

## **The Differences and Similarities in the Perception of the Writing Process in Transactional Texts in L1 and L2 in Translation Students**

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### **Abstract**

Writing as a process has been a trend in teaching since the 1960s, nevertheless, students in the Argentine educational system are rarely aware of the steps involved in the activity. This seems to be the case not only in their L1, but also in their L2. Furthermore, regarding second language acquisition, there is an over-reliance on the L2 in detriment of students' native language, when there is solid evidence that learners' L1 enhances their foreign language skills. This paper purports to explore to what extent the writing process is perceived as different in L1 and L2. In order to explore this issue, a group of 18 students working towards their degree in translation were given a task in Spanish, their L1, and a similar task in English, their L2. A questionnaire measured their perception by posing questions regarding the writing process in the two tongues. The result obtained showed that the writing process is seen as similar in both languages, revealing the same flaws and strengths in the two cases. Furthermore, there was a correlation between writing skills in L1 and L2. Few students actually wrote a draft or made an outline of their work and there was no awareness that they belonged to a discourse community. The pre-writing stage and the editing stage were especially neglected. The fact that skills in both languages go hand in hand seems to show that there is a teaching opportunity missed by not recurring to L1 when teaching L2 writing.

**Keywords:** writing process, second language acquisition, writing skills, translation studies, English as a second language.

### **Resumen**

Escribir, como proceso, ha sido una tendencia en la enseñanza desde la década de los sesenta. Los estudiantes del sistema educativo argentino, sin embargo, rara vez son conscientes de los pasos que supone esta actividad. Este parece ser el caso no solo en su L1, sino también en su L2. Además, con respecto a la adquisición de una segunda lengua, existe una dependencia excesiva de la L2 en detrimento de la lengua materna de los estudiantes, aun cuando existe evidencia sólida de que la L1 de los alumnos mejora sus habilidades en el idioma extranjero. Este trabajo intenta explorar en qué medida el proceso de escritura se percibe como diferente en la L1 y la L2. Para explorar este tema, un grupo de 18 estudiantes de traducción recibieron una tarea en español, su L1, y una tarea similar en inglés, su L2. Un cuestionario midió su percepción a través de preguntas

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sobre el proceso de escritura en las dos lenguas. El resultado obtenido mostró que el proceso se percibe como similar en ambos idiomas, y reveló los mismos defectos y fortalezas en los dos casos. Además, mostró una correlación entre las habilidades de escritura en la L1 y en la L2. De hecho, pocos estudiantes escribieron un borrador o prepararon un lineamiento de su trabajo y no se mostró conciencia de pertenencia a una comunidad discursiva. Las etapas de pre-escritura y de edición fueron especialmente desatendidas. El hecho de que las habilidades en ambos idiomas vayan de la mano parece demostrar que existe una oportunidad de enseñanza no tenida en cuenta al no recurrir a la L1 cuando se enseña a escribir en la L2.

**Palabras claves:** procesos de escritura, adquisición de una segunda lengua, habilidades de escritura, traducción, inglés como segunda lengua.

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## **I. Introduction**

It is a well-known fact that applied linguistics has been concerned with the development of writing skills for the past 60 years (Grabe & Kaplan, 1996). The focus of attention has been on two aspects of language: the transactional –which is concerned with the communication of factual or propositional information (Lyons, 1968, cited in Brown, G and G. Yule, 1986), and the interactional, which deals with the conventional use of language in open talk exchanges, that is, the phatic use of language mostly studied by philosophers, sociolinguists and sociologists (Brown, G & G. Yule, 1986). The revival of rhetoric in the 70s and 80s in the universities in the United States and other English speaking countries has placed the focus on the social construction of writing and writing across the curriculum by giving importance to such issues as topic, genre, audience,

intertextuality, and content-based writing instruction. These issues have been the subject of research in both L1 and in L2 in the United States, Canada, European countries as well as in Australia.

In Argentina, these issues have been addressed in the syllabuses of foreign language instruction in schools, colleges and universities to a large extent; although it seems that little attention is paid to them across the curriculum in subjects taught in Spanish (Fernández and Carlino, 2005). Thus, the matter to be queried is: how exactly does a student in the Argentine educational system learn (or fail to learn) to produce a written interactional text? Due to the fact that the only subjects which include the production of transactional texts in their syllabuses are foreign languages, students seem to receive the formal staging and organizational aspects of text writing in a language that is not their own native tongue. Even in foreign language programs not specifically oriented to language professionals, the emphasis is on reading comprehension of texts related to the subject matter –with remarkable success, but little or no importance is placed on their subsequent reconstruction in Spanish (Klett et al., 2005).

The issue of text reconstruction is particularly relevant to students enrolled in the translation programs in Argentina. Due to the nature of the translator's profession, in which mostly transactional written texts are dealt with, it seems important that they be able not only to understand the indications that the producer is sending in "chunks", but also to be able to reconstruct the text with an adequate organization and staging at the level of macro-structure. This paper will explore the process and production of written transactional texts in students' L1 and L2. It will also aim to ascertain whether the organizational scheme perceived when a text is read in Spanish is sufficiently self-contained to enhance the formal instructions usually taught in a foreign language, and, thus if students simply transfer the scheme learned in those classes or if, on the other hand, students use the staging and organization at all when producing a transactional text in Spanish, as they might consider that rules do not cross language borders.

