph for each one of those three main reasons; however, when I asked him why he had written seven paragraphs, he said, "Okay, so this third paragraph is actually a continuation of the second paragraph, let me see, one, two, three four, five and then the conclusion..." He kept on reflecting on his essay and commented, "If I had the chance to rewrite this I would put these paragraphs together, yeah just because it's the same kind of idea and then the second, the second paragraph is just one as a whole, the third paragraph is one as a whole and then I introduced this new idea that it was actually what I thought the solution was that like, like I'm saying that reducing like, I'm saying what would be the benefits of reducing but then like in this fifth paragraph I'm saying that what I think is um okay so, I don't know, the fifth paragraph, I think it doesn't fit like, it might be part of the conclusion, or it shouldn't

be there, like I felt that I'm not I'm giving my opinion on the issue, but it doesn't belong to the thesis statement..." In this long reflection, Carlos showed his expertise as a writer; he clearly pointed out how he could improve his text if he had the chance to put together certain paragraphs and delete others. Cummins (1996) states that L2 learners form a "common underlying proficiency" which helps them transfer cognitive or literacy skills from their first language to their second. Edelsky (1982), Jones and Tetroe (1987) as well as Friedlander (1990) also suggest that L2 writers transfer L1 skills, knowledge about writing and strategies to approach the L2 process of writing. Carlos's desire to rewrite the text suggests his awareness of the dynamics of the composing process. He perceived writing as a several-draft process.

There are several factors that could have increased the degree of task difficulty in Carlos's second writing task. Qi (1998) suggests that "when an L2 task is relatively demanding, the participant tends to use her L1 for cognitive processing" (p.424), that is to say, the levels of knowledge demands have influenced her cognitive processing behavior. Carlos realized the second task was more demanding and he admitted to being a bit overwhelmed by several factors during this second writing task, "The topic was a little bit more difficult, I didn't have as much time as to process in my brain..."

He also found it more difficult because he had a hard time trying to organize his ideas from the short plan he had; this suggests that planning is a fundamental stage in the writing process. Jones & Tetroe (1987) see "planning as a critical high-level composing activity" (p. 39). In this respect he said, "... it was actually very tricky for me to write it because I didn't have a clear idea when I start writing, so even though like I had like I tried to annotate or write down things that I could talk about, I still didn't have like a clear idea of what I was writing..." Carlos admitted openly he did not like to spend too much time writing outlines as he was not used to it. "I don't like writing *outlines*, I almost never do them, I usually plan them in my mind and pick some ideas, only ideas in my plan..." Then he added, "I do it when I have to write something that needs to be fast

so that helps me organize, because as I said like, when I usually write I take a lot of time to to kind of like organize my thoughts in my head, but I seldom like, write a long plan.” From his reflection I can assume that Carlos’s difficulty in approaching his second writing task was the fact that he did not spend time enough to prepare a longer and better outline to lead his L2 writing. As he himself commented, at the beginning of his second writing task, he did not know how to start his writing even though he had a short plan. Carlos did not consider the audience for whom he was writing either. He said, “... I wasn’t thinking about the audience but perhaps like in my subconscious I was thinking more as like to talk to parents...”

Although he did not use his L1 much during his L2 writing process, Carlos indicated that he indirectly accepted the benefits of L-S during L2 composing when he said, “Sometimes, sometimes I feel like, sometimes I think how could I say this in Spanish, when it’s hard for me to say it in English but but it’s, I don’t use it much...” Carlos was conscious that his L2 writing was pretty natural, fresh and sophisticated, and he was also aware that he did not language switch often during his L2 composing process. He strongly believed that a person’s L2 proficiency was closely related to his language switching habits, “When I wrote this letter I thought in English at all times, it wasn’t hard to do so, like I realized that when I’m writing in English now I almost never think in Spanish like I did during my first year when I was learning English, I had to translate a bit more then.” Carlos’s words reflect and support what L2 research has shown that L1 use decreases as L2 proficiency increases, that is to say, the more proficient a L2 writer is, the less he needs to language-switch to his L1 (Woodall, 2002; Wang & Wen, 2002; Weijen et al, 2009). Carlos was also conscious about the fact that task difficulty contributes to this L-S, “When I’m writing an academic essay and let’s say I want to use a more sophisticated phrase, and even though I’m thinking in English I can’t finish that phrase, I soon realize that such a phrase might have a Spanish structure, it’s something I would use in Spanish...”

### Carlos's tensions in his L2 writing during the study

Despite his high English proficiency, Carlos faced some difficulties during his experience participating in this study. Although Jones and Tetroe (1987) and Hayes and Flower (1983) don't believe verbal protocols in general affect writing, Carlos suggested that the fact of verbalizing aloud might have influenced his writing. He said that during his first writing task he was not affected by the think aloud technique; however, during the second writing task, he felt the technique negatively affected his composing process. "At first I was a bit afraid of not being able to verbalize but when I read the prompt, that was easy..." Then he added, "The first one was really easy and I felt that speaking aloud helped me..." However, his perceptions regarding the role thinking aloud played during his second writing task were completely different. "Well, ... because I needed to be constantly like speaking, I didn't allow my brain to have that kind of break, that kind of space that it needs, for me to kind of like focus on an idea and kind of write it down, so it interrupted me yeah, in a way it did, in this one yeah, in the first one I didn't have the problem but in this one like I felt that my brain didn't have that space that it needs for me to kind of like focus on an idea and kind of write it down."

Carlos also commented that he was not the kind of person who could do multiple complex actions at a time. He said he always has a hard time learning and coordinating highly cognitive demanding tasks, "It's very difficult so that's one of my biggest problems as a flute player, I mean I have improved so much and like I have had like very good success but my main problem is still that I'm not able to think about two things at a time, like thinking in the note I'm playing and at the same time thinking about the air stream, that's hard..." Carlos also commented that he was affected by time constraints during the second writing task. He thought that if he had had more time, his writing would have had a higher quality.

Carlos was a highly proficient L2 user and an organized L2 writer despite his personal perceptions of himself as a writer. The fact that he was living in an all English speaking environment helped him improve his L2 communication skills greatly, and his high English proficiency helped him become an almost independent L2 writer. Carlos's few L-S occurrences could be connected to a principal factor such as task difficulty for which he has used his L1 to generate L2 through lexical searches. However, his low frequency of using L1 during the L2 composing process was closely related to his high proficiency as he affirmed. During the entire experience, Carlos suggested that think aloud protocols and time constraints affected his L2 writing.

### Roberto: the family provider

#### A personal portrait

Roberto is a tall, robust and brown skinned man from Mexico. He was born in Ciudad Juarez twenty-eight years ago and moved with his mother and siblings to El Paso, Texas when he was six. He did not know the reasons why they moved to the U.S. since they had a good living standard in Mexico, but he remembered that his grandfather was given a Green Card and that his grandfather became the first in the family who migrated to the U.S. Roberto is a very reserved man and speaks only when spoken to. He is married to Luisa and has two daughters, Christine and Tania. Although he has lived in the U.S. most of his life and is absolutely competent in English, he considers Spanish to be his native language. At home he speaks both languages with his wife and daughters and sometimes they speak what he calls *Spanglish*.

Roberto is the oldest of his siblings, and his parents got divorced when Roberto was three years old. His father attended college and graduated as a veterinarian in Mexico. Roberto's mother did not go to school as she had to take care of the children. Although she is literate in her native language and understands English, Roberto's mother

does not speak it. She likes reading Spanish romantic novels from time to time. Roberto's wife graduated in Fashion Merchandising and likes to read articles and magazines related to her professional field.

Roberto perceives himself as Hispanic and said that he usually felt overwhelmed in Mexico as he was used to living in the Midwest, "I don't feel pretty comfortable there (Mexico) but it's not it's not, it's not because of the people but for like here in the Midwest there's not many people here like, so there, that is what made me feel overwhelmed but I like the people, my family when I visit places I feel okay." Roberto's family's future plans will depend on Luisa's chances to find a job. "If she can't find a job here in the Midwest the next step would be to move to a place where she can find a job. In my field political science, I think is a lot easier to find a job anywhere..."

Roberto started attending a bilingual elementary school in El Paso when he was six. When he reflected on his early memories at school he said, "I remember attending a bilingual school, at first it was a bit hard because in EL Paso, when I lived in El Paso everybody spoke Spanish because that's their language, so the school was the only place where I used English and during the first years I think I was taught in English and Spanish, maybe it was a bit easier when the teacher taught the same thing in English and Spanish."

Roberto attended high school and graduated in 2000, but as he was not sure what he wanted to be, he decided not to go to college and started working in a cattle and pig processing plant to make a living and provide for his family. During our first interview he recalled the following, "When I graduated from high school, I graduated in 2000 from high school and then I decided to work in what is called animal processing. During four years I worked in that place, in a plant processing pigs and cattle and then when I got married and moved to Ames I started working in a factory that made meat and stuff for pizzas, I don't know why I didn't stay at school, I had different plans, as Hispanic one never plans for the future..."

However, he went back to school since his wife inspired him to go back. “The strongest motivation for me was my wife, who started attending college right after she finished high school but I didn’t...” Then he added, “I was working in the plant and in the factory and I realized that it was hard, no maybe it’s not hard but in the long run I see there’s no future because when one starts losing strength, losing your physical strength, then they lay you off...” Roberto was admitted to study Political Science and Spanish at the State University, and he was aware of the importance of education in his future life. He said that he wanted to get a certification in Spanish and though he is a native Spanish speaker, he said that it is crucial to have an endorsement in Spanish nowadays. When he reflected in his future plans he said, “I want to graduate and make a career in political science, if I don’t keep studying Law in grad school I would like to find a job related to immigration. I would like to work with policies, like how to help Hispanic people...”

At the moment of data collection, Roberto was a senior majoring in Political Science and Spanish. He was taking four classes: *Latino Politics*, *Immigration Policy*, *Islamic Culture* and *Business Spanish*. He was also applying for an internship to a foundation called “The State Immigration Coalition Education” in which he would potentially learn how to educate companies and people about the importance of knowing the immigration policies in this country. His expectations were to get some experience during his internship and then graduate in 2011.

#### The second language user

As Roberto started learning English early in his life and has Spanish as his native language, he was fully competent and fluent in both languages. However, he prefers to speak Spanish most of the time except at school and in places where no one speaks it. Roberto said that the role he played in his house when he was a kid helped him become very competent in English. After becoming fluent in English, he became the family

translator in public offices. “I think what really helped me was I had an ill brother and as I was the oldest in my family, I had to go with my mother to talk to the doctors, so then there it was when when I had to use English, that’s how I used English by then. I used to translate for my mom when shopping or in some other places.” At that early age he realized how demanding and highly cognitive the process of translating was since he sometimes did not have the proper words. He described, “Sometimes it was hard because often you don’t understand the medical terms even when you speak English; it was difficult for me at times. Sometimes I knew what the doctor said in English but to translate to Spanish, it was really hard...” By the time of data collection, Roberto commented that he felt pretty comfortable with both languages; he considered himself a native Spanish speaker and a highly proficient English speaker. He ranked himself to have between an 8 to 9 level in English on a 0 - 10 scale.

#### The writer

Roberto does not consider himself to be a strong writer in Spanish because of his lack of expertise with Spanish orthographic accents. He said that he never received formal instruction in Spanish writing and that affected his writing in Spanish. However, he prefers writing in English, “I don’t write much in Spanish, I do it only for class assignments and that is when we read a story like the Cid for example, and we need to focus on what we think about it, about the book, or compare the book with a poem. In English I do the same more or less, but in English I like it more. In my immigration class I like to write about what I think of the immigration laws and stuff...” At the same time, Roberto confessed that when he writes in Spanish, his ideas flow more than when he writes in English. “I think when I’m writing ... something in Spanish my ideas come more easily. When I’m writing something in English, sometimes I have like, though I know what I have to write about sometimes I need to collect some more information...”

Roberto's personal writing experience in English was connected to the school system, a formal context, whereas he did not have formal instruction in Spanish until he started college. For those reasons Roberto assumed that English was a very formal language and Spanish was more versatile and depending on whom you were writing to, you could easily switch from formal to informal. Although Roberto usually used written Spanish to communicate with friends and family through social networks, he had no need to write formal papers in Spanish, and this may be a factor that impeded him from getting interested in the accent rules in Spanish. He suggested that he had problems writing in Spanish, "As I didn't go to school in Mexico and my language, but I do speak Spanish, but... but, when I have to write in Spanish, I find it hard when... because of the accents, but in English I don't..."

#### Roberto's L2 Writing Process

Like Carlos, Roberto participated in two English writing tasks using a think aloud technique. The first writing task was to write a personal letter as a response to a friend who had shown interested in studying a semester in Roberto's home university. The second one was to write an argumentative essay responding to an invitation from the editor of the newspaper on a very controversial topic in town: the *21 Ordinance*.

During both L2 writing activities, Roberto showed interesting writing behaviors. In the following section, I offer an overview of Roberto's L2 writing habits, especially those regarding planning and revising, as well as his L1 use during his personal L2 writing process. Then, my three research questions organize the discussion of findings about his L2 writing process in terms of language switching (L-S) purposes, his perceptions on L2 writing and L1 use, and his tensions during L2 writing.

In both L2 writing tasks, Roberto showed the same pattern. He read the prompt to make sure he knew what to do, wrote, stopped, re-read the prompt and also read his

already-written text as a technique to revise and edit his writing. Every time he read, he sounded aloud every word and crossed out the words, phrases or complete sentences he was not sure about. He edited his text by writing the new words next to the already deleted words. For his first writing task, Roberto wrote a five-paragraph letter. His letter was 357 words which, although was not as long as Carlos' letter (664 words), was still longer than those of the native English speakers (242 words and 318 words). His second written text totaled 479 words, which was still higher than Meg's (354) and Katie's (357). Although he would have liked to have more time to write a more elaborated letter, in his reflections he said he was satisfied with his first written text, but not completely satisfied with his second. For school written assignments, Roberto said he was used to getting ready by reading and searching for information related to the topic on which he would write.

Although Roberto did not explicitly make an outline before starting to write, he took the first two minutes (approximately 6% in his first assignment and 4% in the second, of the total composing time) to read and reread the prompts several times in order to understand what he had to do. Then he took a few seconds to start his writing by saying "how do I start." In this respect he later commented, "Most of the times I just start writing, no outline at all. When I'm writing in English I think it takes more time to visualize my ideas..." Although Roberto took a few seconds to mentally plan how to start his letter, it seemed to me that he developed his ideas at the same time he composed his text and he confirmed he did. Roberto also seemed to bring to the L2 composing process his L1 writing habits, including the absence of an outline to plan his writing. Jones and Tetroe (1987) suggest that L2 writers transfer good as well as weak writing skills from their L1 to English and that seemed to be Roberto's case.

After reading the first prompt several times he realized that the prompt did not correspond with his personal reality since he had not lived in Mexico since he was a child and the prompt asked him explicitly to offer information from his city and university in

Mexico. This stopped him for a moment until he was able to indirectly ask me in Spanish if he could write about his current university and the city where he lived. The appropriateness with which prompts are written may influence how writers use their L1s. Reflecting on this episode he commented, “At first I wasn’t sure to ask you about it but, when I kind of asked you, I had already reflected about it in my mind, I had thought about it and I decided to ask you but I said to myself ‘I won’t look at him.’”

During both L2 writing tasks, Roberto used his L1 as L-S research suggests. During his first L2 writing task, Roberto switched to his L1 12-times. He spoke 3,751 words including 82 words verbalized in Spanish and 3,699 words in English is the first think aloud protocol. As can be seen in Figure 5-3, Roberto’s first task was mainly dominated by his L2. The use of his L1 represents 2% of the total number of words used in his think aloud protocol.

Roberto's distribution of L1 and L2 use in task # 1

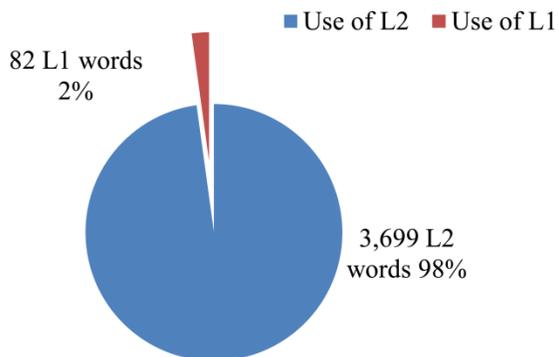


Figure 5-3. Roberto's L1 and L2 use distribution during writing # 1.