In order to evaluate this, it seems logical to ask students about their writing habits both in Spanish and English and observe, first of all, what their perception concerning the organization of texts in both languages is; in a second stage, it would be necessary to assess if their goals regarding staging and organization are actually achieved when a text

is produced. Therefore, the purpose of this paper is to explore to what extent the writing process is perceived as different in L1 and L2 among second year college students earning a degree in translation.

## **II. Literature Review**

In order to approach the complexity of the subject matter in this paper, it becomes necessary to examine the issue from several viewpoints: in the first place, it is essential to review the literature concerning the development of the writing process in a first language. Secondly, it is necessary to explore this topic specifically in Argentina so as to describe the environment in which these students in particular carry out their activities. Thirdly, as the learners are engaged in second language learning, the distinguishing features of process writing in a second language must be probed. And, finally, as the subjects of this research are working towards a degree in translation, it is indispensable that the writing process as explained in the translation theory be analyzed. This section, therefore, has been broken down into four different sub-sections, each addressing the specifics of the aforementioned aspects of the general topic, respectively.

### **II.1. The Development of Text Construction in the Writing Process**

Writing in L1 context has evolved consistently since the 1960s as many linguists voiced their reaction against the “current-traditional” approach which dominated earlier educational theory regarding the issue. According to Grabe and Kaplan (1998), this reaction was popularly designated the “writing-as-a-process movement” and it aimed to free instruction from the simplistic model characterized by the three-to-five paragraph layout, certain assumptions in the organizational structure, the one-draft assignment, the student’s lack of interaction with peers, the reliance on grammar and the linear composing model based on outlining, writing and editing. With the process writing approach students were encouraged to discover themselves by making writing meaningful, goal oriented, recursive and non-linear. New ideas of audience awareness and feedback from several audiences were also emphasized. The approach also favored the gradual displacement of grammar and usage in de-contextualized settings.

Writing as a process has raised awareness concerning the complexity of writing. Flower and Hayes (1980) developed the notion of rhetorical problem (audience, topic, assignment) and the notion of defining the writer's own goals (providing meaning and producing a formal text) in task based component of their model, which showed how expert and novice writers differed. The theory of revision presented by Hayes et al. (1987, cited in Grabe, W., & Kaplan, 1996) expanded on the earlier model. For Flower the problem lay in how writers apply their skills and not so much how they acquire them; in the author's own words:

For the student, the classroom content, the teacher's concern with content, and the role of the paper as a tool in the grading process are likely to fit a familiar schema for theme writing. But what is important in college is not the apparent genre or conventions, but the goals. The goals of self-directed critical inquiry, of using writing to think through genuine problems and issues, and of writing to an imagined community of peers with a personal rhetorical purpose – these distinguish academic writing from a more limited comprehension and response. (Flower et al., 1990, p. 251)

While Flowers and Hayes place both novice and expert writers in the same continuum, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) argue that there is no one process for all writers. They believe that there are two models for the writing process: the knowledge-telling model, in which the information is generated from the assignment, the topic, the genre and the terms or lexical items in the assignment; and the knowledge-transforming model, which needs to consider information ordering, audience expectations and logical patterns of argument. They presented evidence stating that less proficient writers spend less time on planning; they are less concerned with goals, plans and problems; they seldom reorganize their content; and they do not use the main ideas as a guideline for integrating information. All of these issues seem to invoke a dialectical process for reflection in the more expert writer.

Concerning the relationship between form and meaning, Halliday's functional Theory of Language, explains that grammar develops precisely because speakers and writers interact. Painter (1989, cited in Grabe, W., & Kaplan, 1996), on the same note, states that: "...the need of language learners has shaped the linguistic system itself" (p. 21). And Christie (1989, cited in Grabe, W., & Kaplan, 1996) suggests that "...language teaching practices should always have an overt and explicit interest in the nature of the

language students must learn to use” (p. 198). That is to say, that the knowledge of form and exploration of content is crucial for learning itself.

Another major issue dominating the theory and practice of writing is genre knowledge. Swales (1990), for instance, argues that the need for genre knowledge is important for students to be successful in academic settings. Grabe and Kaplan (1998) defined genre as:

the ways that groups of writers have managed to solve problems in writing which conform to general expectations, which facilitate communication for both the writer and the reader, and which provide students with frames suited to communication about different sorts of knowledge and different ways of addressing the reader. (p. 132)

Halliday (1993) also discusses meaningful use of language in educational contexts and argues that language form gives structure to meaningful communication, that is, that language use and purpose are closely linked.

Martin (1989, cited in Grabe, W., & Kaplan, 1996) and Swales (1990) both point out that schools should include formal language instruction in the forms of language so that students will find it easier to infer content and learn to control the information by integrating content, context and language. Genre is thus seen by Grabe and Kaplan (1998) as “...a way of empowering students because they serve meaningful purposes and provide frameworks for various academic schemata based sets of knowledge” (p.138). Genre, therefore, may be seen as a meeting point of several issues regarding writing and the writing process: knowledge background, content, linguistic structure, register, purpose, and audience.

The foregoing meant to represent a glimpse at the development of the process writing movement and its implications in academic writing. It is thus seen as important that students learn to develop strategies concerning writing so that they may be better able to communicate meaning through appropriate forms and that they understand that applying the writing process gives them power to make linguistic choices that allow for the transformation of knowledge.

## **II.2. Text Construction in the Writing Process in L1 in the Argentine Public Education System**

Section 13 of the *Ley General de Educación* (General Education Act), enacted in 1993 and amended in 2005, in reference to the initial level of the common basic contents (CBC), provides for the following: “To encourage the forms of personal expression as well as graphic and verbal communication.” (p. 2) This objective also appears in Recommendation number 26/92 of the *Consejo Federal de Cultura y Educación* (Federal Council of Culture and Education) which lists as a basic skill the fact that: “...students should be able to “choose” and use language, symbols and verbal codes in different contexts (...) as a basis for the logical organization of ideas and the expression of feelings (...) to enjoy and appreciate static manifestations of a (...) literary nature and to use their expressive resources harmoniously” (p. 3). In the second block of the initial level referring to “written expression” there appears a reference to the elements of cohesion, coherence through repetition, synonyms, connectors, etc.; register and the production of different types of texts aimed at an adult audience; and the development of pre-reading and editing skills –which would seem to place some importance on process writing. The program also mentions the discrimination between literary and transactional texts according to the codes used.

These objectives, however, do not seem to be clearly assimilated by students. Carlino and Fernández (2005) state that:

Most students describe the fact that Polimodal/Secondary school proposes reading and writing within practices based on memoirist models. The most commonly used tasks consist of a low level of complexity, which imply recurring to only one textual source, require little or no written composition, and thus, do not promote the building and organization of knowledge (p. 34).

They end the remark by stating that “these tasks seem to propitiate learning forms which are merely reproductive and superficial (p. 35).” Furthermore, Aisenberg (2005) analyses primary school reading and writing and points out that “...the most frequent reading instructions aim to “deconstruct” the text into punctual bits of information (...) which implies a superficial and fragmentary comprehension (...) the reproduction of information thus understood favors (...) a writing activity that limits the student’s activity to a mere transcription (p. 6).”

In the Argentine portal *portal.educ.ar* teachers gave their opinions on writing, and, perhaps not surprisingly, one teacher's concerns were mainly focused on reading, reading sessions, interchange of opinions among readers, advancing as readers, and expanding the reading experience. Another teacher wrote about checking comprehension through plastic arts and puppets. Only one mentioned writing skills at all, and only referring to the achievement of a "final product" to be shared among the audience. Not one comment concerned process in writing. In an interview with Javier Nicoletti (2007), director of Pedagogy at "Universidad de la UNLaM" published by "Clarín" newspaper, the interviewee revealed that secondary school students have difficulties in writing and text comprehension and lack studying techniques.

### **II.3. Text Construction in the Writing Process in Foreign and Second Language Instruction**

There has been quite a lot of research concerning writing in a non-native language. According to Graves and Kaplan (1998) many distinctions have been made as regards the type of students, their cultural context, and their needs: English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students are those who learn English in a country where English is not spoken; English as a Second Language (ESL) students are those who live in an English speaking country where English is a language or the language of the community. Apart from this distinction, there are other terms which may be applied such as English for Occupational Purposes (EOP) students who need the language for their work and Limited English Proficiency (LEP) students, which is a term established by the United States public school system to all students whose language is not the one of the community. Translation students in Argentina may fall into any of these categories; however, because of the need for native-like proficiency, this paper will place them in the ESL category.

Writing in ESL students has been the object of research mostly in applied linguistics, although it has borrowed ideas from cognitive psychology, sociolinguistics and other fields. The issues that have been explored are problems dealing with language transfer and interlanguage (Grabe and Kaplan, 1998). Although there has been research in contrastive rhetoric, there are some issues which still need to be explored, such as the

students writing skills in their L1, how literacy is defined in their L1, the reading motivations in students' L1, the writing motivations in students' L1, and the attitude that students have towards their L1 and L2.

Kaplan (1966, 1972) explored how student writing could be analyzed at a discourse level in order to account for organizational preferences among different discourse communities. Contrastive rhetoric is mostly concerned with the issue of topicalization, with the various ways of achieving cohesion, with how coherence-marking contexts operate in different languages, and with how implicatures are encoded in different languages (Halliday and Hassan, 1989), supposing that the ideational or content-bearing functions of discourse as well as the choices people make when they use language to structure their interpersonal communications exist in all languages (Halliday, 1978). Although different cultures have different ways of doing things with language, they seem to have some resources which allow each to express the same ideas.

There are, however, some constraints as not all cultures produce a stimulus in exactly the same way due to the intrinsic properties of each language (Gutt, 1991). Along these lines, there is another line of argument which stems from sociolinguistics and argues that there are cultural preferences which lead a person to make use of certain options available in linguistic possibilities (Street 1984). This would seem to occur even at the most objective levels of writing which is scientific writing (Myers 1986, 1990).