During his second writing task, Roberto switched to his L1 six times. Compared to the number of L-Ss during his first writing task, his low frequency of L-S contrasts with some studies which suggest that as more difficult tasks (such as the argumentative essay vs. the personal letter) demand more high level thinking, L2 writers tend to switch more often to the L1s (Qi, 1998; Woodall, 2002). In his second think aloud protocol, Roberto produced 4,157 words in total from which only 36 words were verbalized in Spanish. In Figure 5-4, Roberto's uses of his L1 and L2 can be seen in term of percentages:

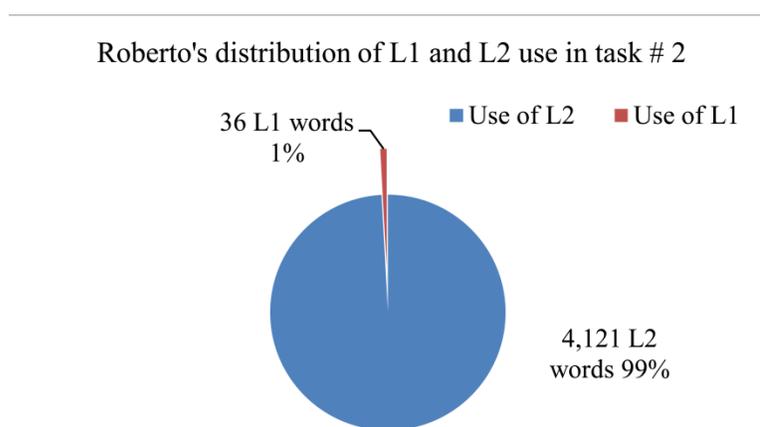


Figure 5-4. Roberto's L1 and L2 use distribution during writing # 2.

In the next section, according to my three research questions, I discuss findings about the nature of Roberto's L-S purposes, his perceptions about his own L2 writing and his use of L1 while writing in English, and the tensions he faced during that process.

### Roberto's purposes for language switching (L-S)

Language switching research suggests that L2 writers tend to language switch for a variety of reasons such as: searching for more appropriate lexical or syntactic item in the L2 or meaning verification, developing a thought cross-linguistically, for metalinguistic use, revising, evaluating and backtranslating, for task examining, controlling the writing process and off-task comments and overloading of working memory (Qi, 1998; Murphy and Roca de Larios, 2010). Roberto language-switched from English (L2) to Spanish (L1) for four different purposes during the first task and three purposes for the second.

The four purposes for which Roberto language-switched during his first L2 writing task were a) Generating L2 Content, b) Revising, c) Task Examining, and d) Controlling the Process of Writing. From 12 L-Ss, 8 (67 %) were intended to Generate L2 content, 2 (17 %) were to revise the text, 1 (8 %) to examine the task and 1 (8 %) to control the L2 writing process. In Figure 5-5, Roberto's L-S purpose can be seen distributed in percentages.

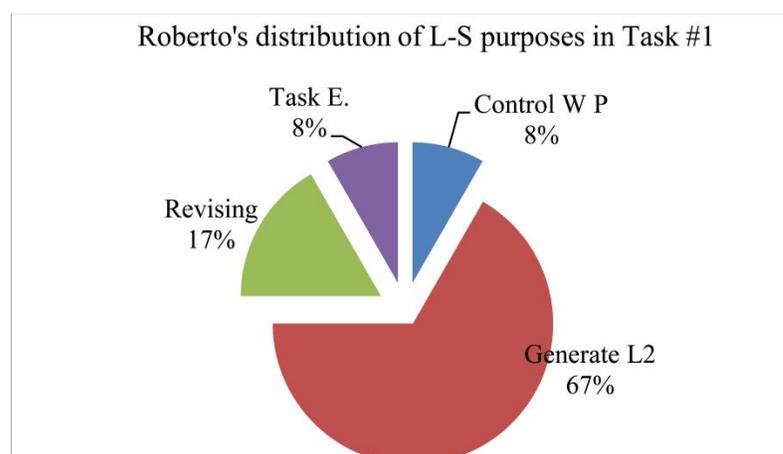


Figure 5-5. Roberto's L-S distribution of purposes during his first writing task.

Roberto used Spanish during his second writing task for three purposes that were more proportionally distributed. In 6 language switches, Roberto switched 2 times to control his process of writing, 2 times to generate L2 and 2 times to revise his text. In Figure 5-6, Roberto's L-S purposes can be seen distributed in percentages.

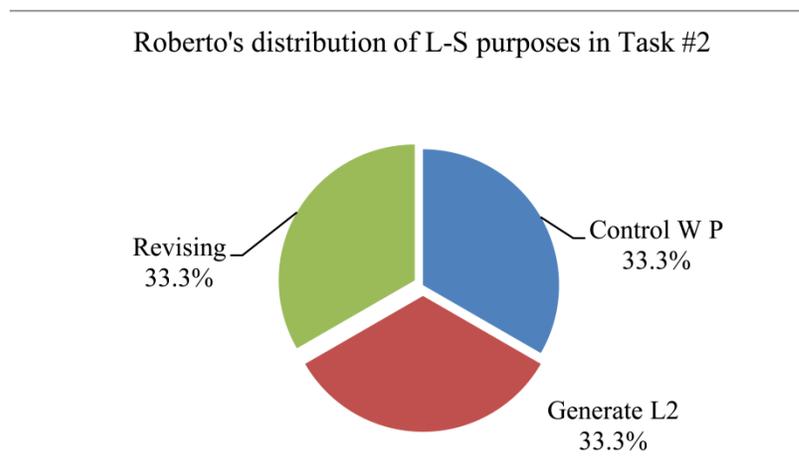


Figure 5-6. Roberto's L-S distribution of purposes during his second writing task.

### Generating L2 Content

Roberto's primary purpose for L-S during his first writing task was to generate L2 content. L2 writers use different alternatives for idea generation in the L2 such as lexical searches through self questioning, problem focusing and direct translation among others. Murphy and Roca de Larios (2010) state that second language writers' lexical problems could be revealed by repetitions in their train of thought. Roberto, like Carlos, showed this common pattern of repeating a word when he faced a lexical problem. He commented that he continuously repeated that word because as he was looking up that

word in the dictionary and was reading other words, he did not want to forget what he was looking for.

- “...impediment... **impedimiento... impedimiento... impedimiento... impe-... impedimento... imp-... impedimiento... impedimento... impedimento... impedimento... impedimiento (...)** **impedimiento... impedimento...** **impedimiento**... *improbable... inoportuno... inoperante... inquietar... impedir... inconvenient...*”

Roberto also language switched to self questioning when he said: “**qué pasa... espérate tantito...**” (what’s going on... wait a minute...) as he was trying to organize and generate new ideas in his L2 to start his third paragraph during his first writing task. Murphy and Roca de Larios (2010) state that L2 writers seem “to carry on an internal dialogue and frequently address questions to themselves” (p. 73).

- “I don’t know... if you’re (...) if you’re s-... I don’t know... [shhh.] I don’t know... **qué pasa...** I don’t know (...) **qué pasa ...** I don’t know... [whispering] (...) **no sé...** xx... I don’t know... **qué pasa... espérate tantito...** *and tell him...* the only... there is only... there is... only... one... thing...”

In this second writing, Roberto also showed his personal pattern of language switching when he lowered his voice and switched to Spanish. In an episode in which he felt he was stuck, he purposely backtracked what he had already written as a way to revise his text but also to generate more L2 ideas. Manchón, et al (2000) state that purposeful backtracking is usually used by L2 writers as a technique to revise. As he did this, he lowered down his voice and asked himself “*qué pasa?*” (what’s going on?) as can be shown in the following excerpt:

- *“the legal drinking age in Iowa City bars be reduced from eighteen to twenty-one has risen... um... I don’t know... um... [ff.]... **qué pasa** (...) the topic for this week states should the legal drinking age be reduced to eighteen...”*

In his reflection, Roberto commented that he used “**qué pasa**” (**what’s going on?**) when he felt he was stuck and wanted to generate ideas in his L2. By observing his protocol, it seems Roberto became frustrated as he could not generate L2 at certain times, and as he was expected to speak aloud, he used this phrase as a resource to break those non-idea-generation moments and at the same time as a resource of having something to speak aloud. In this respect he commented, “I used ‘*qué pasa*’ because I was, as I was stuck with my ideas, then... then when I said ‘*qué pasa*’ it was because I was trying to generate a new idea...”

### Revising

There is a tendency among L2 writers to back-translate the text they just produced into their L1s (Cumming, [1990] cited by Manchón et al, [2000]) as a mechanism to revise their written texts. During the entire process, Roberto was constantly checking his written text to make sure he fulfilled his purposes. Manchón et al (2000) state that as L2 writers have to pay attention to various lower and higher level text demands during the L2 writing process, one of the common strategies to compensate for the limited capacity of working memory they face is to rescan their written texts. Roberto usually resorted to his L1 by purposely back-translating his written text in order to get a mental picture of the written text in his L1 and to make sure his intentions were satisfied (Roca de Larios et al, 1999; Manchón et al, 2000). Roberto back-translated the phrase “I don’t know... **no sé...**” on different occasions. He also back-translated at the end of his think aloud when he was trying to close his letter as shown in the following excerpt:

- “I hope to hear back from you... I... hope... in hope... **en la espera...** I hope... **en la espera de tu próxima...** I hope... **en la espera de tu próxima contestación...** I hope to hear back from you...”

In the second writing task, Roberto also revised by purposely backtranslating to check what he had already written and at the same time, to generate more L2. Roca de Larios, et al (1999) state that “the L1 is of prime importance in this process as writers expand, elaborate and rehearse ideas through their L1 and also back-translate at times into their mother tongue to verify that their intentions are being fulfilled” (p. 25). The following is an example of Roberto’s L-S as he back-translated to English:

- “... *the only thing that is left to do... is... the only thing that is left to do is make...* **la única cosa que queda por hacer... es sumar...** *the only thing that is left to... the only thing that is left to do is... crear...* **la única cosa que queda por hacer... es crear... un resumen de todo...** *the only thing that is left to do is (...)* *the only thing that is left to do is make... an evaluation...*”

Moreover, Manchón et al (2000) suggest that the revision process “does not seem to be hindered by the fact that the text to be revised was written in one language, whereas the means used to carry out such revision is to get a mental picture of the text in another language” (p.25).

### Task Examining

Every time Roberto was stuck during writing, his voice lowered and he whispered. This behavior was an indicator of a language switch. After reading the prompt for the first time, Roberto language switched for an instant in order to examine the task. His first intention was to start writing immediately; however, as he realized he did not know how to start his writing, he decided to read the prompt one more time to make sure

he understood what he had to do. The following excerpt, from his first think-aloud protocol, illustrates an instance of L-S (**a ver**, which means let's see) with the purpose of examining the task. (In the following excerpts italics represent his reading aloud, regular font represents when speaking without writing or reading, underlining represents his composing and L-S instances are shown in bold font)

- “...*include any piece of information you think... will be useful for your friend... a ver*... how do I do start... *An American friend you recently met...*”

### Controlling the Process of Writing

During his first writing task, Roberto switched to Spanish to control the process of writing, that is, the need to use his L1 to organize and plan what he wanted to write in his letter such as when he said:

- “... **que más... voy a escribir primero...**” (what else... first I'm going to write...)

Roberto also used his L1 to control his L2 process of writing as when he said “**acabé**” (I'm done) as he finished his second writing task.

### Perceptions of his L2 writing process and his L1 use

Roberto said he is the kind of writer that takes his time to read and collect information before writing a paper. He needed to prepare in advance and that might be the reason for his dissatisfaction with his second text. In neither task, did Roberto take time to jot ideas or create a more elaborate outline. It seemed that he generated his ideas as he wrote. He barely took two minutes to read the prompt and start his writings. When reading the prompt, his voice was low and calm and he paused and repeated words he

believed to be fundamental for his overall understanding of the task. As if to compensate for the absence of an outline, he read the prompt at least twice before starting writing.

Roberto told me he has never considered the benefits of planning ahead or preparing outlines. “I don’t make any outline, only in my mind. I start by reflecting about what I read and then I focus on the prompt. Usually the professor gives us a prompt or something that we have to write about, it is when I start thinking about it...” Later he added, “I think if I wrote an outline maybe my ideas didn’t flow much, and I might feel confused a little with so many ideas, I wouldn’t know where to put them...” However, Flower & Hayes (1980) state that planning is “one of the most effective strategies for reducing cognitive strain” and that one way to improve people’s writing “is to improve the planning process they go through as they write (p. 44).

Roberto also reflected about his writing habits. “I only realized that I usually write what I’m thinking and at the same time I go back and check what I’ve been writing and try to correct...” As a writer, Roberto was aware of the need to think in audience for his writing. In his second writing task, Roberto began his text with a false start by addressing his essay to: “*dear editor.*” However, after reading the prompt one more time, he decided to start his text addressing his essay to “*To whom it may concern.*” When I asked him the reasons why he decided to change that, he commented, “Because when I think that when you write something for the editor, even though you name him, your ultimate goal is for all the people to read your paper, for the general public...”

Roberto said that he regularly thinks in English during L2 writing; however, he also confessed that he had a particular technique he used anytime he felt he was stuck when using his L2. He said, “I’ve been using English for a long time and when I have to write in English is like like I prepare, I get ready to think in English, but somehow when I’m writing if I feel I’m stuck thinking in English then I switch and think in Spanish and then I translate it to English, most of the times it works but I sometimes use Spanglish...”

Roberto was aware of his L-S habits and commented on his personal pattern of L-S when he was reflecting on his first writing task. “When I felt stuck and didn’t know what to write I realized my voice started to lower and then I asked myself to wait, it’s like, like my personal way to switch from English to Spanish.” Flower (1989) states that “writers are constantly giving themselves instructions for how to write and what to do and then monitoring how well their current effort is going” (p. 32). Roberto said that his L-S from English to Spanish was a natural process. “It is something natural, I speak Spanish and that’s why I use it...” Roberto thought the use of his L1 during his L2 writing process was beneficial. As Qi (1998) suggests, the use of the writer’s L1 “facilitates rather than inhibits L2 composing processes” (p. 429). In his reflection he commented, “I think that most of the times the use of Spanish helps me put my ideas straight, as I speak Spanish most of the time, sometimes I need to use it, I need to think in Spanish and translate it to English...”

Roberto also commented that his L-S habits were sometimes unconscious like his first language-switch during the second writing task.

- I don’t know... um... [ff.]... **qué pasa** (...) *the topic for this week states should the legal drinking age be reduced to eighteen...*

Reflecting about that episode he said, “I don’t even remember that I language switched at the beginning...” Roberto strongly believed that he needed to language switch during his L2 writing process and depending on the topic, the frequency of his language switches would vary. Roberto also told me that his L-S habit was a natural behavior that he had experienced before, “This is a natural behavior that I have, not only with this one but when I have written other papers for... for, I have noticed that I have language-switched...” It is worth noting here that Roberto said that he experienced the same phenomenon when he wrote in Spanish, his L1.

Roberto realized that he language-switched less often in this second writing task compared to the first. He thought that the reason was that he was more familiar with the topic in English. As he put it, “In this (writing task) I spoke more, almost all my thoughts were in English, I almost never thought in Spanish, maybe because this topic is more common here in the States, so I’ve heard about it in English more than in Spanish...” Friedlander’s (1990) suggests that L2 writers benefit when they match the language to the topic. In this case, Roberto did not feel the need to use his L1 much because the topic was more familiar to him in English than in Spanish. He was more comfortable writing about that topic in English than in Spanish.

#### Roberto’s tensions in his L2 writing during the study

During his L2 writing tasks in this study, Roberto faced some difficulties related to the prompt and the think aloud technique itself. The English prompt corresponding to the first writing task did not reflect Roberto’s particular case since he could not be considered an international student like Carlos but a legal resident of the United States. He grew up in El Paso, Texas, and he never lived nor studied at college in Mexico. One of Roberto’s L-Ss during his first writing task occurred when he did not know what to do about this situation. He decided to indirectly ask me if he could adapt the prompt to his particular situation. He told me, “I think the most difficult was, it was to explain the benefits of studying here, I don’t live here...” Roberto’s comments help us understand the need for adapting prompts to the writers’ needs. Roberto said that the think aloud technique helped him focus in some cases; however, he said, “Sometimes your thoughts come faster than your writing and that gave me a hard time by having to write and speak aloud at the same time.”

Roberto was an advanced second language speaker and the most proficient L2 user among the four participants in this study. Although his lack of planning in his L2

writing process might affect his composing, Roberto cared about his written production. He constantly proofread what he wrote and made sure his final written text reflected what has been asked in the prompt. Roberto was raised in a bilingual community since he was 6 years old and this fact has made of him a very competent language speaker in both languages. However, he thought that his lack of academic experience in Spanish has jeopardized his status as a language writer. Like Wang & Wen's (2002) results, Roberto seems to confirm that students switch more frequently to their L1 during the first writing task than during the second. Roberto's perceptions about his need to use his L1 during his L2 writing confirms Wang's (2003) results that suggest that highly proficient L2 writers can benefit from using their L1s.

Although Carlos and Roberto were highly proficient L2 users, they also language-switched to their L1 as a useful resource to succeed during their L2 writing processes. This confirms that even advanced L2 writers use their L1 to some extent during their L2 composing processes (Cummins, 1989). However, their language switching habits were at a lower degree; that is, they language-switched less frequently, compared to the native English users in this study. This low tendency to use their L1 during the L2 composing process is closely related to their high proficiency as L2 users. As Woodall (2002) suggests, the more proficient a L2 writer is, the less he needs to language-switch to his L1. Friedlander suggests that more advanced learners of English (such as Carlos) have developed their L2 proficiency to such a level that they do not see the need to use their native languages.

The two different contexts (FL and SL) in which learners learn their L2s will strongly shape the way and purpose in which they write. People learn to write in an L2 for a variety of reasons and in different contexts, and the settings, the goals, motivations and cultural and linguistic backgrounds in which ESL student-writers and FL student-writers learn to write differ greatly. ESL writers, planning to live and work in the target culture, need to learn the SL for professional and academic success. This last situation

pertained to Carlos's and Roberto's cases. Woodall (2000) suggests that the participants in this study, like the ones in his research study, "were influenced by the all English setting" (p. 24). Furthermore, it is possible that Carlos and Roberto's Spanish speaking cultures have shaped their unique writing conventions and these conventions and patterns were transferred to their L2 writing process (Kaplan, 1966; Uysal, 2008). It is also possible that their personal schooling experiences have shaped their cultures and hence, their writing has been influenced not only by their Spanish speaking environment but by their school system since culture is mediated by instruction. Unlike Meg and Katie, Carlos and Roberto did not prepare detailed plans to direct their L2 writing process and commented that they were more oriented to mentally plan for their L2 writing. In addition, data suggest that these native Spanish speakers wrote more in their L2 than the native English speakers based on the count of words in their L2 written texts. Gender differences are also possible; however, I did not address that topic in this study.

#### Summary of the chapter

In this chapter I described two native Spanish speakers, Carlos and Roberto, and their L2 writing processes. I incorporated the writers' perspectives and cultures, and a description of their behaviors and attitudes to offer a more detailed account of what occurred during their composing processes. After analyzing their L2 writing processes, and taking into account their portraits, it is evident that Carlos and Roberto are highly proficient L2 users due to living in an "all English setting" which positively influences their L2 writing process. Data suggest that these L2 writers wrote longer L2 texts, and they also language-switched to their L1 during their L2 writing processes, but to a lower level compared to the native English speaking participants.

## CHAPTER 6

### CONCLUSIONS

This study sits at an intersection of prominent theories that view writing as a composing process regardless of whether it occurs in a first (L1) or second language (L2) and the L2 students' native languages as a resource for learning. Recent research about L2 writing indicates that L2 writers are likely to instruct themselves on how and what to do during the writing process, using both languages to do so. They move back and forth between their native language and their L2 to examine the writing task, generate ideas, grapple with vocabulary, control their L2 composing process and /or revise and edit their written texts. This phenomenon is known as language-switching (L-S). Unlike code-switching, which usually refers to the use of more than one language in one communicative episode, language-switching refers to the act of switching from L2 to L1 during an L2 composing activity (Qi, 1998).

The aim of this study was to explore the potential use of the L1s during the L2 writing processes of four undergraduate students in a major American university, with the purpose of describing and illuminating the complex phenomena of L-S from a qualitative standpoint. My goal was to describe and understand the purposes for which these four participants would potentially language-switch to their L1s and to depict the perceptions and understandings these four participants have about their personal L2 composing process and the use of their L1s. It was also my intention to describe the tensions they experienced during the L2 writing processes and during the study itself. The participants in this study were Meg, Katie, Carlos and Roberto, four undergraduate students with varying majors and interests who were required to write in their L2s for academic purposes. They were selected on the basis of their profiles as native speakers of English

or Spanish, their status as college undergraduates, and their willingness to voluntarily participate.

L2 composing process studies as well as language switching studies have been mainly conducted, for a variety of reasons, from a quantitative point of view focusing on the writing process itself, covering only part of the complex L2 processes since they have not considered the writers' stances. I considered it fundamental to approach this study from a qualitative lens incorporating the writers' perspectives and a description of their writing behaviors and attitudes to offer a more detailed account of what occurred during their composing processes. I approached data collection from a qualitative perspective within a clinical setting in order to observe the participants' writing processes very closely. The primary data collection method, which provided participants the chance to individually engage in writing experiences, was a think-aloud technique in which students verbalized all their thoughts while they wrote responses to two prompts. This method gave me access to the particular cognitive processes that occurred in each participant's mind during the L2 writing act. In my design, I adapted common interpretive methods such as interviews, observations and reflective sessions with the purpose of observing in depth and exploring, with the students, their perceptions, beliefs and reasoning about their own second language composing process and their L-S habits. Interviews, as well as reflection sessions, in which the informants and I reviewed a videotape of their think aloud, enabled a more complete picture of what occurred during each participant's composing process and allowed me to understand the meaning these second language writers constructed from their unique and personal writing experiences.

Data analysis in this study was qualitative and inductive. I used a constant comparative method which implies a continuous comparison of all the data sources (Merriam, 2009). I first coded each participant's think aloud protocol, using a computer assisted qualitative data analysis software program called *Atlas.Ti*, to find out whether these four L2 writers language-switched and determine their L-S purposes when they did.

As I watched what the writer was doing in each L-S event, I matched language-switching instances with the participants' behaviors and assigned codes referring to the writers' actual activities or behaviors such as a) Generating L2 Content, b) Controlling the Process of Writing, c) Revising, d) Task Examining, and e) Others. I also created a new code named "Beeping" to analyze whether my beeping affected or influenced their L1 use or not. I also identified tensions and individual perceptions about their L2 writing process and their L1 use.

At the heart of this research is the stance that through observing these second language writers' writing processes and seeking their individual perceptions, I can better understand the language-switching phenomenon and the second language writing process in general. Given that I have experienced the struggles of the second language writing process myself, first during my academic experience in my home country -Venezuela- as I learned to write in English, and second as a graduate student at a major Midwestern university in the United States, I am familiar with these struggles and understand these writers' tensions and perceptions about the language-switching phenomenon. As a way to contribute to the research done in the L2 writing field, Sasaki (2002) suggests a need for qualitative research to examine "the details of EFL writers' individual writing processes" (p. 79).

### Research Questions

The overarching questions, introduced in chapter 1, that led this research study were as follows: a) What are the purposes of any language switching that occurs during the participants' L2 composing process? b) What are these students' perceptions about their L2 composing process and their use of L1 in L2 writing? c) What are the tensions these writers experience during their L2 composing processes? As these research questions shaped how data were collected and analyzed in the present study, I would like

to present and discuss each one of these questions individually. It is my belief that it is not only fundamental to know the L2 writing process and investigate the reasons why L2 writers switch between their L2's and L1's, but to describe and understand the L2 writer's perceptions about this phenomenon since this has been avoided in much of the existing research.

What are the purposes of any language switching that occurs during the participants' L2 composing process?

In this study, I focused on the spontaneous, non-instructed use of the writers' L1s during the L2 composing process, and, hence, I analyzed the writers' protocols to find out whether they used their L1s spontaneously or not. An initial review of their think-aloud protocols in this study clearly demonstrated the spontaneous and recurrent use of these writers' L1s during their L2 composing process. Meg and Katie as well as Carlos and Roberto used their native languages to some extent during their L2 writing processes. This confirms what previous studies have suggested, that the L2 writing process is a bilingual event (Cumming, 1989; Lay, 1982; Manchón et al, 2000; Wang and Wen, 2002).

#### Influence of the situational context of L-S

The frequency with which these four writers language-switched varied tremendously along the two writing tasks and among individuals. Meg and Katie language-switched more frequently than Carlos and Roberto during the two writing tasks. This pattern may be explained by the fact that Carlos and Roberto are more advanced L2 users due to their L2 learning environment. They have learned and used English as a second language on a daily basis as they have lived and were currently living in an English speaking context. It is very likely that Carlos and Roberto were strongly

influenced by this all English setting as Woodall (2000) suggests. In contrast, Meg and Katie's L2 proficiency development has evolved at a much slower pace, compared with that of the native Spanish speakers, due to their few opportunities to use the L2 for authentic purposes. Even though Meg suggested that she had abundant opportunities to use her L2, she, like Katie, needed to scaffold their L2 writing processes in their L1 more often. Research suggests that FL and SL writers showed different writing skills development (Sasaki, 2004). According to Woodall (2002) L-S frequency is related to L2 proficiency and, hence, if language-switching is closely related to L2 proficiency, and L2 proficiency is related to the situational context where L2 learners learn and use their L2, the SL and FL contexts are also essential in language-switching studies as this study suggests.

Findings in this study agree with Woodall's (2002) study when he states that the more proficient L2 writers are, the less they need to language-switch to their L1s. However, this finding also contradicts Wang's (2003) study in which her high proficient writers language switched more than his low proficient ones. It is worth noting here that my definition of L-S is more related to Woodall's than to Wang's and this might explain this disparity. In my study, a language switch was defined as the spontaneous and non-instructed use of L1 in the L2 writing process, whereas for Wang (2003) a language switch was a "problem solving behavior" (p. 366).

#### Participants' L-S frequency

As Weijen et al (2009) suggest, L1 use during L2 writing "does not generally appear to be a writer-specific characteristic" as the use of their native languages differs for each individual writer in different ways for each activity. These individual differences and patterns emerged from the data analysis and can be summarized as follows: On one hand, Katie's L2 writing process was entirely dominated by her L1. In both writing tasks,

the use of English, her L1, was above the 50% percentile (53% and 63% respectively) considering the total amount of words in the protocol, and the number of language-switches increased from 154 (L-S) in the first writing task to 180 (L-S) in the second. Although Meg was a proficient L2 user, results showed that she was also an L1-dependent L2 writer. However, the use of her native language never equaled 50% (39% and 24% respectively) of the total amount of words in her protocols. These percentages seem to suggest that her L1 use decreased from the first to the second L2 writing task; however, the second protocol showed that the number of words in general was higher compared with her first protocol (1,676 vs. 2,804). Likewise, the number of language-switches increased from 81 (L-S) in the first writing task to 136 (L-S) in the second.

On the other hand, Roberto was a very proficient L2 user. Living in the States since the age of six has increased his L2 proficiency to a very high level. He mainly conducted his L2 writing process using his L2. The use of his L1 was 2% and 1% for each writing tasks respectively. The number of language-switches decreased from 12 (L-S) in the first writing task to 6 (L-S) in the second. This result contrasts with some studies that suggest that as more difficult tasks (argumentative essays) demand more high level thinking, L2 writers tend to switch more often to the L1s (Qi, 1998; Woodall, 2002). Likewise, this result agrees with Wang & Wen's (2002) results which suggest that students switch more frequently to their L1 during the first writing task than during the second. It is important to note here that, as Roberto himself suggested, he was more familiar and comfortable with the second topic than with the first one and this may be the explanation why he language-switched less often in his second task.

Carlos was also a very proficient L2 user. He was the only participant who never language-switched during his first writing task. He only language-switched twice (0.5%) during his second writing task, which was not significant considering the number of words verbalized during his L2 writing process (2,477 words). Roberto and Carlos's performances seem to confirm that more advanced L2 users have developed their

proficiency to such a level that their Spanish (L1) was not needed within their writing in English as Friedlander (1990) suggests.

### Factors influencing L-S

Qi (1998) proposes that the occurrences of L-S, as a dynamic cognitive behavior, depend on certain variables rather than on a “predetermined bilingual memory structure” (p. 417). During this research study, certain factors such as the language in which L2 prompts were written, the suitability with which these prompts were designed, external interruptions such as my beeping or the phone vibrating, influenced some of these writers to use the L1s during their L2 writing processes. For her first writing task, Meg took the English version of the prompt and as I did not want to intervene in her natural writing process, I let her use that prompt for her first writing task. She commented that the English prompt strongly influenced her to use her L1. She suggested that had her first prompt been written in Spanish, she would have likely used more of her second language.

Roberto was also influenced by the lack of appropriateness with which the first prompt was written. As the first prompt asked the writer to describe his home country and the university where he had studied, Roberto was unable to link the prompt with his personal experience. Because he moved to the States when he was six years old, he barely experienced any education in Mexico, nor was he familiar with the geographical setting in Mexico. This fact disturbed him for a while and influenced him to use Spanish as he wanted to make sure what to do. L-S may also be influenced by different external factors such as the beeping sound I used to alert writers to think aloud, or their phones. Most of the times when Meg and Katie heard the beeping sound they instinctively switched to English, their native language. Besides, there was one instance during Katie’s L2 writing process when she language-switched to her L1 because her cellular phone

vibrated. These quick, unconscious switches seemed to be enacted by a force of automaticity, as Qi (1998) suggests.

### L-S purposes and frequency

This study identified the purposes for which Meg, Katie, Carlos and Roberto language-switched during their L2 writing processes. Previous studies suggest that L2 writers tend to language switch for a variety of reasons such as: searching for a more appropriate lexical or syntactic item in the L2 or for lexical meaning verification; developing a thought cross-linguistically without slowing down the pace of thinking; for metalinguistic use, revising, evaluating and backtranslating; and for task examining, controlling the L2 writing process, off-task comments and overloading of working memory (Qi, 1998; Murphy and Roca de Larios, 2010). I found that Meg, Katie, Carlos and Roberto switched to their L1s during their L2 writing tasks for varied purposes; however, I discovered three main consistent purposes in all writers except Carlos: a) Generating L2 Content, b) Controlling the Process of Writing and c) Revising. In addition to these three basic purposes, Katie and Roberto also language-switched during their L2 writing processes for d) Task Examining and for e) Others, in the case of Katie.

The purpose Generating L2 Content seems to be the most frequent and regular category among the four writers in both writing tasks. This category/purpose appears in all protocols except in Carlos's first protocol in which he did not language-switch at all. All four writers language-switched to generate L2 content through lexical searches and/or translations, and during both writing tasks, with one exception, this category dominated the frequency distribution in all protocols. The only exception in this recurrent pattern was Katie's first protocol in which this purpose placed second, after the Controlling the Process of Writing purpose. This result suggests that most of these four writers' L-S instances were primarily intended to generate L2 content by translating from their L1s to

their L2s or through lexical searches, which were mainly used to refine their lexical choices or due to writers' lack of L2 proficiency (Qi, 2000; Murphy and Roca de Larios, 2010). That is to say, this result suggests that generating L2 content is the most recurring purpose for which writers language-switch during L2 writing as Wang and Wen (2002) found and for some writers, such as Meg and Katie, this L2 generation process was mainly done via L1.

The second most frequent purpose was Controlling the Process of Writing which occupied the second place in both Meg's protocols and Katie's second protocol. During Katie's and Roberto's first protocols, this category occupied first place and third place respectively. Meg as well as Katie controlled her L2 writing process frequently by constantly planning and organizing what to do. From the 6 language-switches Roberto did in his second protocol, it was not possible to say that any of them dominated the purpose frequency distribution since he language-switched twice for Generating L2 Content, Controlling the Process of Writing and for Revising respectively.

The third frequent purpose was Revising which was constant in Meg's and Katie's protocols. In Roberto's first protocol, this purpose placed second and, as I said before, as the three main purposes were equally distributed in his second protocol, it was not possible to establish a ranked order. Katie and Roberto also language-switched for purposes other than the main three categories: Generating L2 Content, Controlling the Process of Writing and Revising. Katie language switched for the purpose of Task Examining in both protocols and Roberto only examined his task during his first writing task. It is worth noting here that Roberto's first writing task was more demanding for him since he could not connect the prompt to his personal experience as he suggested. This fact made him language switch to elucidate how he could solve that specific situation. Although it was not a regular or frequent category at all, it is worth mentioning that Katie also language switched once for making a comment which was not related to the writing task itself when her phone vibrated during the first writing task. That category was coded

as Others. Figure 6-1 shows a comparison among the four writers and the distribution in the frequency of their L-S purposes:

	Purpose Frequency	Meg	Katie	Carlos	Roberto
First writing task: Letter	1	Generating L2 Content (57%)	Controlling the P of W (39%)	-	Generating L2 Content (67%)
	2	Controlling the P of W (26%)	Generating L2 Content (30%)	-	Revising (17%)
	3	Revising (17%)	Revising (23%)	-	Controlling the P of W (8%)
	4	-	Task Examining (7%)	-	Task Examining (8%)
	5	-	Others (1%)	-	-
Second writing task: Argumentative Essay	1	Generating L2 Content (55%)	Generating L2 Content (62%)	Generating L2 Content (100%)	Generating L2 purposes were equally distributed (33.3%)
	2	Controlling the P of W (37%)	Controlling the P of W (21%)	-	Controlling the P of W (33.3%)
	3	Revising (8%)	Revising (15%)	-	Revising (33.3%)
	4	-	Task Examining (2%)	-	-

Table 6-1. Comparative chart of the frequency of purposes of the four participants.

To sum up, from the four writers, Meg was the only one who maintained a consistent pattern in both writing tasks. The frequency of her purposes, Generating L2 Content, Controlling the Process of Writing and Revising, was regular in both protocols. Katie, in contrast, was the writer with whom I used the most codes to analyze and describe her think aloud protocols. The frequency of her purposes was not constant in the two tasks as shown in the previous chart. Roberto showed the following pattern: Generating L2 Content, Revising, Controlling the Process of Writing and Task Examining during his first protocol, and the purposes were equally distributed in the second protocol. Carlos was the only writer who did not language-switch during his first protocol and only switched twice to Generating L2 Content in the second.

### A rationale for participants' L-S purposes frequency

The order in these four writers' L-S purposes may respond to different factors. For instance, Meg's order may suggest that her L2 proficiency allowed her to focus more on generating L2 content as the most fundamental goal during her L2 composing process, followed by her need to control the process of writing in second place and revising as her last goal. In contrast, it is evident that during her first writing task, Katie was more concerned in controlling her process of writing than in generating L2 content. Although her lack of L2 proficiency and her lack of familiarity with the techniques used in the study affected her, her need to control the process of writing may respond to her expertise as a writer in her L1 that pushes her to organize her text in first place without having to monitor her L2 output. It seems that Katie compensated for her lack of L2 proficiency with her expertise as an L1 writer. She suggested that she found it hard to generate L2 content due to her lack of vocabulary. In both writing tasks, Katie frequently controlled her L2 writing process by constantly planning and organizing what to do. In her second writing task, she showed a similar pattern to Meg's. Katie and Meg were more concerned about generating L2 content as their main goal, followed by their need to control their process of writing and revising respectively. This need to control the process of writing as their second most frequent purpose may suggest that, unlike Carlos and Roberto, Meg and Katie are more organized writers who placed earlier emphasis on text structure and who were used to planning their writings through outlines and thesis statements.