In spite of the extensive text-based research evidence available, however, Grabe and Kaplan argue that “it has not been possible to control sufficiently the many confounding variables that have been a problem in contrastive rhetoric research” (1998: 186). According to Ferrari (2004), linguists have different opinions concerning the strategies used by writers in their L1 and their L2, respectively: in her opinion there are authors who consider that there is no relation between the strategies used in both languages (Connor 1987 and Kaplan 1979, 1984, 1897); there are authors who consider that the strategies are the same (Arndt 1987, Cumming, 1989, (cited in Grabe, W., & Kaplan, R. B., 1996), and Valdés, Haro y Echevarriarza 1992); and there are authors who consider that it is possible to transfer strategies if the writer has reached a minimum level of linguistic competence (Eisterhold, Carrell, Silberstein, Kroll y Kuehn 1990, Sasaki y Hirose 1996 y Whalen y Ménard 1995).

In view of the aforementioned, this paper purports to explore what actually happens with students who study translation in Argentina given the particular context that they are in and the impending need to manage text reconstruction strategies in their mother tongue as well as their second language.

#### **II.4 The Importance of Developing Text Re-construction Skills in the Translation Theory**

This part of the paper aims at establishing that it is crucial for translators to handle macro structures equally well in both source language and target language, thus, the importance of developing skills of re-construction at a macro structure level in both languages. As regards text analysis, translation theory has provided much research and theory which establishes the importance of whole text understanding and macro structure reconstruction as a complement to de-construction and micro structure reconstruction. That is to say, that it is not enough to provide a detailed analysis of lexis and syntax, but it becomes necessary to approach the text in terms of its rhetorical organization. According to a pilot study by Niska & Wande (as cited in Wande, 1999):

(...) a number of text linguistic models for the description of the interpreting process were evaluated. It was found that text linguistic models can increase general understanding of the processes going on during an interpreting session, on the macro level (text structure and content of the message) as well as on the micro level (morphology and syntax).

Various types of problems of understanding occur, including terminological problems and difficulties understanding the text structure. In expert discourse, references can be hard to find in the surface structure, and coherence is often maintained only by the use of implicit references (p. 12).

According to Hatim and Mason (1990), there is always an overriding rhetorical purpose which defines the patterns and syntax in a language. The texture of a source text, therefore, becomes an important guideline for making decisions concerning the overall texture of the target text. Thus, the order sought in translation should always take into account the rhetorical and macro structures first, and only then should there be an attempt at finding the appropriate words and syntactic structures. This is the case of

“conceptual translation” (Larson, 1984) which suggests that what changes is the form and the code, but that the meaning and the message should remain unchanged, since the unit of translation is not the word or phrase, but the concept as is best seen for example in proverbs and idioms.

Furthermore, Newmark (1988) has suggested communicative and semantic approaches to translation. This approach attempts to produce on its readers an effect as close as possible to that obtained on the readers of the source language. He contends that there are “three basic translation processes: the interpretation and analysis of the SL text; the translation procedure (choosing equivalents for words and sentences in the TL), and the reformulation of the text according to the writer's intention, the reader's expectation, the appropriate norms of the TL, etc” (p. 144).

Since Halliday and Hasan (1976) introduced the notion of cohesion, the idea of translation at a level of macro structure has become widely accepted. As (Connor, 1994) states:

Systemic linguistics, a related approach to text analysis and semiotics, emerged in the 1960s with the work of linguists such as Halliday, whose theories emphasize the ideational or content-bearing functions of discourse as well as the choices people make when they use language to structure their interpersonal communications (see, e.g., Halliday, 1978) (p. 682).

In addition, Swales (1990) applied the notion of macro structures for scientific research articles and Biber (1988) applied the notion to multidimensional computerized analysis. Clearly, there is a need for overall text analysis both in the de-construction of the source text as well as in the re-construction of a target text in the translation process.

Snell-Hornby (1988) has also explored the issue of whole text translation in her “Integrated Approach” where she speaks of “a dynamic, gestalt-like system of relationships, whereby the various headings represent an idealized, prototypical focus and the grid-system gives way to blurred edges and overlapping” (p. 31).

An interesting example of how certain macro structures work in similar ways across languages is Bolivar’s study of the editorials appearing in “The Guardian” during the first quarter of 1981 (as cited in Riazi, 2004). She found that a paragraph level structure

called “triad” organizes the macro structure of editorials. This structure consisted of three elements called Lead, Follow, and Valuate which serve the function of initiation, follow up and evaluation. Riazi and Assar (as cited in Riazi, 2004) found similar structures in Persian newspapers demonstrating that certain syntactic forms tend to appear in the same parts of paragraphs across languages, and this responds to a more complex organizational concept of the writing as a whole.

Gutt (1991) emphasizes the importance of contextual information in the interpretation process as regards a number of stylistic features. He quotes the Relevance Theory of Communication developed by Sperber and Wilson (1986) whereby the presumption of relevance to the audience dominates the stimulus produced so that a gratuitous processing effort is avoided; thus, as a consequence of the information conveyed by a stimulus, the audience is able to infer certain contextual assumptions. According to this theory, the assumptions may be conveyed in two different ways: explicatures and implicatures. Explicatures refer to what a writer or speaker intends to transmit while implicatures are the contextual assumptions and implications. A translator may be forced to explicate the implicit information in the text and in certain cases. What is more, she or he may have to change certain aspects of the text in order to make the implications clear and produce a non-literal translation.