These results could also be interpreted considering the writers' L2 proficiency or the situational context where these L2 writers are using their L2s. As can be seen, Meg and Katie, the less proficient L2 participants, used their L1s to generate L2 content and then to control their processes of writing, but Roberto, the most proficient L2 participant, used his L1 to generate L2 content first but preferred to use his L1 to revise his text in

second place instead of controlling the process of writing. Although Generating L2 Content seem to be the most frequent purpose for which L2 writers switch to their L1 during L2 writing, it seems that Controlling the Process of Writing plays a predominant role in less proficient writers' L2 composing processes.

As L2 proficiency is related to the situational context where L2 speakers learn and use their L2s, the order of purposes shown by these four writers could also suggest that L2 writers in a foreign language context, may prefer to generate L2 content as a primary goal and to control their process of writing as their second goal, as opposed to L2 writers in a second language context who may prefer to generate L2 content as their primary goal but to revise their written text instead of controlling their process of writing, as in the case of Roberto. This pattern is worthy of further study with a higher number of L2 writers since the number of participants in this study did not allow me to make conclusive generalizations.

What are these students' perceptions about their L2  
composing process and their use of L1 in L2 writing?

Each one of the participants in the present study showed different perceptions about their particular L2 writing processes and the use of their native languages (L1s) during the L2 writing process. Personal characteristics and writing behaviors during the L2 writing process seem to have been shaped by the culture in which they have experienced their native language schooling; that is to say, the strong effect that instruction has on culture. As Sasaki (2000) states "we cannot ignore the social/cultural contexts where the writing takes place" (p. 283).

Cultural transfers & L2 writing perceptions and behaviors

In Chapters 4 and 5, I discussed how the students' cultures may have shaped their writing patterns and behaviors. Contrastive Rhetoric has found that speakers of different language backgrounds organize their L2 writing in a specific way related to their L1 writing background (Kaplan, 1966; Uysal, 2008). The assumption is that students from different cultures are influenced by their cultural patterns and that this causes them to write in ways that are not native-like (Casanave, 2007). Students may have some culturally constructed thoughts and patterns in their first language which they attempt to transfer with or without much success to the foreign or second language writing process. In establishing differences between the process of writing in the first and the second language, Grabe (2001) states that students have many implicit frames for presenting information and arguments in their L1 which cannot be transferred directly to the second or foreign language writing process. Taking a closer look at each one of the participants' insights about their L2 writing processes, in this section I synthesize the most salient features of their L2 writing process habits across these four writers.

Meg was a very motivated L2 learner and a competent second language speaker, capable of articulating her ideas in her L2 clearly. As a writer, she cared about her written text as she constantly proofread what she wrote in search of more appropriate lexical items or ideas and made sure her final written text reflected what she has been asked in the prompt. She was also aware of the composing process in general as she emphasized the importance of devoting time to prepare the writing task in advance. Meg usually transferred her good writing skills from her L1 to her L2 writing process. L2 writers transfer L1 skills and strategies to approach the L2 process of writing and these transfers, from L1 to L2, play a central role in L2 writing (Jones and Tetroe, 1987; Friedlander, 1990; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992). As part of this expertise from her L1, Meg was aware of her need to plan her writing by using outlines. As she herself commented, "I'm an outline kind of person, I can't start just from nowhere, I have to... like have a basic idea."

It seems she devoted more time to plan as the level of difficulty in her writing task increased. In the first writing task, her planning took no more than 2 minutes out of 33 minutes, whereas in the argumentative essay, she spent almost a third of the composing time planning before starting her text since she said she had to talk more about it, "...I guess there was more to talk about, its argument..." As Qi (1998) suggests, this finding might indicate that Meg "needed to think at a deeper level before she could communicate her ideas clearly" during her second writing task (p. 422). When writing, she seemed to follow her outlines and did not revise the entire text after she finished writing her letter as Roberto did. About her two L2 written texts she said she did not feel satisfied with the first written text because her Spanish was very basic, "I am not very satisfied with it but, 'cause I don't feel my verbs were very high level and it was just very basic like..." However, she felt fine with the second written text. She believed her argumentative essay had a higher complexity. "I think it's more complete; my thoughts are more complete and I think it is at a higher level maybe..."

Like Meg, Katie was also an outline-oriented L2 writer and considered planning a fundamental stage in her L2 writing process, "Well I usually start with an outline..." She devoted a significant amount of time brainstorming and planning (23%) and this seems to be a recurrent pattern, as she did this in both writing tasks. Jones & Tetroe (1987) state that "the quality of planning transfers from L1 to L2" (p. 56) and Cumming (1989) suggests that writing behavior and "planning" in particular could be socially constrained. Katie seems to have brought some of her good L1 writing skills to her L2 writing, such as her planning and revising skills, as well as her overall expertise in terms of content, as Jones and Tetroe (1987) suggest. Katie was also aware of the importance of elaborating a thesis statement. "I need a thesis, 'cause every time I write, even in Spanish, I always have a thesis to write about..." As she has commented, she perceived herself as a well-rounded writer in her L1; however, she did not perceive herself as a good writer in her L2. "I feel I am not a very strong writer..." Both Meg and Katie showed these particular

processes (planning-formulation and revising) in their L2 composing which might contrast with the native Spanish speakers' L2 writing processes. The need for outlines as well as thesis statements was fundamental in these native English speakers' L2 writing processes and these two characteristics seem to have been shaped by the schooling experiences in their particular cultures.

In contrast, Carlos did not consider himself as a writer. His definition of a writer is wider. As he put it, "the truth is that as a writer I don't consider myself as somebody who likes to put my thoughts on paper. I don't envision myself as a person who could make a living by writing my own thoughts." However, Carlos was conscious that his L2 writing was pretty natural, fresh and sophisticated, and he was also aware that he did not language switch often during his L2 composing process. He strongly believed that a person's L2 proficiency was closely related to his language switching habits since he believed his high L2 proficiency helped him not to switch often. He perceived that writing in English was different than writing in Spanish since in English you have more clues to organize the writing "I think English writing organization is pretty good because if you have a thesis statement, that helps you know what you want to write about..."

Carlos wanted to develop all his ideas in full detail and tried to make his text neat and clean. He was very fluent in his L2 and seemed not to need his L1 at all. Carlos's writing pattern was planning short outlines and writing long texts. Spanish speakers/writers are said to compose long L2 texts influenced by the way they write in their native language, and this seems to be Carlos's case. Carlos's letter had 664 words, which was twice as many as Meg's letter (318 words) and almost three times more than Katie's letter (242 words). His second written text was also long; he wrote a seven-paragraph essay of about 700 words which was twice as many words as Meg's (354 words) and Katie's (357 words) argumentative essays. Carlos said that this length does not surprise him at all since that was a very common characteristic in his writing, "I think they (English native writers) tend to write a bit less. When I write, I always end up

writing a lot.” Carlos devoted little time to planning his two written L2 texts. For the first session that lasted around 43 minutes, Carlos only spent about 2 minutes planning his writing, and during the argumentative essay, he devoted approximately five minutes (out of 55 minutes) to reading the prompt and briefly jot some ideas to start his writing. In addition, he admitted openly he did not like to spend too much time writing outlines as he was not used to it. “I don’t like writing outlines. I almost never do them. I usually plan them in my mind and pick some ideas, only ideas in my plan. I seldom like, write a long plan.”

For both writing tasks, Carlos produced long written texts (about seven paragraphs), as he himself stated, and when he reflected on them, he was not completely satisfied. Carlos’s desire to rewrite the text suggests his awareness of the dynamics of the composing process. He perceives writing as a several-draft process. These two characteristics, writing brief outlines and long texts, could be understood as Carlos’s personal strategies to write in L2 but also could be assumed as a culture-specific aspect as Cumming (1989) suggests.

Roberto said he was the kind of writer that takes his time to read and collect information before writing a paper. For school written assignments, Roberto said he is used to preparing by reading and searching for information related to the topic he will write about and this might be the reason why he was not satisfied with his two written texts. In neither task did Roberto take the time to jot ideas or elaborate an outline. It seemed as if he generated his ideas as he wrote. “I only realized that I usually write what I’m thinking and at the same time I go back and check what I’ve been writing and try to correct...” There was an absence of outlines or written plans in his L2 composing process to help him organize his ideas, which contrasts with the previous participants in this study. “Most of the times I just start writing, no outline at all. When I’m writing in English I think it takes more time to visualize my ideas...”

Roberto barely took two minutes to read the prompt and start his writings. When reading the prompt, his voice was low and calm and he seemed to pause and repeat words he believed to be fundamental to his overall understanding of the task. As a means to compensate for his absence of outlines, he read the prompt at least twice before starting to write. Jones and Tetroe (1987) suggest that L2 writers transfer good as well as weak writing skills from their L1 to English and this seems to be Roberto's case. Roberto also suggested that he has problems in writing in Spanish, "As I didn't go to school in Mexico and my language... but I do speak Spanish, but when I have to write in Spanish, I find it hard when... because of the accents, but in English I don't..." Roberto wrote a five-paragraph letter of about 357 words and a four-paragraph essay of 479 words. His L2 written texts were not as long as Carlos' (letter 664 words and essay 700 words), but were still longer than those of the native English speakers'. This data suggest than these native Spanish speakers wrote more in their L2 than the native English speakers based on the count of words in their L2 written texts. The following Figure 6-2 is a comparative chart of the four participants where I summarize their L2 writing behaviors in terms of outlines, planning time and length of written texts:

Participants	Use of outlines	Approximate planning time in percentages for the letter and the essay respectively		Number of words in letter	Number of words in argumentative essay
Meg	Yes	6 %	33%	318 words	354 words
Katie	Yes	23%	23%	242 words	357 words
Carlos	Yes	4%	9%	664 words	700 words
Roberto	No	6%	4%	357 words	479 words

Table 6-2. Comparative chart of participants' L2 writing behaviors.

### Writers' perceptions about their L1 use during L2 writing

One of the most fundamental differences between L1 and L2 writing is that L2 writers have at least two languages at their disposal and that they switch to their L1s in order to compensate for the difficulties in the L2 (Cumming, 1989). L-S represents a pedagogical controversy among those SL /FL teachers who believe that the use of L1 will inhibit acquisition of the L2 and will interfere with the generation of L2 structures because of incorrect transfers (Friedlander, 1990). It also represents a debate among scholars who investigate the use of L1 in L2 writing based on their interpretations whether the use of L1 in L2 writing is beneficial or not. However, some studies suggest that using L1 while composing in L2 could be beneficial for L2 writers. For example, Lay (1982) reported that the more frequently a writer language switches to their L1s, the better the texts in terms of organization and quality, and Friedlander (1990) concluded that using the L1 to plan L1 culturally related topics could be a great help for L2 writers.

These conclusions were made mainly based on the writers' written texts; however, the participants' personal perceptions about this phenomenon have hardly been reflected in previous studies. Hence, it is my intention, through this qualitative clinical study, to fill this gap by providing the participants' insights and perceptions on the use of their L1s when composing in their L2s. Each one of these participants reflected on the use and its benefits of their native languages during the L2 writing processes.

Meg thought that L-S was a very common and normal strategy for writers during L2 writing and was aware of the benefits that L-S brought to her L2 writing process. She realized that L-S is a gift for her since it helped check her intentions during the L2 writing process, "I mean it's nice to have a language to like... another language to verify the language you are writing in..." Then she added, "... it really helps me organize I guess it really makes me see things clear, more clear because it's my native language. I don't think it's more practical for organizing, I just think it really helps that I have... that

I can like also look back to my native language and like see how the organization makes sense to me in my own language.” Meg also commented that most of her switches were done unconsciously. “I think ‘cause it’s just my first language and I was like... I just didn’t even think about like saying it. I just kind of said it, I didn’t realize I was saying it, it is just my first language...”

Like Meg, Katie’s pattern was to use her L1 along her whole L2 writing process, as her main tool to cope with her lack of L2 proficiency and she strongly believed her native language helped her organize her ideas in the text, “I think it helps me out to put my sentences together...” and perceived that it made her write a better paper in her L2. “I feel that I can construct a better Spanish essay if I thought about it in English...” Katie also said the L1 use helped her comprehend the text and the task more fully when she was not hundred percent sure. “Probably it would be more sure if I use English so I can say it in English and comprehend it at a stronger level that I would in Spanish, not all the time, maybe just during the times where I’m not one hundred percent sure on what I’m saying”

At first, the habit of L-S was an unconscious process for Katie, “I’m going back and forth, I’d never realized it until you said something afterwards...” As she reflected more on her tendency to language switch back and forth from Spanish to English during her L2 writing, she commented, “I think I do that to double-check, to make sure that what I’m writing makes sense in my head. I’m thinking that if it makes sense in English it will make sense in Spanish, when I translate it from English to Spanish. I think I do this to make sure my sentence structure is correct and word choice is right...” Katie was aware of the fact that she language-switched more during the second writing activity, “I think I spoke more English in this one, to make sure it sounded... what do I wanna say... sounded up to standard, is that what I wanna say... so it sounded formal...”

Carlos was conscious that his L2 writing was pretty natural, fresh and sophisticated, and he was also aware that he did not language switch often during his L2

composing process. “I realized that when I’m writing in English now I almost never think in Spanish like I did during my first year when I was learning English...” Although he did not use his L1 much during his L2 writing process, he indirectly accepted the benefits of L-S during L2 composing, “Sometimes... sometimes I feel like... sometimes I think how could I say this in Spanish, when it’s hard for me to say it in English but... but it’s... I don’t use it much...” Carlos is also conscious about the fact that task difficulty can also contribute to the writers’ L-S, “When I’m writing an academic essay and let’s say I want to use a more sophisticated phrase... and even though I’m thinking in English I can’t finish that phrase, I soon realize that such a phrase might have a Spanish structure... it’s something I would use in Spanish...”

Roberto perceived that thinking in Spanish during any L2 writing task was a natural and regular practice for him. “It is something natural. I speak Spanish and that’s why I use it...” He confessed that he used this particular technique anytime when he felt he was stuck when using his L2. “... If I feel I’m stuck thinking in English then I switch and think in Spanish and then I translate it to English. Most of the times it works but I sometimes use Spanglish...” Roberto was aware of his L-S habits and commented on his personal pattern of L-S: “When I felt stuck and didn’t know what to write I realized my voice started to lower and then I asked myself to wait, it’s like... like my personal way to switch from English to Spanish.” Roberto thought the use of his L1 during his L2 writing process was beneficial for him. Roberto strongly believed that he needed to language switch during his L2 writing process and depending on the topic; the frequency of his language switches would vary. For example, he language-switched more during his first writing task due to his lack of familiarity with the topic. During the second writing task, the frequency of his L-S decreased since he felt more comfortable with the topic. He said the *21 Ordinance* was a very familiar topic at the university and he was used to reading and writing about it in English. Roberto’s perceptions seem to indicate a close connection

between the frequency of L-S and the degree of familiarity with the topic; that is, the more familiar the writer is with the topic, the less he language-switches.

From these participants' perceptions, it seems that the use of their L1s was very beneficial for them during their L2 writing processes. Their L1s helped them organize ideas, write better texts and understand the tasks given. Katie, Meg and Roberto openly admitted the benefits of the L1 use during their L2 writing processes and although Carlos did not expressly say that, he suggested that the L1 use could help him overcome certain problems during his L2 writing as it indeed happened in his second writing task during a lexical search. It is interesting to note here that for Meg and Katie, L-S seems to be an unconscious mental process at first, whereas for Carlos and Roberto, language switching appears to be a conscious process. This finding might suggest that writers, like Carlos and Roberto, using their L2s as second languages, seemed to control their L-S, while others, like Meg and Katie, using their L2s as foreign languages, seem to use their L1s without control.

What are the tensions these writers experience in their L2  
composing processes during the study?

During the L2 writing, writers engage in a recursive problem-solving practice that demands high-level mental processing as they pay attention to different details during the process. Some of the problems these writers face could be related to personal factors such as their lack of L2 proficiency, their lack of experience of the writing process in their L1s, their limited capacity of working memory and/or their understanding or familiarity with the topic they have to write about. Jones and Tetroe (1987) state that second language writers "must deal not only with the usual problems of composing, but also with the problems of doing so in a language in which they are not as competent as they are in

their first” (p. 34), and Manchón et al (2000) state that L2 writers have to pay attention to various lower and higher level text demands during the L2 writing process.

When writing, L2 writers are also influenced by external factors such as time constraints and research techniques. The use of different techniques to collect data, such as the think-aloud protocols, also influenced L2 writers. During this qualitative clinical study, the four writers reflected on certain tensions they faced during their L2 writing processes such as time constraints, lack of L2 proficiency, prompts, think-alouds and my beeping.