As regards the pedagogic application of these theories, it is clear that it is not only necessary for translators to be able to infer the connotations given by macro structures in the source text, but they should also be able to replicate those connotations as closely as possible. It is of utmost importance, therefore, that translators be aware of and be able to manage these resources in both languages; thus, the necessity of exploring the possible lack of rhetorical, macro level, cohesion, and coherence devices in the future translators’ native language as well as their second language.

### **III. Procedure**

#### **III.1. Context**

A questionnaire was administered to 18 students who are working towards a degree in certified translation and who are attending their second year at the Universidad Católica

Argentina. The students were selected in order to establish certain moderator variables which are a) the fact that they have already taken English and Spanish grammar courses in which they were explicitly taught cohesive devices, 2) they have also taken courses in which process writing was taught in English, their second language, and 3) they had taken no courses where explicit process writing was taught in Spanish, their native language.

### **III. 2. Description and Questionnaire**

The aforementioned questionnaire (refer to Appendix 1) consists of 36 questions divided into 3 main categories. The first one, which is headed as “Background”, comprises eleven questions and is aimed at measuring respondents’ background regarding their first and second language. The second, consisting of 23 questions is headed as “Hands on Task”, and is divided into three sub-sections, namely: pre-writing activities, writing activity proper, and editing activities. The third section contemplates systemic restrictions to the questionnaire. The questions in sections one and two were all closed questions comparing English and Spanish. The first question in section three was a rated question and the second question was open.

#### **III.2.1 Section I: Background**

This section aims at ascertaining respondents’ reading and writing background in L1 and L2.

- Question 1: Did you have mandatory writing courses in High school?  
It helps test writing experience in L1 and L2.
- Question 2: Did you have optional writing courses in High school?  
It focuses on respondents’ possibilities regarding writing in L1 and L2.
- Question 3: Have you attended literary workshops?  
It draws attention to respondents’ interest in writing in L1 and L2.
- Question 4: Do you read magazines?  
It aims at ascertaining respondents’ reading habits in short texts in L1 and L2.
- Question 5: Do you read the newspaper?

It focuses on respondents' daily reading habits in L1 and L2.

- Question 6: Do you read novels or short stories?

It aims at assessing respondents' reading habits in longer texts in L1 and L2.

- Question 7: Did you have to write term papers in school?

It refers to respondents' early training in writing skills in L1 and L2.

- Question 8: Have you written any essays or term papers in College?

It aims at evaluating respondents' recent writing skills in L1 and L2.

- Question 9: Have you read any essays in college?

It focuses on respondents' reading skills in transactional texts in L1 and L2.

- ┌ Question 10: Have you passed the test for "Lengua Española" at college?

It evaluates respondents' proficiency in L1.

- Question 11: Have you passed all the test for "English Language" at college?

It evaluates respondents' proficiency in L2.

### **III.2.2 Section II: Hands on Task**

This section focuses on respondents' direct experience with the assignments given.

#### **III.2.2.1 Subsection A: Pre-writing Activities**

This subsection draws attention to respondents' approach to writing in L1 and L2

- Question 1: Did you do any research on the topic before writing?

This question draws attention to respondents' pre-writing research in L1 and L2

- Question 2: Did you use more than one source for your research?

It focuses on how research was carried out in L1 and L2

- Question 3: Did you talk to anyone who knows about the subject?

It ascertains if respondents sought help when confronted with a problem.

- Question 4: Did you make an outline of the essay?

It focuses on the steps of the writing process in L1 and L2

- Question 5: Did you make a first draft of your work?

It focuses on the steps of the writing process in L1 and L2.

- Question 6: Did you consider your audience?

It aims to assess respondents' awareness of their discourse community

- Question 7: Did you consider an approach the paper as a whole?

It focuses on respondents' critical attitude towards writing in L1 and L2

### **III.2.2.2 Subsection B: Writing Activity Proper**

This section aims to assess if respondents follow certain steps of the writing process in L1 and L2

- Question 1: Did you start the paper by pointing out the main idea?

It draws attention to the issue of coherence in L1 and L2.

- Question 2: Did you provide a proper title?

It helps ascertain whether students could summarize their point of view in L1 and L2

- Question 3: Did you develop a topic sentence with a controlling idea for each paragraph?

It focuses on coherence at paragraph level in L1 and L2.

- Question 4: Did you provide adequate support for your idea?

It draws attention to the need to ground ideas on facts in transactional writing.

- Question 5: Did you connect different aspects of your idea in an adequate way and did you give more relevance to more important ideas?

It focuses directly on relevance and coherence through cohesive devices. In L1 and L2

- Question 6: Did you check that the connectors used were appropriate?

It draws attention to the use of cohesive devices in L1 and L2

- Question 7: Did you link one paragraph to another in an adequate way?

It focuses on inter-paragraph cohesion in L1 and L2

- Question 8: Did you try to vary the structures you used?

It aims at stylistics in L1 and L2

- Question 9: Did you take relationship between theme and rheme into account?

It draws attention to inter-sentential coherence through subject verb structures in L1 and L2.

- Question 10: Did you consider the location of prepositional phrases in the sentence?