### Time constraints

For Meg, the time given to complete the writing tasks affected her L2 writing process since she had to prepare the outline and the writing at the same time. “The hardest part was probably... I guess just ‘cause I’m used to... with my Spanish writing class... having a night to prepare an outline and then writing it. The next day I know exactly what I’m going to write about...” Katie saw L2 writing within a process-oriented approach and said she was used to preparing herself in advance to get engaged in any writing process, something which she could not do during this study and hence, she was also affected by time constraints. She said that it was difficult to prepare an outline and write the text in fifty minutes, which corresponds to the usual academic hour at the State University. “I felt a little rushed at the end yeah, but... I mean I could’ve said more but then I just ended it. Apparently I needed more time to talk about it, or like a writing assignment in my writing Spanish class... it usually takes me the whole fifty minutes...”

Like Meg and Katie, Carlos also commented that he was affected by time constraints during the second writing task. He thought that if he had had more time, his writing would have had a higher quality. In contrast, Roberto did not suggest he was affected by time in any of the two writing tasks.

### Tensions due to lack of L2 proficiency

Meg did not directly express that she had problems related to her L2 proficiency, although it seems to be evident that her constant use of her L1 while writing in her L2 indicates her need to compensate for the gaps she may have in her L2 proficiency. In contrast, Katie suggested that her lack of L2 proficiency made her L2 writing process slower, less fluent and simpler compared to her L1 writing process. She said she found it hard to generate L2 content due to her lack of vocabulary. “The hardest... I don’t know, sort of... sometimes I have trouble with vocabulary like when I don’t know a word.”

Carlos proved to be a very proficient L2 user, and his confidence in his L2 skill made him almost never hesitate about it. He was aware of the quality of his L2 level and used his L2 almost at all times during his L2 writing tasks. Likewise, Roberto had been raised in a bilingual community since he was six years old which made of him a very competent language speaker in both languages. However, at the same time, he thought that his lack of academic experience in Spanish has jeopardized his status as a writer in his native language, especially regarding Spanish accents.

### Tensions due to the prompt

During their L2 writing tasks in this study, Meg and Roberto suggested that they had some problems with the prompt. On one hand, Meg commented that she found the topic a bit confusing at first, “Well, first I was so confused because you know like now in (the city) they’re talking about the age of the bars being nineteen and the reason is that 21, so the topic struck me...” This confusion kept her wondering for a while whether to ask me or not, but she decided not to interact with me because I had instructed her not to. Likewise, Meg also suggested that the English prompt strongly influenced her to use her L1 as it was written in her L1. On the other hand, Roberto also faced some difficulties related to the first prompt. The prompt corresponding to the first L2 writing task did not

reflect Roberto's particular case since he cannot be considered an international student like Carlos but a legal resident of the United States. He never lived nor studied at college in Mexico and did not live in the city either. One of Roberto's L-S episodes occurred as he was trying to solve this problem, "I think the most difficult was to explain the benefits of studying here. I don't live here\* (\*the city where the State University is located)..."

#### Tensions due to the think-alouds

Meg faced some difficulties related to the think-aloud technique. Although Jones & Tetroe (1987) state that verbal protocols in general do not affect writing, Meg suggested that her experience thinking aloud while writing was different for her and that her writing would have been better organized and her Spanish more sophisticated if she had not had to verbalize. However, Meg recognized that she would potentially use the technique when she makes mistakes, "... I don't really think aloud... unless I make a mistake or something when I say 'oh my gosh' or something... then I think I'll say that aloud." I assume that as the L2 writing process is a problem-solving phenomenon in which her miscues emerge constantly as she generates ideas, organizes her writing, revises and edits her texts, Meg surely thinks aloud in her daily life writing experience.

Katie also suggested that the use of the think aloud technique might have affected her in different ways. She said that because she was not used to doing that and that speaking aloud in her L2 represented a big challenge to her because that process needed to go along with the need to monitor her L2 accuracy and fluency which made her thinking process slower. In addition, Katie thought that the fact of monitoring her L2 output usually took her away from the assignment, "I remember when I was writing that I had to think through the verbs and conjugations and the adjectives before and after the noun and stuff like that and so kind of takes away from the actual assignment of writing like I have in English 'cause it comes natural compared to Spanish."

Carlos's perception of the use of the think-aloud technique changed from the first writing task to the second. He said that during his first writing task he was not affected by the think aloud technique; however, during the second writing task, he felt the technique affected his composing process negatively, "The first one was really easy and I felt that speaking aloud helped me..." Then he said, "Well, that... because I needed to be constantly... like speaking... I didn't allow my brain to have that kind of break, that kind of space that it needs, for me to kind of like... focus on an idea and kind of write it down... so it interrupted me, yeah in a way it did, in this one yeah, in the first one I didn't have the problem, but in this one like I felt that my brain didn't have that space that it needs... for me to kind of like focus on an idea and kind of write it down..." Roberto also commented that the think aloud technique helped him focus in some cases; however, he said that it was difficult at times. "Sometimes your thoughts come faster than your writing and that gave me a hard time by having to write and speak aloud at the same time."

Think alouds have been criticized as a research tool because they are said to cause problems of validity and reliability, and because think alouds could influence the way writers write and interfere with their normal composing process such as slowing down people's thinking processes or interrupting their train of thoughts (Faigley and Witte, 1981; Polio, 2003; Wang, 2003; Woodall, 2002; Zamel, 1983). However, this kind of technique has offered important benefits to the L2 writing field. Hayes and Flower (1983) state that think aloud protocols offer three fundamental advantages: a) they provide direct evidence about the processes, b) they promote exploration due to the rich data obtained and c) they can detect processes that are invisible to other methods. Considering the relevance of these advantages, it is also important to reflect how we, as researchers, can improve and develop this technique to make it less disturbing.

### Tensions due to my beeping

Meg said she instinctively switched to English when she heard the beep, “I was surprised...when I get in my writing mode I obviously... I just write and write and write and then like... I just like heard the beep and wow I went like that... and so like my first intuition... oh like... I need to... I don’t know... use English...” I must assume that this beeping was an external influence on her L-S behavior. Unlike Meg, Katie thought my beeping did not affect her writing process and that she was so involved with the task that she did not realize she was not verbalizing, “I was surprised that I wasn’t talking aloud, like when you beeped I didn’t realize those (pauses) being that long...” Besides, more than affecting her writing behaviors, my beeping made her keep going, “It made me get going... no, it didn’t scare me, it is just a reminder...” Neither Carlos nor Roberto experienced any beeping during their two writing tasks. The following figure 6-3 is a comparative chart where I summarize the four participants’ tensions during their participation in this study:

Tensions Participants	Time constraints	Lack of L2	Prompts	Think aloud use	Beeping
Meg	She suggested she was affected by time	She needed to use her L1 often	Confusing topic	Negative and positive sides	Surprised her
Katie	She suggested she was affected by time	She needed to use her L1 a lot due to difficulties to generate L2	No	Took her from task	No
Carlos	He suggested he was affected by time	No	No	Negative and positive sides	No
Roberto	No	No	Topic was not appropriate for him	Negative and positive sides	No

Table 6-3. Comparative chart of participants’ tensions related to the L2 writing process.

### Summary of Findings

The L2 composing process is a bilingual event in which L-S has a natural occurrence, even in highly proficient L2 writers. The use of the writer's L1 during the L2 writing process is closely related to the writer's L2 proficiency, and the degree of proficiency can be related to the situational context (FL vs. SL) in which the L2 is learned and used. Highly proficient L2 users may or may not language-switch depending on their personal characteristics. Low proficient L2 writers are more likely to use direct translations to generate L2 content. Although L2 writers may language-switch for different purposes, some other factors such as the level of difficulty of the task, the choice of language and the suitability with which prompts are designed, external distractions such as the phone, or research techniques such as my beeping can also push writers to language-switch. According to this study, less proficient L2 users language-switch more frequently than their highly proficient counterparts. Findings reveal that Generating L2 Content is the most recurring purpose for L-S during L2 writing among these four writers and that the writing expertise writers bring to the L2 composing process may privilege the writer's focus on Controlling the Process of Writing rather than Revising as their second purpose to L-S.

Regarding the students' L2 writing habits, this study confirms that writers transfer their L1 skills to the L2 writing process. Both Meg and Katie showed these particular processes: planning-formulation and revising, in their L2 composing which might contrast with the native Spanish speakers' L2 writing processes. The native English users were outline-oriented and used thesis statements to organize their writing, whereas the native Spanish users did not depend on outlines or plan much for their writing and wrote longer texts based on the count of words in their L2 written texts. These characteristics seem to be part of their cultural writing behaviors that have been shaped by the schooling experiences. It is not clear though, whether these characteristics are exclusively related to

their L2 academic writing or to their general L2 writing. Also, if culture is mediated by instruction and Roberto has experienced his entire schooling in the U.S., how is that he is not an outline-oriented writer? It is possible that his L2 writing behaviors have been shaped not only by his schooling experience but by his Spanish speaking environment. There is also a possibility that the writers' gender may play a role in these differences given that the two native Spanish speakers were males and the two native English speakers were females.

One of the greatest contributions of this study to the L-S field is the participants' perceptions about their L-S habits. Most of them thought that L-S was a very common and normal strategy for writers during L2 writing and they were aware of the benefits that L-S brought to their L2 writing process. Their L1s helped them organize ideas, write better texts and understand the tasks given. Findings also suggest that L-S seems to be a conscious process for the more advanced L2 learners, and an unconscious mental process for the less proficient writers; that is, writers, like Carlos and Roberto, seemed to control their L-S, while like Meg and Katie, using their L2s seem to use their L1s without control. The study also reveals that these L2 writers believed that time was an important issue that influenced their writing negatively. They suggested a need for more time to plan and write their texts. Although some of the participants commented on certain positive aspects of the use of the think-aloud technique, its use also negatively affected their writing performances.

#### Limitations of the Study

One of the advantages of this research is that I approached this study with a qualitative lens by incorporating the writers' perspectives and a description of their writing behaviors and attitudes to offer a more detailed account of what occurred during

their L2 composing processes. However, there were certain uncontrolled aspects during the data collection process that could be considered as limitations.

A possible limitation is the different writing schedules set for the 4 participants. In fact, the length of time in between the writing activity and the reflection session was not uniform with all the participants. The time period between the two writing tasks and their reflection sessions was first intended to be one week due to the crucial influence time has on language development proficiency and the participants' ability to remember what they did during the L2 writing tasks. Bloom (1954) suggests that these reflection sessions should be done up to 48 hours after the writing event; otherwise they will be less accurate. Within the first 48 hours after the writing activity, writers are more able to be 95% accurate. The lapses between the writing activities and the reflection sessions with the native Spanish speaking participants could be a limitation. Though I tried hard to set the writing activities and reflection sessions within a short period of time as suggested by Bloom (1954), it was not possible to do so with all the participants due to Carlos's hectic schedule and a Thanksgiving break which came between the first writing activity and the first reflection session in Roberto's case.

Another limitation could be that both writing tasks were designed to be accomplished during a limited time, and this may have affected the composing process as Wang & Wen (2002) suggest. In addition, participants' written texts must be considered first drafts. Therefore, future research in this specific field should consider the possibility to study the L-S phenomenon including a several draft L2 process to explore whether L-S varies during the entire L2 writing process, and also, consider giving writers a longer time frame to feel comfortable to plan and compose their texts without feeling rushed. The last possible limitation of this study could be the fact that Meg used the English version of the prompt for her first writing task. She commented that the English prompt strongly influenced her to use her L1. Had her first prompt been written in Spanish, she suggested that she would have likely used her second language. Understanding this

strong influence that L1 prompts have on the use of participants' L1 or L2 during the L2 writing processes, I decided to make sure Katie, Carlos and Roberto got the prompts written in their L2s for their two writing task as a way to avoid external influences in their L-S habits.

### Pedagogical Implications

This study confirms what previous studies have suggested that the L2 writing process is a bilingual event (Cumming, 1989; Lay, 1982; Manchón et al, 2000; Wang and Wen, 2002). Hence, we, as L2 educators, need to revisit our assumptions and beliefs regarding the L1 use during L2 composing process to approach a more appropriate and favorable L2 teaching and learning process. As Casanave (2007) suggests, L2 writing teachers need to reflect on the controversies in the L2 writing field and consider research findings to make informed decision to benefit their teaching. If the use of the students' L1s during the L2 writing process is likely to occur naturally, preventing them from using their native languages to scaffold their L2 writing is detrimental to building their knowledge and proficiency in the L2. L2 learners' linguistic diversity needs to be seen as a resource for learning rather than an obstacle to be overcome. From the writers' perspectives, it is evident that the use of the writers' L1s is beneficial in their L2 composing process, so teachers need to be aware of these benefits and try to incorporate them in their teaching practice.

Even though there have been sound research findings suggesting that the use of the students' native languages is beneficial for their L2 learning process, there is still an overwhelming tendency to assume that the best way to compose in an L2 is to think exclusively in such L2. Kibler (2010) states that from "second and foreign language perspectives, prohibiting or restricting first language use is common practice" (p.123). These institutional policies or L2 teachers' assumptions such as the exclusive and

obligatory use of the L2 during the L2 composing process or in L2 classes not only limits students' possibilities but contrasts with some fundamental theorists such as Cummins (1996), Freeman & Freeman (1992; 1998), Goodman (1989), and Schwarzer (2001) who advocate the fostering and use of the students' native languages during the L2 learning process.

Being aware of the possibilities L2 writing teachers have to best support their students' learning leads us also to deal with certain problems writers face during the L2 composing process. As a problem solving process, L2 writing demands that writers deal with a series of significant problems along the process and hence, writers need to face such a process with the best tools they can have to solve the problems they encounter. Although it is evident that in an authentic composing process, either in L1 or L2, writers make use of different tools such as dictionaries, computer software for spelling, discussions with peers, knowledge of the world through their native languages, their proficiency in an L2 and their knowledge of the writing process itself, some L2 writing teachers still insist in preventing L2 learners from making use of these tools to face the L2 writing process. In an L2 writing process in which writers are denied the use of these tools, teachers are only allowing students to show the proficiency they have in their L2 and not the knowledge they have about writing. For those teachers, using tools during the L2 writing process may even be considered cheating.

However, during the L2 writing process, the use of these tools and mainly, the use of the writers' L1s may bring about some negative aspects teachers need to deal with too, such as the negative transfers writers make during the process. Writing in a second or foreign language represents diverse challenges for students since many of them do not establish differences in the process of writing in the first language and the second or foreign language. For example, as Contrastive Rhetoric has found, students may have some culturally constructed thoughts and patterns in their first language which they

attempt to transfer without much success to the foreign or second language writing process.

As L2 writers commonly use direct translations as a practical way to generate L2 content, and depending on the writer's L2 proficiency, these translations may hamper the resulting text since it may not reflect the writer's initial intentions such as Katie's examples of *tiene divertido* (have fun) and *estoy excitada* (I'm excited). It is important for us, as educators, to be aware of these negative transfers that occur and help students with their unique flaws. At an early stage in their L2 learning process, it is common to expect native English and Spanish writers to translate certain structures to their L2s in a negative way such as the ones shown by Katie. Because of their personal experience as L2 learners and instructors, L2 writing teachers are likely to predict what kind of mistakes or negative transfers learners usually make. Teachers could address these common mistakes and offer explicit explanations in their feedback during personal conferences or in classroom workshops so students/writers can be aware of these common negative transfers. In addition, as low proficient L2 writers are more likely to use direct translation during the L2 writing process, it is important to give them more freedom to use their L1s as a resource to understand the task, to control their process of writing and to revise their texts, as a way to avoid negative transfers from the translations.

What does it mean for a second language educator to be aware of second language writers' needs as they use their native language in their L2 writing? The findings from this research will contribute to theoretical understanding about the second language writing processes. These findings will also offer insights for second language pedagogy and the growing demand for classroom teachers to be knowledgeable about how to best support their students' learning about L2 writing. Pedagogical implications will be important as well for monolingual educators who teach in increasingly multilingual classrooms every day. My study will also contribute to, and potentially challenge the

common practice and assumptions among second language teachers with respect to the use of the students' native language during the second language learning process; it will provide educators a chance to reflect on those phenomena to make informed decision to benefit their teaching practices.

It is my belief that as L2 writing teachers, we need to give students freedom to use all the resources they have during the L2 writing process including the students' L1s. Using the students' native language during the L2 writing process does not necessarily mean composing aloud. Writing does not necessarily mean a silent process either. In this latter case, when writers verbalize their thoughts and use their L1s to scaffold their L2 composing process, teachers need to be sensitive to the writers' needs and encourage them to use their L1s as needed. For example, low proficient L2 writers might be encouraged to use their L1s to revise, by backtracking their entire text as Woodall (2002) suggests, to make sure their intentions are clearly stated in their texts, keeping in mind that negative transfers may affect their writing. Making them aware of how negative transfers may affect their writing is, in turn, a new opportunity for them to learn more about the L2. Of course, the fact of verbalizing aloud may bring some other implications for classroom management and teachers need to be aware of how these practices might affect writers in the classroom and how they can be adapted. Writers also need to be aware of their possibilities during the L2 writing processes respecting their peers' decisions when composing. We can learn much from students who are second language writers, from their personal experiences in their second language writing processes, and from the insights they offer about addressing the complexity of language-switching.

#### Research Implications

More research about the use of students' L1s during L2 writing, through a qualitative lens, with a higher number of participants needs to be done. There are still

huge gaps to fill up to fully understand the complex cognitive processes in the students' minds during L2 composing and their relationships with the L-S phenomenon. For instance, during the L2 composing process, the writer is continuously involved in a highly cognitively demanding process of problem solving to perform different processes such as the generation of ideas in the L2. During idea generation, the writer might begin that process through non-linguistic images, which for his/her own purposes of writing, he needs to encode these non-linguistic representations to an appropriate linguistic form (Qi, 1998). The process of encoding these mental (non-linguistic) representations in the person's mind to an appropriate linguistic form (speaking or writing) is what Bruner (1990) called *meaning readiness*. This encoding process must take more time than what is assumed by researchers and hence, techniques such as think alouds could affect or distort the way this encoding process works. There is a possibility that L2 writers, while generating these non-linguistic representations, might be affected by a researcher who pushes him/her to verbalize in a moment in which he/she is not using words but images. However, as he needs to verbalize as a requirement for the sake of research, he immediately uses his L1, the strongest language of a bilingual person. Meg's comments such as "Oh my gosh... wow... I'm really trying to think about language but I don't even know what I was thinking..." and Roberto's "when I said *qué pasa* it was because I was trying to generate a new idea..." may confirm my appreciation of this phenomenon. Roberto used that Spanish phrase as a resource to break those non-idea-generation moments and at the same time as a resource of having something to speak aloud. I wonder if we need to consider these details as we plan and design our data collection techniques as a way to avoid further distortions in the data collected. This also implies that the think aloud technique has some drawbacks researchers need to be aware of when considering this technique as one of their tools for data collection. Although this is not a conclusive finding, all participants in this study perceived this technique as disturbing to some degree but also helpful.

### Final Considerations

Due to the nature of the qualitative sample size, the patterns found in this study cannot be claimed to be the cultural representations of English or Spanish writing. My purpose was, by no means, to draw general conclusions or hypotheses of the L-S phenomenon during the L2 writing process but to shed light on certain aspects of this complex writing process such as to reveal the writers' perceptions and understandings of their L2 writing process and the use of their native languages, and to understand the purposes these writers language switch during their L2 writing process. Hence, these findings could not be rigorously evaluated but could be taken as an opportunity for future research to compare, verify and dig deeper into these and other fundamental topics related to L-S.

It is my hope that findings in this study may encourage language teachers to revisit their assumptions about the most appropriate ways to help SL/FL students develop their L2 by understanding the need they have in using their L1s as a resource for learning the L2, see Cummins (1996); Freeman & Freeman (1992; 1998); Schwarzer (2001). As Woodall (2002) suggests, L2 writing instructors need to find ways to incorporate this L-S strategy into their teaching practice. As I said before, using the students' native languages as a resource for writing does not mean composing aloud all the time, and in the case of that occurrence in the classroom, teachers should be sensitive and encouraging toward students and peers. Low proficient L2 users could benefit more from their L1s use during the L2 writing process to generate L2 content, to control the process of writing and to revise their texts. It is my desire that this qualitative clinical study may contribute to the L2 writing research field and, in turn, may also contribute to challenge the common practice and assumptions among L2 teachers with respect to the use of the students' native language during L2 learning and especially, the use of their L1 during the L2 composing process.

APPENDIX A  
SCHEDULE DURING DATA COLLECTION

WHEN	WHAT	WHO
April 2010 (First Week)	First Meeting (Consent letter) First Interview (30 min. Approx) Think-aloud training (15 m. App)	native English speaking participants # 1 and # 2
May 2010 (Second Week)	First writing task (Day one) *Reflective Session 1 (Day two) *Second writing task (Day two) * same day Reflective Session 2 (Day three)	native English speaking participants # 1 and # 2
November 2010 (Third Week)	Final Interview	native English speaking participants # 1 and # 2
September 2010 (First Week)	First Meeting (Consent letter) First Interview (30 min. Approx) Think-aloud training (15 m. App)	native Spanish speaking participant # 1
September 2010 (Second Week)	First writing task	native Spanish speaking participant # 1
October 2010 (Third Week)	*Reflective Session 1 *Second writing task *Same day	native Spanish speaking participant # 1
October 2010 (Fourth Week)	Reflective Session 2	native Spanish speaking participant # 1
December 2010 (Fifth Week)	Final Interview	native Spanish speaking participant # 1
November 2010 (First Week)	First Meeting (Consent letter)	native Spanish speaking participant # 2
November 2010 (Second Week)	First Interview (30 min. Approx) Think-aloud training (15m. App) on Day One First writing activity on Day three	native Spanish speaking participant # 2
December 2010 (Third Week)	*Reflective Session 1 *Second writing task *Same day	native Spanish speaking participant # 2
December 2010 (Fourth Week)	*Reflective Session 2 *Final Interview *Same day	native Spanish speaking participant # 2

APPENDIX B  
PROMPT TASK # 1

Letter. (For native Spanish speakers)

An American friend you recently met during your vacation in the Southern part of the United States is interested in studying a semester in a university in your home country. Write a letter in English telling your friend about life in your country. Describe the city, the weather, transportation, night life, the university facilities (campus, resources, and accommodations) and tell him/her about your personal experience (or one of your friend) while studying there. Include any piece of information you think will be useful for your friend.

Carta. (For native English speakers)

Un amigo a quien conociste durante tu viaje a Latinoamérica está interesado en estudiar un semestre en los Estados Unidos. Escríbele una carta en español comentándole sobre la vida en tu país, la ciudad donde está la universidad, la infraestructura de la universidad y sus recursos (campus, residencias, carreras, clases, etc.), el tiempo, el transporte, la vida estudiantil y la vida nocturna. Describe tu experiencia personal en esa universidad (o la de algún amigo). Incluye cualquier información que consideres sea necesaria.

APPENDIX C  
PROMPT TASK # 2

Argumentative Essay. (For native Spanish speakers)

The editor of the “Daily Citizen” initiates a new section in the newspaper encouraging students to give their opinions about public issues in the city. The topic for this week states: “*Should the legal drinking age be reduced to 18 in the city bars, or should it remain 21*”. Write an argumentative essay in English presenting pros and cons of each side of the argument. State your position on this topic and explain your reasons.

Ensayo Argumentativo. (For native English speakers)

El editor del periódico “Daily Citizen” abrió una nueva sección internacional alentando a los estudiantes de la State University a emitir sus opiniones en español sobre temas de interés público. El tema de esta semana es: “*Se debería reducir a 18 años la edad legal para consumir alcohol en los bares de la ciudad, o debería permanecer en 21 años de edad*”. Escriba un ensayo argumentativo en español presentando los pros y los contras de cada posición. Fija tu posición personal y explica tus razones.

## APPENDIX D

## FIRST PROMPT USED WITH MEG

A friend you met during your study abroad experience in Latin America is interested in studying a semester period in the U.S. Write a letter in Spanish telling your friend about life at the State University. Describe the city, the weather, transportation, night life, the university facilities (campus, resources, and accommodations) and tell him/her about your personal experience while studying at the State University. Include any piece of information you think will be useful for your friend.

APPENDIX E  
INITIAL INTERVIEW

- 1- What is your academic background? (Cuál es tu bagaje académico?)
- 2- What are you studying now? (¿Qué estás estudiando ahora?)
- 3- What would you like to be as a professional? (¿Qué profesión te gustaría obtener?)
- 4- How long have you been studying Spanish as a second language? (¿Hace cuánto tiempo has estado estudiando inglés?)
- 5- Tell me about your previous experience with writing. (Comenta sobre tu experiencia con la escritura)
- 6- How often do you write? (¿Con qué frecuencia escribes?)
- 7- What kind of writing do you usually do? (¿Qué tipo de escritura haces regularmente?)
- 8- How do you think writing in a second language is different from writing in your native language? Why? (¿Consideras que escribir en tu lengua materna es diferente a escribir en tu segunda lengua? ¿Por qué?)
- 9- What do you think is the most difficult and the easiest task during a second language writing activity? (¿Qué consideras que es lo más fácil y lo más difícil en la escritura en la segunda lengua?)
- 10- How do you approach a writing task in your L1? (¿Cómo organizas tu escritura en tu lengua materna?)

11- How do you approach an L2 writing task? (¿Cómo organizas tu escritura en tu segunda lengua?)

APPENDIX F  
FINAL INTERVIEW

- 1- What did you learn during this writing experience? (¿Qué aprendiste de esta experiencia de escritura?)
- 2- How was this writing experience for you? (¿Cómo te pareció la experiencia?)
- 3- What do you think about the use of L1 in L2 writing? (¿Qué opinas del uso de la lengua materna durante la escritura de la segunda lengua?)
- 4- What surprised you during this writing experience? (¿Qué te sorprendió de esta experiencia?)
- 5- How different is your perception of second language writing compared with your perception at the beginning of the study? (¿Qué tan diferente es tu opinión de la escritura en la segunda lengua comparada con tu opinión al comienzo de este estudio?)
- 6- Have your L2 habits changed during this project? (¿Han cambiado tus hábitos de escritura en tu segunda lengua durante este estudio?)
- 7- Have you realized any particular writing pattern? (¿Has percibido algún patrón de escritura?)

APPENDIX G  
POST-WRITING REFLECTIVE INTERVIEW

- 1- How do you feel about your written text? (¿Cómo te sientes con tu texto escrito?)
- 2- What did you notice about your composing process in your second language?  
(¿Qué percibes de tu proceso de escritura en tu segunda lengua?)
- 3- Did you realize any particular pattern in your composing process? (¿Percibiste algún patrón en particular en tu proceso de escritura?)
- 4- What was the hardest (easiest) part in the previous L2 writing task? (¿Qué fue lo más fácil/difícil en la actividad de escritura anterior?)
- 5- How has this writing task been different from any others you have done previously? (¿Encuentras alguna diferencia entre esta actividad de escritura y otras que hayas realizado anteriormente?)
- 6- Were you aware of any particular approach you were taking to complete the writing task? (¿Estás consciente de algún enfoque particular que usaste para completar esta actividad de escritura?)
- 7- Did you realize if you use more than one language when you were composing?  
(¿Notaste si usaste mas de una lengua cuando escribías?)
- 8- If you do, how do you feel using you L1 during your L2 composing process? (Si lo notaste, ¿Cómo te sientes al usar tu lengua materna cuando escribes en tu segunda lengua?)
- 9- Why do you think you used one (or two) language(s) during your composing?  
(¿Por qué consideras que utilizaste una (o dos) lenguas durante tu escritura?)

- 10- When are you more likely to think in your native/second language during your second language writing? (¿Cuándo es más probable que utilices tu lengua materna durante tu escritura en la segunda lengua?)
- 11- What were you thinking in this specific moment? (referring to a specific section on the video recording). (¿Qué estabas pensando en este momento?)
- 12- What can you tell me about your written text? (¿Qué me puedes decir sobre tu texto escrito?)

APPENDIX H  
THINK-ALLOUD TRANSCRIPTS CONVENTIONS

- Regular font:** Regular font represents when the participant spoke without writing or reading.
- Italicized font:*** Reading portions (to the text or the prompt) are italicized
- Bold font:**** Bold font represents L-S instances (L1 use).
- Underlined:** Underlined words represents participants' composing.
- ... A pause up to two seconds
- (...) A pause longer than two seconds but shorter than 5 seconds
- :
- xxx- Someone has broken off his/her utterance mid-word (e.g. cons-  
construction)
- [sh. sh.] Explanation in brackets usually refer to the speaker reactions such laughs, whisperings or sibilant sounds such as [sh.], [ff], aspirations [hhhh.], etc.
- Pa-ra-graph:** Hyphenated word refers to a word which has been spelled out by the writer at the moment when he/she is writing it or reading it.
- {(...) Beep} This refers to the beeping sound I make when the writers pauses for more than 5 seconds. This is a reminder for them to verbalize their thoughts.
- xx two lower case x's refer to those words which could not be transcribed due to low quality of sound.

## APPENDIX I

## SAMPLE OF KATIE'S THINK-ALoud TRANSCRIPTION # 2

*Alright... el editor del periódico Daily Iowan... abrió una nueva sección internacional... alentando a los estudiantes... de la universidad a emitir sus opiniones sobre temas de interés público... okay... the editor of the newspaper... a new section... international... students... I don't know the word emitir... um... sus opinion sobre temas de intere-... about their opinions... subjects... and interest to the public... um... el tema de esta semana es... se debería reducir a dieciocho años la edad legal para consumir alcohol en los bares de... Iowa City... o debería permanecer en... veintiuno años de edad... escriba un ensayo argument-... argumentativo en español presentando... um... los pros y los contras de cada posición... alright... y fija tu posición personal... okay... so:... whether or not drinking age should be eighteen or twenty-one...*

(01:33)

*... so I'm gonna make an outline again... so I have the introduction... um... in my introduction I'm gonna have... a thesis... and I'm going to... okay... my thesis... is going to be ... um... let's think what should my thesis be... I don't... agree with the eighteen drinking age but I agree with the twenty-one... so: ... um... [clicking sound in her mouth]... [hhhhh.] I don't know what to say... okay...eighteen... es muy importante que: ... it's important that... okay... alright... las personas... personas... tienen... dieciocho años no... deberían beber... porque... ellos... um... their... mind is still developing... their... they... are... están... develop-... no... developing... um... I'm gonna look for develop (...) which*

dictionary... okay... develop (...) develop... develop... um okay  
 develop... okay... están... desarrollando... okay so they're still  
 developing... okay... they are... okay *las personas tiene... dieciocho*  
*años no debería beber... porque ellos están...* xx drink... okay I need to  
 redo that... las personas tienen eighteen años... okay... Gosh  
 it's...okay (...)... eight-... okay... eighteen years the legal age to drink  
 alcohol... *las personas... should not...* okay... la: .... [sh. sh. sh.] I  
 don't know what to say... la edad legal para consumir... alcohol en los  
 bares de Iowa City... [.hhh]... okay legal para consumir... consumir  
 alcohol en los bares de Iowa City... okay I'm gonna skip my thesis  
 'cause I think I am out of brain now...

(05:08)

um...okay so... a favor... so... um... reasons... to support... okay...  
 reducir... legal... um... okay so... reducir... so... means that would be  
 good for an eighteen year old to drink legally...um... menos... less...  
 um... younger kids.... would drink... less menos... um... um... what  
 am I gonna say... less kids... younger kids... so... um... los... niños  
joven... no beben... mucho... less younger kids would drink more  
 cause they're legal... um... [hhhhh]... what's another... um...  
 another reason... eighteen year olds... a good idea... um... okay... en  
contra (...) okay... twenty-one... so las personas (...) um... las personas  
 tienen... eighteen años... están... developing... okay... um... what's  
 another reason why... um... no... um... responsible... I'm gonna look  
 for the word responsible (...) um responsible (...) responsibility...  
 responsible... um... responsib-... character... serious... reliable...  
 responsable... okay no... so they're not responsible... um... qué más  
 {(...) Beep}

(08:04) okay so I'm thinking of... other.... reasons against... having the drinking age in eighteen... so other reasons... I have... *las personas tienen... dieciocho años están... desarrollando... seriou... responsible...* okay... um... let's go back to a favor... um... los niños que... so... less kids would drink... um... las compañías... compañías... de... um... del... bebé... posible... no sé...las compañías... um... make more money... hace más dinero... porque: ... um... whatever... okay... more... más personas... drink... más personas beben... um... okay... um... just add two points and finish... okay (...) um... I'm going to:... start writing now... okay... oh I have to put my... personal... okay and then I'll put that in my intro... my personal position... and my reasons... okay... start with that third paragraph... so.. um... mi posición... posición personal... okay... so... um... I think... okay... so... I'm going to start with... um... muchos... estudiantes... um... what am I gonna to say... so right now I'm brainstorming different ideas... to start with... *muchos estudiantes...* beben durante la semana... um... *muchos estudiantes...* um... what's the word for underage... underage... under-... under-.. let's see... under- (...) under-...under-... underage... menor de edad... okay... okay so muchos estudiantes... menor de edad... underage... beben... durante... la semana... um... some people... unas... una gente... some people... be- ... cree... um... que... um...if... si...um... el gobierno... um... reduci- ... reducir reduce... um... la... um... la edad... um... legal... para... consumir alcohol... so una gente believe... um... que si el gobierno reduce la edad... para consumir alcohol... some people believe that if the government reduce the... drinking age.... to consume alcohol...

that...um... less... um... less... younger... los niños... menos... los niños... oh I don't wanna say that... okay so... I'm going to: ...

(13:22)

okay...una gente cree que si el gobierno reduce la edad legal para consumir alcohol... um... would be better... would be (...) oh what do I want to say... would be... una gente cree... que si el gobierno reduce la edad legal para consumir alcohol... would be safer... um (...) okay we'll say would be... so would be safer... so... what are... I'm gonna look for the word safe cause I don't... I don't remember... safe (...) safe... safe safe safe... oopps... alright... safe safety safe... xx... to be safe... okay... safe... okay I'm not seeing the word I want... endanger not truthfully... safety... [sh.] ... okay... un...harmful... to be safe... um... fuera de... okay... I'm gonna say out of danger then... um... okay so consumir alcohol... I... some people believe that... the government reduce the drinking age to consume alcohol... um... comma... alcohol... los niños... okay... fuera... de peligro... would be out of danger... um... what else I want to say... that's my... four pros... en contra... pero... um... some people... una gente... en contra... um... cree que...um.. that... la edad... legal para... consumir alcohol... um... pero una gente en contra cree que la edad legal para consumir... okay... um... but... the pe-... some people... again... oh that's nonsense... pero... que... some people... believe that the drinking age... drinking some alcohol... should be: ... debe... should... should be... [hhh.]... es... um... should be... um... veintuno años... porque... um... los niños... um... fuera... de peligro... en... mi... opinión... yo pienso que... um... la edad... um... legal... para... consumir... alcohol... should be... um... twenty-one años... porque... um... porque... um (...) it is safer... um... porque... um... I don't know... um...