It focuses on inter-sentential incoherence through prepositional dislocation in L1 and L2

- Question 11: Did you write in the proper register?

It aims at establishing stylistics within the respondents' discourse community.

### **III.2.2.3 Subsection C: Editing Activity**

This subsection is concerned with respondents' editing skills and habits in L1 and L2.

- Question 1: Did you proofread your work?

It addresses the issue directly in both L1 and L2.

- Question 2: Did you check for unity in each paragraph?

It ascertains whether respondents were aware of any dislocated concepts in L1 and L2

- Question 3: Did you check if the paragraphs flowed smoothly?

It aims at establishing inter-paragraph coherence in L1 and L2.

- Question 4: Did you give your paper to a peer for correction?

It focuses on the awareness of a discourse community

- Question 5: Did you check that your writing complied with the required formal parameters?

It draws attention to the respondents' awareness of rules within their discourse community

### **III.2.3 Section III : Systemic Restrictions**

This section focuses on systemic restrictions that may have affected the final product and the writing process.

- Question 1: How much did the time taken for the task influence your writing process? Mark the corresponding with an X.

A lot	Pretty much	Some	A little	None
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It aims at ascertaining the influence of time on the writing process in L1 and L2.

- Question 2: What elements mentioned in “(II) Hands on task” did you have to sacrifice due to time constraints? (You may draw a line if you had enough time.)

It focuses on the relative importance given to each step of the writing process in L1 and L2

#### **IV. Results**

Due to the size of the sample, any variation under 10% will be considered negligible or immaterial.

The first set of questions, included in section I -“Background”, aimed to assess respondents’ reading and writing habits in their L1 (Spanish) and their L2 (English). Question 1 shows that just under half (47%) of the respondents had a mandatory writing course in English in high school, compared to only one third who had a similar course in Spanish, which is consistent with the data set forth in Section II.2 of this paper. Surprisingly, however, a third of respondents had attended optional literary workshops in their L1, as revealed by responses to question 2.

Questions 4, 5 and 6 aimed to establish reading habits in different genre in both languages. While three fourths of the respondents stated that they read magazines, newspapers, short stories and novels in Spanish, the numbers relative to English showed large variations as regards genre; 39% said that they read magazines, 53% read newspapers, and a staggering 100% read short stories and novels.

Questions 7, 8 and 9 aimed to ascertain whether respondents had any experience writing transactional texts in either language. The results were contradictory because the numbers showed great variations which were unexpected due to the fact that all respondents belonged to the same course, thus their answers should have been absolute. After the feedback of the questionnaire, respondents were asked to explain the reason for the variations, and the rapport proved interesting because there were discrepancies regarding whether certain assignments had been essays or term papers. In view of this, the aforementioned questions were considered to have a “no” answer because respondents were unable to identify the genre of essay altogether.

Questions 10 and 11 referred to the respondents’ academic performance. All students had passed English Language courses and all but one had passed the Spanish Language course. The differences were considered negligible.

As regards the writing process concerning the assignments that the students were asked to hand in, there was a noticeable low percentage of respondents who had taken into

account the pre-writing stage. Although all respondents had searched for information, 20% did so from only one source in English and 33% failed to recur to more than one source in Spanish. 17% claimed that they would have done so if they had had more time, and that information in Spanish was harder to come by.

Less than a third of respondents actually made an outline for their paper and just over half made a draft copy. A negligible amount claimed that it was due to a lack of time, though. Questions 6 and 7 aimed to establish the awareness of belonging to a discourse community; in this sense, about a third answered affirmatively.

The answers to Section II.B, which aimed to assess the writing process proper, showed a consistently high number of affirmative answers which ranged between an 80% and 100% with the exceptions of question II.B.3 regarding establishing a predominant point of view for each sentence and question which was just under 50%; and question II.B.9 which referred to inter-sentential coherence which yielded a meagre 22%. Once again, a 17% claimed it was due to the lack of time.

The answers to the questions regarding editing were incredibly similar for both languages. While, however, there were high percentages for spelling and coherence which ranged between 94% and 83%, only 28% verified that the compositions met formal requirements and a mere 6% showed the compositions to anyone.

The effect of the time devoted to the task, the results were discouraging since, on an average, respondents considered that they could have taken more time to do the tasks. The result was 3.61 on a scale from 1 to 5.

## **V. Conclusions**

### **V.1 Acquisition of Writing Skills in L1 and L2**

As regards the first query of this research paper, that is, how exactly a student in the Argentine educational system learns or fails to learn to produce a written interactional text, it appears that the students surveyed perceive that they have received more formal instruction in English than in Spanish. There seems to be, however, a more considerable interest in acquiring the skills in Spanish. This is evinced by the large number of respondents who have voluntarily taken writing courses in their native language and by the greater number of extra-curricular reading they do in their L1. The relatively high number of respondents who have attended literary workshops must be handled with care, however, because the contents of those courses are generally aimed at creative

rather than at transactional writing. This finding would seem to be consistent with Javier Nicoletti's assessment mentioned in the introduction, in the sense that students seem to feel that they have to make up for the lack of instruction in their L1 by attending workshops either within or outside of the school system.