(18:24) **okay en mi opinión yo pienso que la edad legal para consumir alcohol debería... veintiún años porque... [sh.] um... why... why why... because(...) I don't know... um... because (...) it is safer I guess...and... um... porque... um... it is safer... so...la es más seguro... that's what it is... um... okay so... I'm gonna make a thesis... oh... um... so... I don't know how to say it...um... es importante... que that... el gobierno... no... oh what's to change...obviously that confuses me...to change... um...encontrar... to change (...) change (...) change... C-H- ... H-A... change charge... to change oh cambiar du:h... pero no cam-... um... es importante que... el gobierno no cambie...um... la edad... drinking age... okay edad legal... para... consumir... alcohol... it's important that the government doesn't change so... cambiar cambie... la edad legal cambie... for... para... la... el seguro... el seguro... de los estudiantes...**

(21:11) **okay... so... um... [hhhh.]... the pros... of having eighteen... drinking age... okay... so... okay... I'm going to... present the pros and cons of each position... okay... um (...) mi opinión there isn't... very many... but we'll see what happens...okay... um... so... I'm gonna take... the idea from up here about... the pros... and take it down there... okay... um... okay... um... so... unos estudiantes sostienen la idea de... um... [/p/ /p/ /p/] support the idea of...um... support the idea of... eighteen... what am I gonna say...eighteen drinking age... años la edad legal... para consumir... alcohol... um... um... la... okay... so... I wanna start the sentence different but I don't really know how... so... so some students support the idea... um... okay find two reasons... [hhhh.]... um... un... okay.. what I wanna... okay... un razón... un razón... to support... sostener... la idea... es... less... menos... los**

niños... less kids... um... what do I wanna say... less... okay... the reason to support the idea is...less... menor... less younger... kids... menor niños ... um... beben... más... less kids drinking... um... más... porque... because... um... will be legal...estar-e... will be legal... no wait but it's an E as A... will be legal... legal consumir... alcohol... a: .... dieciocho niños ....um... [hhhh.]...

(25:38)

otro razón... that... los estudiantes... sostienen... la edad es... um... okay that sounds... other reasons ... other reasons... other reasons to support... um... to support... um... la edad de... eighteen años es... um... las compañías... pañías... um... las compañías... um... [sh. sh. sh.]... I'm gonna look up the word drinks... cervezas du:h...okay... las compañías de... la cer-... cerveza:... cer-... drink... D-R... drink (...) [hhhhh.]... drink drink... la cerveza... D-R-... drink there you go... drink... drank... beber (...) um... drink... agua... okay... cerveza... donde está cerveza... um...to have a drink beber... tomar algo...okay... okay... cerveza... las compañías de la cerveza... hacen make... more dinero... more money porque... más... más gente... more people... more gente... um... are drinking... están... um... drinking... bebiendo... okay... um... so I went over... so younger kids no drink more...companies make more... I need a transition sentence... okay... *estudiantes sostienen la idea del eighteen years... the drinking age to consume alcohol... the reason to support that idea is... less younger kids drink more because... it's legal to drink alcohol at eighteen years... other reason to support that idea... um... is companies make more...cause more people are drinking... okay... so con... um... las personas... a favor... okay so with the people... for... esta idea... esta idea... there are... hay... are... la gente... la gente... that no...*

- sostienen... sostiene... um... la gente que no sostiene... la e-... um... la edad... de **eighteen años**... **okay so**... en contra...
- (30:26) **so**... *las personas tiene*... **eighteen años están desarrollando** and *no serio*... **okay so... okay... so (...)** um... **I don't wanna say this... many investigators... um... muchos... investigadores... some investigators... okay... unos... invest-... skip an x... unos investigadores... pienso okay... believe that... um.. los estudiantes**... um... los estudiantes **that have... que tienen... eighteen años... are... developing... um... developing... in their mind no... are developing their minds... their minds... I'm gonna look up the word for mind... or head or... I don't know what I wanna say... say their mind is still developing... minds (...)** I... N... mind... mente... **I didn't know that word mente...okay... so... la mente... de los ... estudiantes... es...** [hhhh.] **still (...)** still growing...**S-T-I...** still growing... um (...) okay... still... grito... protestando... oh *todavía*... oh... even... was... still... *todavía*... okay... still (...) still develop... okay... I'm gonna look up the word for growing... grow... grown... grow... grew... grow... crecer... become... okay... developing... okay so it's still the same word as developing but...okay crecer... okay... están... okay... todavía creciendo... um... okay...um... okay... otro... **let's say... otro... razón... that la edad...debería... should be... okay... deber... [/p/ /p/]... should be twenty-one... okay...deberá de ser... okay so other reasons are... that age should (...)** should be... um... okay should be... twenty-one... ser o estar...age... which one goes with age... um {(...) Beep}
- (35:35) what we said in a high school.... okay so... the avocation health xx it's probably ser... okay... so... should be...twenty-one.... *Other reasons that drinking age should be twenty-one....años es... los estudiantes...*

tienen... **eighteen** años... [hhhh.]... **since they have eighteen años...are.... no...not responsible....um.... don't wanna expand on that... wanna say... what I wanna say... um...otro razón que la edad should be twenty-one years is los estudiantes tienen eighteen años son no serio... um...um... los estudiantes... que tienen... **eighteen** años... no experienc- experiencia... encia... de... **okay los estudiantes que tienen eighteen años no experiencia de... um... vida real... porque.... okay... la vida... real porque.... um... esta gente lived... con... their... sus padres... y no... and not... and not... solos...****

(37:57) **okay.... um... okay... um... my position... okay so... en...um... I wanna start with a preposition... I don't know... okay... so in... in... relation... in regards... in... okay... I'll make this simple... okay so... mi posición personal... is that... yo sostengo... I support.... [hhhh.]... la... what do I support...twenty-one... okay... so I say... twenty-one años... I support (...) **twenty-one años... um... twenty-one years... la edad (...)** consu-... la edad... legal...um... para... consumir... alcohol... parece... **okay... I'm gonna explain the reasons (...)** *so mi posición personal es que... sostengo twenty-one años la edad legal para consumir...consumir alcohol...***

(40:09) en mi opinión...yo... I think... that... it... what is it... drinking age... it is... no es... no... lo no es seguro... para... los estudiantes... tienen **eighteen** años... so okay... in my opinion... yo pienso que... lo no es seguro para... los estudiantes... okay so in my opinión I think it is no safe for... students who are eighteen...[hhhh.]... to drink... okay... to...tienen... beber... there you go... um... a eighteen años... ellos... are... developing...des-... I'm gonna make sure I spell it right (...) des-... des-... **where is my... desarrollando... donde está:... okay...**

can't find... the verb... where... oh there it is... desarrollando... **um**... *eighteen años is still developing*... okay... *so at eighteen years ellos están developing*... and no... tienen... experiencia... con la vida... real... entonces... es importante... que... *entonces es importante que*... el gobierno... no... encon-... **wait**... cambiar... [hhhhh.]... okay... el gobierno... cambie... la edad... **drinking age**... legal... consumir... alcohol...

(43:39) **okay**... en conclusión... **um**... unas... personas... **some persons**... una gente... **instead**... una gente... sostienen... support... la idea de eighteen... años... para... la edad... [/p/ /p/]... okay... *en conclusión*... *de*... *sostiene la idea de eighteen años para la edad legal consumir*... alcohol... **um**... **what else I'm gonna say**...okay and then...**do I say** pues... pero... pero... **um**... hay... **there are**... **um**... [hhhh.]... la gente... una gente... **some people**... **that**... no sostiene... **um**... la... **they don't support**... **um**... okay... **they don't support**... okay... la... edad... **drinking age**... **the age**... consumir... alcohol... a **eighteen años**... porque... **I feel I'm repeating myself a lot**... okay... **eighteen años** porque... **um**... los estudiantes... tienen eighteen años... están... desarrollando... y no serio... okay **um**... **so**... yo creo... **believe that**... la edad... la edad... **age**... **the legal age to consume alcohol**... **alcohol**... **should be**... **um**... **twenty-one** años... porque... **um**... porque... **um**...**what am I gonna say**... porque... **it is safer**... **it is**... **it is safer**...**I don't wanna say that**... okay... **I'm not gonna say that**...okay... porque...**twenty-one**... **I don't know if I state my thesis** {(...) Beep}

(47:52) ...**um**... es importante... **it's important that**... el gobierno... no cambie... la edad legal... consumir... alcohol... **um**... para... **the safety of the students**... [hhhh.]... Para (...) **I'm gonna look up the word**

**safety... you know I looked it up earlier... make sure.... I have the  
 right word... okay.... oops... safety... okay... safety... safe... safety...  
 I see seguridad... okay...so... para... la (...) **safety of... la... los**  
estudiantes... estudiantes... okay... **so I guess I was saying the wrong**  
 (...) la seguridad... **so I'm going to... go back... and make sure (...)**  
**that I have the right word...to change it... I don't know where I put**  
**it... okay... I'm going to change you to seguridad... um... okay...**  
 años... no serio... consumir... okay.... seguridad... **okay (...) I think...**  
**okay... I'm done....****

## APPENDIX J

## MEG'S WRITTEN TEXTS

## ① - First Writing Task

4 may 2010

City - la ciudad.  
 the weather. - el tiempo  
 transportation - transportación.  
 night life. - i.e. durante la noche.  
 campus, resources - los Dormitorios, las clases,  
 experiences. = mis clases, y profesores.  
 mis amigos.  
 oír oye

Hola Juan -

Cómo estabas? ~~o~~ oye que tú estás  
 interesado en estudiar ~~en~~ en Iowa  
 City por un semestre. Voy a ~~te~~ decirte  
 todo lo que necesitas ~~de~~ saber sobre  
 la ciudad de Iowa y la Universidad.  
 La ciudad de Iowa es más pequeño  
 de ~~los~~ Buenos Aires. Hay menos  
 personas aquí y no hay mucha ~~de~~  
 diversidad. En comparación con  
 Buenos Aires la ciudad tiene menos  
 edificios y tiendas, ~~pero~~ pero hay  
 un ~~un~~ centro ~~comercial~~ comercial. ~~es~~  
 En este centro comercial hay  
 una tienda moderna, Express, y  
 hay algunas tiendas pequeñas como  
 silver spider. También hay lugares  
 donde se puede comer como  
 Chipotle y taco Bell.

SNOW -  
 nieve  
 hace frío. cold -  
 frío.

Hay muchos apartamentos porque los estudiantes no quieren vivir en los dormitorios.

Durante el invierno, hace muy frío y hay ~~mucho~~ mucha nieve. No me gusta la temperatura, pero en abril la temperatura es más caliente.

No uso la transportación de la universidad porque me gusta caminar y no me gustan los autobuses. Mucha gente utiliza los autobuses especialmente durante el invierno cuando la temperatura está tanto frío. Durante la noche, ~~hay una~~ para las mujeres, hay una ~~en~~ coche se llama NiteRide. Las chicas usan esta coche para ~~este~~ ser seguras porque las calles durante la noche pueda ser un poco peligroso.

Desde no hay muchas fiestas en casas, mucha gente va a los bars. Hay una calle se llama College St y eso es donde ~~de~~ la mayoría se puede encontrar la mayoría de los bars. No salgo mucho entonces.

te gusta -  
te gustaría  
te ayudaría

no se como <sup>has been</sup> ~~es~~ <sup>se</sup> ~~la noche~~ <sup>había sido</sup> las son  
las noches de fiestas en ~~te~~ <sup>haber.</sup>  
la ~~en~~ ciudad <sup>245</sup>

Las clases de la universidad de Iowa son muy buenos. ~~Creo que~~  
y los profesores son amables. ~~Se~~  
~~Se~~ el primer semestre tomé una  
clase de arte, una clase de italiano,  
una clase de español y una clase  
de historia. Hay una gran variedad  
de clases que puedes tomar.

mi experiencia había sido una  
experiencia muy divertida y creo  
que te gustaría estudiar aquí.  
~~Se~~ Espero que esta carta  
te ayude con ~~su~~ tu decisión.

~~Se~~ Hasta pronto,  
tu amiga,  
M. JJ. 318

② La Tesis - ~~creo que~~ Sería beneficios si la edad legal para consumir alcohol en los bares de ~~toda~~ Iowa City la ciudad de Iowa era 18 años.

~~creo que~~ se debería reducir a 18 años la edad legal para consumir alcohol en los bares de Iowa City. y debería permanecer en 21 años de edad.

- el propósito es para decir mi opinión sobre ~~de~~ la consumo de alcohol en los menores.
- el lector es alguien que quiere aprender más sobre esta posición.
- ~~la tesis~~ <sup>Las fiestas en las casas - o en los dormitorios.</sup>

una persona puede entrar en el ejército a los 17 años.

una persona puede manejar un coche a la edad de 16 años

el peligro de este.

\* los pros / y

los bares ~~se~~ <sup>ganarían</sup> más dinero porque muchos estudiantes van a los bares y compran ~~las~~ bebidas.

~~Hay~~

una persona puede manejar un coche a la edad de 16 años

el peligro de este.

los contras

~~La gente,~~ ~~creo que 18 años~~ es demasiado poco. no es una edad ~~bastante~~ suficiente para consumir el alcohol.

sería más billetes de la consumo de alcohol.

conclusión = resume.

el autorizado  
para vender  
bebidas alcohólicas.

obtener  
obtiene su lice  
Licencia  
los primeros

Un tema muy popular ~~ahora~~  
~~en todo~~ hoy en día es ~~esta~~ que  
debería ser la edad legal para  
consumir alcohol en los bares de  
Iowa City. Algunas personas creen  
que la edad debe quedar a  
21 años pero ~~por~~ mucha gente cree  
que la edad debería ser ~~de~~ 18 años.  
Soy una persona que cree que sería  
beneficial si la edad legal para  
consumir alcohol en los bares  
de Iowa City era 18 años.

La edad legal para manejar un  
coche es 16 años, pero ~~manejar~~ manejar  
es una actividad muy peligrosa.  
~~Los~~ ~~prim~~ En los primeros años de  
tener su licencia el riesgo de tener  
un accidente es bastante alto.  
Esta actividad ~~es más tiene una~~  
~~amenaza es más de una~~ tiene  
una amenaza de su vida más  
grande que el consumo de alcohol.  
~~Una cosa~~ Otra cosa peligrosa que una  
persona puede ser antes de ~~la edad~~  
~~de~~ 21 años es entrar en el militar.

reducir  
dueño.

rodear = to surround. disminuir  
decrease disminución

Obviamente entrar en el militar en más peligro de consumir alcohol en los bares. ~~Porque~~ Cuando ~~estás en el militar~~ ~~usas~~ Estás rodeando por las armas y los muertos cuando estás pelando en una guerra que es más serio de consumir alcohol. Las dos cosas, manejar un coche y entrar en el militar, son más peligros de la consumo de bebidas alcohólicas y tiene más consecuencias.