## **V.2. Perception of the Writing Process in L1 and L2**

The purpose of this paper was to explore to what extent the writing process was perceived as different in L1 and L2 among second year college students earning a degree in translation. In that sense, the findings show that the writing process is viewed as very similar by the surveyees. The same strengths that respondents had in their L1 were the strengths that they exhibited in their L2.

These strengths were mainly concerned with the writing proper which was perceived as being very important in all the items queried with the exception of the fact that no predominant point of view had been taken for the papers in L1 and L2 as a whole, which had repercussions on the syntactic arrangement of new and given information depicted by the theme –rheme relationship.

The weaknesses, on the other hand, were principally concerned with the organizational scheme which affected the L1 production as well as the one in L2. The failure to edit both papers and to disregard the formal parameters that were requested is very much in line with the fact that the audience and the general attitude towards production was not taken into account. The other important weakness concerned the whole pre-writing stage which was not considered as important as the writing proper.

On the whole, nevertheless, the perception that respondents had was that the writings in both languages had followed the same writing process in spite of differences observed in both productions as regards the overall length of the papers and the complexity of the cohesive devices used.

## **V.3 Pedagogical Implications**

The fact that this group of students perceive the writing process essentially in the same way when they produce a text in L1 and in L2, respectively, seems to show a cross-over from one language into the other as regards organizational schemes and the writing process that is followed as a whole thus confirming Cummin's (1989, cited in Grabe,

W., & Kaplan, 1996) opinion. This allows for a whole range of possibilities concerned with the use of a learner's L1 in the L2 classroom. The positive view of these respondents towards their L1 seems to show that they would be willing to use their L1 background to their advantage when learning a foreign language. Exercises of back-translation and research of material in their own mother tongue could be a plus to L2 learning. In addition, the use of writing in L1 during the writing process can help students raise their awareness as to certain elements used in L1 which are not being fully developed in their L2 production, such as complex cohesive devices.

#### **V.4 Suggestions for Further Research**

The results of this survey call for further research concerning this issue. Firstly, it would be necessary to assess the relative attitude of translation students towards their L1 and L2, respectively. Secondly, it would be interesting to observe if the teaching of process writing in both languages is actually fostered. Thirdly, it would be important to analyze the L1 and L2 texts in depth in order to see if the students' perceptions match their actual output.

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**Appendix 1: Questionnaire Given to Students**  
CUESTIONARIO

Estimado Alumno,

Le agradeceríamos tenga a bien completar este cuestionario sobre los últimos dos trabajos que se hicieron en clase.

Usted tiene el derecho de permanecer anónimo/a y de recibir una explicación de la investigación en desarrollo.

La información relevada a través de este cuestionario sólo será utilizada con propósitos relativos a la investigación.

Muchas gracias por su cooperación.

I. Antecedentes de lectura y escritura

	INGLES		ESPAÑOL	
	SI	NO	SI	NO
1. ¿Tuvo algún curso de redacción obligatorio en el colegio secundario?				
2. ¿Tuvo algún curso de redacción optativo en el colegio secundario?				
3. ¿Asistió alguna vez a algún taller literario?				
4. ¿Lee alguna revista?				
5. ¿Lee algún periódico?				
6. ¿Lee novelas o cuentos?				
7. ¿Tuvo que escribir monografías o ensayos en el colegio secundario?				
8. ¿Tuvo que escribir monografías o ensayos en la universidad?				
9. ¿Tuvo que leer ensayos en la universidad?				
10. ¿Aprobó la materia “Lengua Española”?	-----	-----		
11. ¿Aprobó las materias de Lengua inglesa?			-----	-----

II. Actividades relativas a la escritura	INGLES		ESPAÑOL	
	SI	NO	SI	NO
A. Actividades previas a la escritura				
1. ¿Recabó información relativa al tema antes de escribir?				
2. ¿Utilizó más de una fuente de información?				
3. ¿Consultó con alguien que sepa del tema?				
4. ¿Hizo algún esquema de la redacción antes de escribir?				
5. ¿Hizo un borrador antes de la versión final?				
6. ¿Tuvo en cuenta el lector al que se dirigía?				
7. ¿Consideró qué enfoque le iba a dar al ensayo?				

II. Actividades relativas a la escritura	INGLES		ESPAÑOL	
	SI	NO	SI	NO
B. Actividades de escritura propiamente dichas				
1. ¿Estableció con claridad el tema desde el principio?				
2. ¿Escribió un título apropiado?				
3. ¿Constató de que cada párrafo contara con una oración que contuviera la idea principal y un punto de vista predominante?				
4. ¿Aportó suficiente sustento relativo a la idea principal en cada párrafo?				
5. ¿Conectó las ideas de manera lógica dándole más predominio a las ideas más importantes?				
6. ¿Constató que los elementos conectores fueran apropiados?				
7. ¿Conectó los párrafos de manera adecuada?				
8. ¿Utilizó una variedad de estructuras sintácticas?				
9. ¿Tomó en cuenta las relaciones entre el tema y el rema?				
10. ¿Constató que las frases con preposiciones estuvieran bien ubicadas dentro de las oraciones?				
11. ¿Utilizó el registro apropiado?				