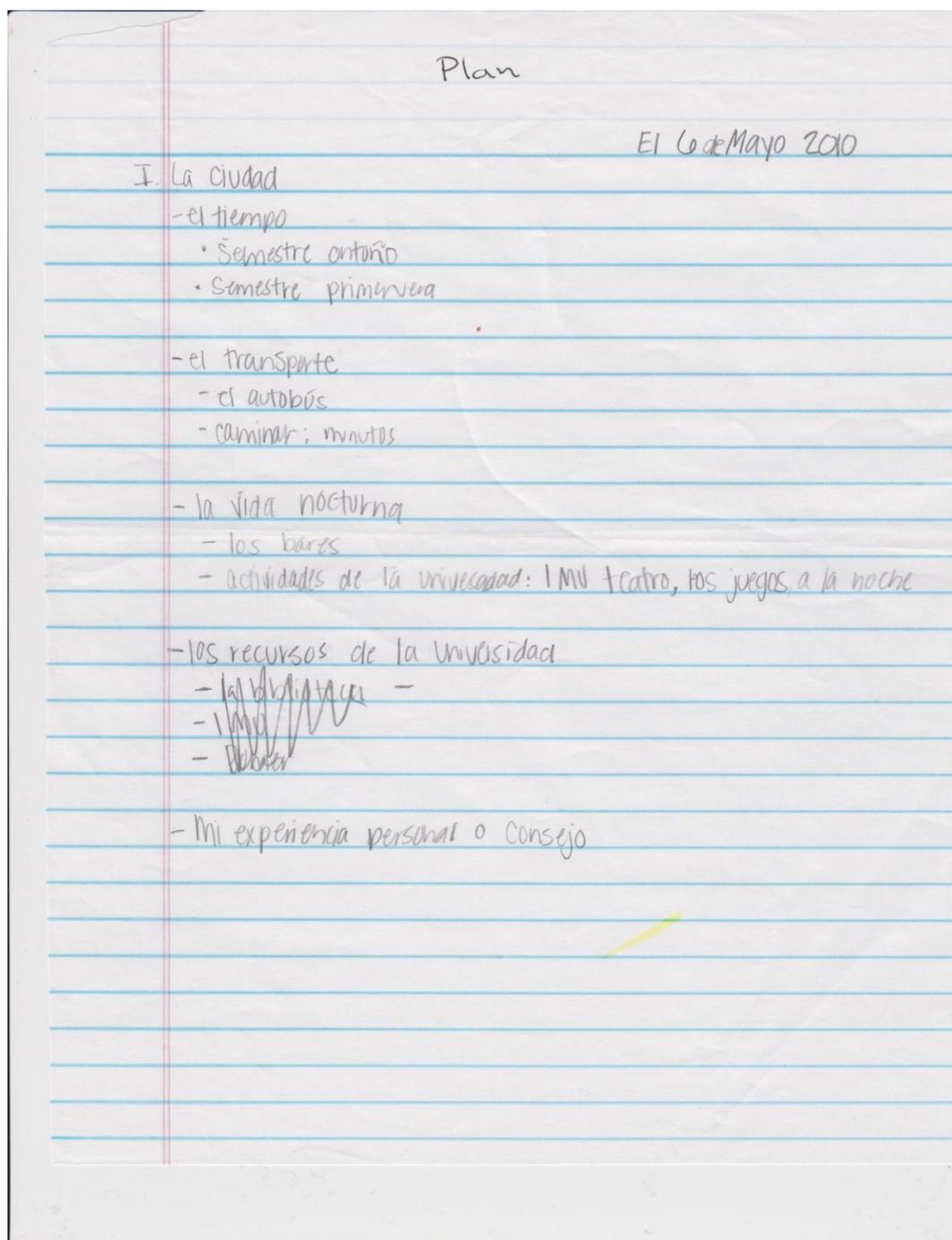
Una punta de vista diferente pero de la misma posición es que los bares ~~gana~~ ganarán más dinero si la edad ~~de consumir~~ legal de consumir alcohol era menor. La razón por eso es hay muchos estudiantes que van a los bares y compran <sup>muchas</sup> bebidas alcohólicas. Si la edad de la consumo permanece en 21 años de edad la cantidad de las personas que ~~serán~~ fueron a los bares reducirán. ~~Entonces~~ por eso los dueños de los bares ~~perderán~~ ~~perderán~~ perderán ~~piden~~ ganarán menos dinero.

Si la edad de ~~consumo~~ la consumo de alcohol ~~era~~ ~~permanece~~ permanece a 21 años, los estudiantes tendrán fiesta!

en sus casas, apartamentos y dormitorios y este sería un problema porque no había nadie que pueda monitorar el consumo.

Algunas personas creen que la edad de 18 años no es una edad suficiente para consumir alcohol creen que esta edad es demasiado joven. ~~Creo mi opinión,~~ ~~creo que es~~ Ellos creen que hay muchas consecuencias de esto pero creo que sería beneficioso si la edad de consumir alcohol era 18 años.

APPENDIX K  
KATIE'S WRITTEN TEXTS



## First Writing Task

El 6 de mayo 2010

Hola Jose,

Yo estoy muy estimulado que tú estás visitando la universidad de Iowa. No tengo mucha información para tí. Durante el semestre anterior, el tiempo hace Sol. En Octubre, el tiempo es más frío que en el verano, pero en diciembre, lo es muy frío porque el tiempo es invierno. Mi semestre favorito es primavera por el tiempo es hace calor y la escuela está terminando.

Durante el día, un estudiante usa el autobús por el transporte de oeste a este campus. También, unos estudiantes caminan a la clase. Normalmente, un estudiante puede caminar al otro lado del campus en diez minutos.

Mi parte favorito de la universidad es la vida nocturna. Durante a la noche, las personas pueden hacer cosas diferentes. Una opción para la persona está ir los bares. Ahora, un estudiante puede entrar los bares con diez y nueve años pero en junio los estudiantes necesitan ser veintiuno años. Otras actividades de la universidad por la vida nocturna son teatro de IMU. Los estudiantes pueden mirar las películas al teatro de IMU. También, la universidad de Iowa tiene una programa llama "los juegos a la noche". Durante "los juegos a la noche", los estudiantes juegan los deportes, los juegos, y más.

Durante mi dos años aquí, yo enseñé que un estudiante necesita explorar la campus y encontrar muchas personas. Mi consejo para tí es tiene divertido.

Tu amiga -- Katie 24/2

## Plan

El 12 de Mayo 2010

Intro:

tesis: Las personas tienen 18 años no debería beber porque ellos están desarrollando  
Las personas tienen 18 años no

A favor:

- menos los niños joven no beben mucho
- las compañías del bebe hacen más dinero porque más personas beben

En contra:

- las personas tiene 18 años están desarrollando.
- no serio
- 

Mi posición personal

## Second Writing Task

Muchos estudiantes menor de edad beben durante la semana. Una gente cree que si el gobierno reduce la edad legal para consumir alcohol, los niños fuera de peligro. Pero, una gente, en conta, cree que la edad legal para consumir alcohol debena estar 21 años porque los niños fuera de peligro. En mi opinion, yo pienso que la edad legal para consumir alcohol debria 21 años porque 19 es más seguridad. Es important que el gobierno no cambie la edad legal para consumir alcohol para el seguro de los estudiantes.

Unos estudiantes sostienen la idea del 18 años la edad legal para consumir alcohol. Un razon sostiene la idea es menos menor los niños beben más porque ella estará legal consumir alcohol a 18 años. Otro razon sostiene la edad de 18 años es las compañías de la cerveza hacen más dinero porque más gente está bebiendo. Con las personas a favor esta idea, hay la gente que no sostiene la edad de 18 años.

Unas investigaciones creen que los estudiantes que tienen 18 años están desarrollando. La mente de los estudiantes están todavía creciendo. Otro razon que la edad debria ser 21 años es los estudiantes tienen 16 años son un serio. Los estudiantes que tienen 16 años no experiencia de la vida real porque esta gente vino con sus padres y no solo.

Mi posición personal es que yo sostengo 21 años la edad legal para consumir alcohol. En mi opinión, yo pienso que lo no es seguro para los estudiantes tienen 18 años beber. A 18 años, ellos están desarrando y no tienen experiencia con la vida real. Entonces, es importante que el gobierno no cambie la edad legal consumir alcohol.

En conclusión, una gente sostiene la idea de 18 años para la edad legal consumir alcohol. Pero, hay una gente que no sostiene la edad legal consumir alcohol a 18 años porque los estudiantes tienen 18 años están desarrando y no serio. Yo creo que la edad legal consumir alcohol debiera ser 21 años. Es importante que el gobierno no cambie la edad legal consumir alcohol para la seguridad de los estudiantes.

## APPENDIX L

## CARLOS'S WRITTEN TEXTS

## First Writing Task

①

Describe the City

The weather

Transportation

Night life

University facilities: Campus, resources, and accommodations) Personal

Personal experiences while studying there.

Dear John,

How are you? I hope that you are having a wonderful semester! I'm sure you are very excited to study abroad.

Of course it will be a pleasure to tell you some things about my country and the National University of Costa Rica. I'm also very excited that you are interested to come to my country and my family is very excited to get to meet you too.

I would like to describe Heredia which is our city to you. Heredia is a smaller city than San José the capital. However Heredia is considered to be one of the main cities in the Central Valley. I'm sure you are very interested on knowing about Heredia Centro which is where the National University of Costa Rica is. Heredia Centro has everything you need. It has several traditional food restaurants, that

②

are very cheap and have very good quality food. I'm telling you this because I'm sure you won't have many time to go home during the day and I want to make sure you know there are good and healthy restaurants around the University. Heredia Centre also has many banks stores, churches, bars, it has a very good hospital and many recreational Centers. I'm sure you will never get bored.

The second thing I want to address is the weather. The weather in Heredia doesn't change that much throughout the year, however it will be good for you to know that it rains a lot. The temperature itself doesn't change that much with the rain, but just in case bring spring sweaters, maybe hard shoes that doesn't get wet very easily. The dry season is about five months which fairly warm I'm sure you will enjoy them. Perhaps, the weather stays between  $85^{\circ}\text{f}$  and  $70^{\circ}\text{f}$  throughout the year.

Transportation<sup>30</sup> in Heredia is great. We have a very convenient bus schedule that usually goes from 4:00 am to 12:00 am. So don't worry about it. And you can pretty much go everywhere by bus. However if you want something quicker you can take a cab. Cabs are everywhere in the city and

③

specially, outside the University. Also there are several companies you could call to order a cab, and they will immediately send you one.

I'm sure you are also very interested to know about fun places to go. There are not that many dancing clubs in Merida. However is very easy to take a cab with some friends and go to the capital. However you might want to ask for a recommendation of a taxi driver so that you know you are traveling with someone trustworthy. As every big city, there are risks so I would tell you to be careful<sup>450</sup> walking at night, or even riding a cab with a stranger.

There are some other places like in the mall where you can have fun and be pretty much safe.

The University facilities are pretty good. They are not as good or convenient than America's ones but they are still good<sup>500</sup>.

The campus is very nice every thing is connected so you won't have to be traveling around that much. Also there are many green places where I am sure you will like to study, eat, hang out, or take a nap.<sup>540</sup>

Also college is very cheap compared to America, so you can spend your money on good food haha! I got to study there for a semester before I came to USA. But I really enjoyed the experience I had. Also people are very nice and friendly and I'm sure you will make many friends.

I think that is all I have to say about our city and University. However if you have any more questions or concerns, please!! let me know!! I would really like to help you to come to my country.

Anyways I hope this letter is helpful and I will be waiting for any more questions!!

Have a great day and I will keep in touch with you!!

TTYL,

Sincerely



## Second Writing Task

18 vs 21

→ When there is prohibition people tends to go against it.

My Own Country, 18 years Old.

Cons  
Early death  
Intoxication  
Bad behavior.

Pros  
Less tendency to break the rules.  
# Better understanding of drinking.

Parental education about drinking.

Under aged drinking is an issue that affects not only America but <sup>also</sup> the rest of the world. In my opinion the lower the drinking age is the better, this is why I am in favor for the legal drinking age be reduced to 18 in <sup>so</sup> Iowa city. My reasons for supporting this are: <sup>there will be</sup> less tendency of breaking laws, less illegal drinking parties, and better understanding on the consequences of drinking.

The first thing I would like to talk is that reducing the drinking age could help students to have less necessity of <sup>so</sup> breaking laws.

As we know, the more restrictions there are, the more humans want to go against it.

I know that <sup>excessive</sup> drinking might not be good for anyone, <sup>at any age,</sup> but for sure we can't stop people of doing it. As many of us have read in the news, Iowa City is very famous to be a drinking town and that many underage student <sup>always</sup> managed to find away to drink.

I know that the government wants to prevent fatal accidents, problems with intoxication, and early deaths by allowing drinking to people who are supposed to be more mature<sup>20</sup> or that have a better age to take decisions. However, no matter what the government has done it never stops younger people from drinking. That's why I believe that if the legal drinking age goes down, students will feel less tendency for breaking laws.

The second <sup>25</sup> aspect that could be improved by reducing the drinking age is that there could be less illegal drinking parties. I know that we are all very concerned about our young population going to dangerous places in order to find a way for them to drink. This illegal parties often include <sup>30</sup> drugs, sex and in many cases very fatal accident. I know that this events could happen in any place at any age. But by reducing the legal <sup>drinking</sup> age<sup>20</sup>, students might be more interested on getting alcohol.

under less extreme conditions.

The final aspect I think could be improved by <sup>350</sup>reducing drinking age is that students might have a better understanding of the risks of <sup>drinking</sup> alcohol.

When you are young and want to go against laws you have less of a tendency of thinking about the consequences of your actions. You are usually thinking that you want to fight against <sup>400</sup>something that might get in the way of your freedom. However, I believe that by reducing the drinking age people will be more likely to think before they do something.

Of course everything has its consequences, and we are not 100% sure that things would be improved. Drinking is a major <sup>450</sup>issue and we want to make sure we do everything possible for our kids to stay away from it. However, sometimes trying to tight too much rope could make our kids go against us. I am not saying that we should allow everything or that there shouldn't be rules. <sup>500</sup>nonetheless, I do think there should be a balance in everything.

1 In conclusion I hardly believe that reducing the drinking age to 18 could improve the safety of our younger generations. However I believe that more than reducing the

legal drinking age there should more involvement of the parents in order to educate their children about the risks of alcohol and that everything should be balanced. I just want to leave you by describing my own anecdote. When I was a child my parents introduced me to alcohol. They led me try to feel the sensation and they would talk to me about what alcohol can do to you if you are not responsible. I had always the opportunity to drink in company of the ones who care the most about me. Those early encounters with alcohol taught me how to be responsible about it. By the time I reached the age of 18 I didn't feel the necessity to run out and do crazy things in order to drink. I'm 21 now and I still don't have the necessity to drink, and I feel I have a good understanding of what alcohol could do to me if I'm irresponsible.

APPENDIX M  
ROBERTO'S WRITTEN TEXTS

Dear Jose,

I'm writing this letter to inform you about the benefits of attending the University of Iowa and why it would be a <sup>great opportunity</sup> ~~good opportunity~~ for you to attend the University of Iowa. I cannot explain to you a lot about the transportation and nightlife since I'm not very familiar with these. What I can explain to you is why attending the university of Iowa would be such a good benefit for you for academic reasons. The university of Iowa is one of the most prestigious universities in the midwest when it comes to medical fields and also they also have opportunities for other majors as well. The facilities here at the university are kept in great condition eventhough some of the buildings are old, but they also have other facilities with modern technology.

The ~~teacher~~ <sup>faculty</sup> at the university are willing to help you whenever you ask for help. ~~The~~ <sup>I</sup> believe the learning environment that's provided at the university is very good because the classes are small and the teachers have more time to interact with smaller classes.

There is only one thing that can hold you back from attending the university - if you don't like cold weather. In the

~~Fall semester when~~ That ~~thing~~ is the weather.

I know that you<sup>20</sup> being from the Southern part of the United States <sup>might be a</sup> problem since you are not accustomed to the cold weather that we have here in Iowa. But if you are willing to tough it out and cover yourself well, the weather wouldn't be a <sup>problem</sup> ~~an impediment~~.

I know that I haven't explain much about the night life and life here on campus, but if you are interested about learning more, I can get you information on this things or I can get somebody else that is more acquainted with this to write you a letter where they explain all of <sup>30</sup> these.

It was a pleasure for me to write this letter for you, <sup>and help</sup> I hope that you are a little bit more informed about my school and take it into consideration when making a decision of where to attend school. I hope to here back from you <sup>as soon as possible</sup>.

Sincerely,



## Second Writing Task

To whom it may concern,  
 Recently the issue on whether the legal drinking age in Iowa city bars be reduced from 18 to 21 has risen. Reducing the legal drinking age has its benefits as well as negatives. In the following paragraphs I will try to explain the <sup>positive</sup> ~~negative~~ <sup>100</sup> consequences that reducing the legal drinking age has on citizens as well as the community.

~~To start of I will~~

First of all reducing the legal drinking age from 18 to 21 has a number of positive consequences. ~~The first positive impact that reducing the legal drinking age has on~~  
 When 18 year olds are not allowed to drink publicly, they tend to hang out at parties <sup>100</sup> where they know that they are going to be able to drink. This causes many problems for both the city and the 18 year olds. When they <sup>attend</sup> ~~go~~ to these parties <sup>that</sup> they are not supervised, many ~~problems~~ young adults drink until they cannot drink anymore, sometimes causing alcohol poisoning. Also the city <sup>150</sup> faces many complaints by neighbors about loud noise and people drinking on front yards. By reducing the drinking age from ~~21~~ 21 to 18 the city would eliminate some

some of these problems because now 18 year olds wouldn't have to hide ~~at~~ at basements and other parts to drink. By ~~doing~~ reducing the age limit in bars they would also to some extent reduce the number of alcohol poisoning cases, because bartenders could control how much a person drinks and if they look drunk not serve them drinks anymore.

This would also eliminate some complaints from citizens about the noise and drinking in front yards because now 18 year olds ~~would~~ would have a place to go and drink.

~~Even though there are more negative consequences~~

~~Now the~~ Even with all these positive outcomes that reducing the legal drinking age has, there are many people that believe that reducing the legal drinking age is a bad thing. One of their arguments against reducing the drinking age is that 18 year olds are not mature enough to handle the responsibility that comes with drinking. They say that allowing them to drink would cause more problems because they would be able to drink as much as they want without being reprimanded, causing them to be out on the streets drunk or driving drunk. Another argument against

reducing the drinking age is that in the long run if we reduce the drinking age now, later 16 & 17 year old high school seniors are going to want to drink. Reducing the drinking age would probably not solve the problem since it can lead to younger people drinking.

There are many views positive and negative on whether the drinking age should be reduce or kept the same. ~~and the only~~ The only thing that is left to do is make an evaluation of the positive and negatives and make a decision from it. Some people might be dissapointed with the outcome, but that's just how it works with policies. Some people are excited about the outcome and others aren't.

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