II. Actividades relativas a la escritura	INGLES		ESPAÑOL	
	SI	NO	SI	NO
C. Actividades de edición				
1. ¿Se cercioró de que el trabajo no tuviera errores ortográficos?				
2. ¿Constató que cada párrafo fuera coherente?				

3. ¿Se cercioró de que hubiera una adecuada conexión entre los párrafos?				
4. ¿Le pidió a alguien que revisara su trabajo?				
5. ¿Se cercioró de que la redacción cumpliera con los parámetros formales requeridos?				

### III. ELEMENTOS EXÓGENOS

1. ¿Qué influencia tuvo el tiempo dedicado a estos trabajos en el proceso de su escritura? Marque con una X lo que corresponda.

Mucha	Bastante	Algo	Poca	Nada
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2. ¿Cuáles de los elementos mencionados en “(II) Actividades relativas a la escritura” debió usted sacrificar por falta de tiempo? (Puede trazar una línea si contó con el tiempo suficiente)

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**Appendix 2: Data Matrix**

		CHART 1																			
		ANSWERS CONCERNING WRITING IN ENGLISH																			
		<i>respondent</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	ENGLISH
<i>question</i>																					
I.Q1		0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	44%	
I.Q2		1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	22%	
I.Q3		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%	
I.Q4		0	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	39%	
I.Q5		1	1	1	1	0		0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	53%	
I-Q6		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1			1	1	1	1	1	1	100%	
I.Q7		0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	47%	
I.Q8		1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	39%	
I.Q9		1	1	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	53%	
I.Q10		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	n/a	
I.Q11		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	100%	
II-AQ1		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	100%	
II-AQ2		1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	78%	
II-AQ3		0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	11%	
II-AQ4		1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	22%	
II-AQ5		1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	56%	
II-AQ6		0	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	56%	
II-AQ7		0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	67%	
II-BQ1		0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	94%	
II-BQ2		1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	72%	
II-BQ3		1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0		0	1	1	1	0	47%	
II-BQ4		0	1	1	1	1		0	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	76%	
II-BQ5		0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	78%	
II-BQ6		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	72%	

II-BQ7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	89%					
II-BQ8	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	72%				
II-BQ9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	22%				
II-BQ10	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	0	72%				
II-BQ11	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	94%				
II-CQ1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	94%				
II-CQ2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	89%				
II-CQ3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	89%				
II-CQ4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	6%				
II-CQ5	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	0	28%				
III-Q1	3,6	1	1	1	1	1	3	3	5	5	4	4	1	3	3	4	3	4	3	4	3	5	4	4
III-Q2	SEE CHART 4																							

		CHART 2																				
		ANSWERS CONCERNING WRITING IN SPANISH																				
		<i>respondent</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18		
SPANISH	QUESTION																					
33%	I.Q1		1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	
33%	I.Q2		0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	
39%	I.Q3		1	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	
78%	I.Q4		1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	
72%	I.Q5		0	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	
76%	I-Q6		1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	
89%	I.Q7		1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	
47%	I.Q8		1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	
29%	I.Q9		1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	
89%	I.Q10		1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1
n/a	I.Q11		-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	

100%	II-AQ1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1					
67%	II-AQ2	0	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1				
33%	II-AQ3	1	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0				
28%	II-AQ4	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0				
56%	II-AQ5	1	1	0	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	1	0			
61%	II-AQ6	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	1	1	1				
67%	II-AQ7	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1				
100%	II-BQ1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1				
67%	II-BQ2	1	0	0	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1				
47%	II-BQ3	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0		0	1	1	1	0				
78%	II-BQ4	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1				
72%	II-BQ5	0	1	1	0	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1			
78%	II-BQ6	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	0			
89%	II-BQ7	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	0	1	1			
72%	II-BQ8	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	1	1	0		
22%	II-BQ9	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	1	0	0	0		
72%	II-BQ10	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	0	1	1	0	1	0	
100%	II-BQ11	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	
89%	II-CQ1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	
83%	II-CQ2	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	
89%	II-CQ3	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	
6%	II-CQ4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	
28%	II-CQ5	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	0

CHART 3

TOTAL	355	21	25	20	20	18	17	18	22	19	17	24	17	19	14	19	22	28	15			
English																						

Spanish	378	26	26	23	19	20	20	17	23	23	22	23	16	17	12	22	22	29	18
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III-Q1 THE INFLUENCE OF TIME (SCALE BETWEEN 1 AND 5) = 3,61

CHART 4

III-Q2	Answers to questions III-1																		
respondent	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	
II-AQ1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
II-AQ2	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0	17%
II-AQ3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	17%
II-AQ4	0	0	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	28%
II-AQ5	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1	0	0	0	28%
II-AQ6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
II-AQ7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
II-BQ1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
II-BQ2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
II-BQ3	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	11%
II-BQ4	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	11%
II-BQ5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
II-BQ6	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6%
II-BQ7	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
II-BQ8	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	11%
II-BQ9	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	17%
II-BQ10	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	6%
II-BQ11	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
II-CQ1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
II-CQ2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6%

II-CQ3	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
II-CQ4	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6%
II-CQ5	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0%
It is a subject this year	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6%
No Spanish information	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6%
There is little information	0	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	17%
No edition was possible	0	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	17%
All questions in Spanish	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	6%