

LANGUAGE SWITCHING ON ENGLISH COMPOSITIONS
OF LATINO STUDENTS IN ALASKA AND PUERTO RICO

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

By

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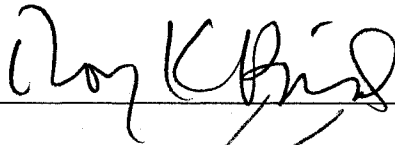
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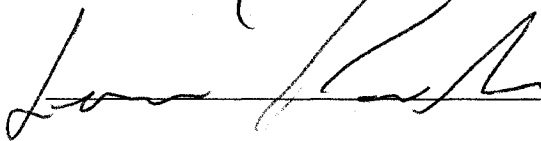
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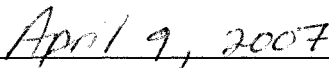
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Abstract

The main objective of the research described in this dissertation was to explore how English second language (ESL) writers used their first language (L1) when composing in their second language (L2). This task was undertaken by identifying participants according to their L2 (English) proficiency level, Latino ethnic subgroup, and generational status. Another objective of this study was to better understand the writer's perspective regarding first language use in L2 writing, referred to as language-switching (L-S) in this study. Eight high school Latinos were recruited in Fairbanks, Alaska, and a group of twenty-three college-level participants in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. Participants were asked to complete a self-report questionnaire, provide a writing sample, and participate in a guided focus group discussion. Findings indicated that participants with low L2 proficiency were more likely to switch languages at the lexical level than participants at an intermediate or advanced level of English proficiency. Switching languages from English to Spanish at the lexical level was of no benefit for text coherence. Lack of L2 linguistic competence was a contributing factor for switching to the L1 as participants compensated for L2 difficulties with their L1 knowledge at the morphological, syntactical, and semantic level. A qualitative analysis of the focus group data suggests that thinking in the L1 is a common strategy for ESL learners, which they perceive to be an advantage for generating ideas faster and to decide what to write. However, participants' perceived writing text in the L1 for later content translation to be counterproductive. An important factor that cannot be discounted and that may have

contributed to the language switching frequency among the participants in this study is the learning contexts: learning English in the U.S. versus learning English in Puerto Rico. Additional research is needed to explore the relationship between language switching and learning context. I conclude this dissertation by suggesting pedagogical implications regarding L2 writing instruction and for placement of L2 learners in ESL programs.

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Abbreviations and Symbols

AK	Alaska
B	Benefits of Language Switching
C	Constraints of Language Switching
CEEB	College Entrance Examination Board
CT	Content Translation
DEED	Department of Education and Early Development
ELL	English Language Learning
ELPA	English Language Proficiency Assessment
ESL	English as a Second Language
ESLAT	English Second Language Achievement Test
F	Factors (related to language switching)
FNSBSD	Fairbanks North Star Borough School District
GPA	Grade Point Average
HSGQE	High School Graduation Qualifying Exam
INGL	Ingles
IRB	Institutional Review Board
L1	First Language
L2	Second Language
LAS	Language Proficiency Assessment
LC	Linguistic Constraint

LEP	Limited English Proficient
L-S	Language Switching
MT	Mental Translation
NCES	National Center for Education Statistics
NCLB	No Child Left Behind 2001 Federal Legislation
NES	Native English Speakers
NL	Native Language
P	Participant
PLQ	Parent Language Questionnaire
PP & ED	Program Planning and Evaluation Department
SLL	Second Language Learning
SLW	Second Language Writing
TD	Task Difficulty
TK	Topic Knowledge
TL	Target Language
TS	Think in Spanish
U.S.	United States
UAF	University of Alaska Fairbanks
UPR-M	University of Puerto Rico - Mayagüez
WE	Write in English
WI	Writing Instructions
WS	Write in Spanish

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The role of the native language (NL) influence on second language learning (SLL) has been studied from various perspectives, including those from disciplines such as linguistics, psychology, sociolinguistics, and second language acquisition (Gass & Selinker, 1994). During the last decade, a great deal of research on second language writing (SLW) has focused on the role of first language (L1) influence in the composing process of second language (L2) writers of various language backgrounds. One such first language influences in SLW, identified as language switching (L-S) and known to be the “*non-instructed*” use of the L1 while composing in the L2 (Woodall, 2002, p. 8), is the area of concern in this research study.

A shift in composition studies from an interest in the writing product to writing process research encouraged second language writing researchers to explore the composing processes of L2 learners (Zamel, 1982). However, most of SLW researchers’ attention has been on the similarities of writing processes between L1 and L2 writers, with little attention to differences (Frankenberg-García, 1990), aside from the writing differences in L1 and L2 writing addressed in contrastive rhetoric research that emphasizes the written product (Grabe & Kaplan, 1987; Kaplan, 1966). According to Silva (2001), writing in a second language “is strategically, rhetorically, and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing” (p. 201), and learning about those differences aids in L2 writing instruction.

The study of differences between L1 and L2 writers contributes to a better understanding of whether the teaching practices for L2 writing are appropriate according to the L2 writers' expectations, the learning context in which the L2 writing takes place, and the goals of the instructional/institutional context. According to Frankenberg-García (1990) "linguistic proficiency" is one of the most "serious problems" among L2 learners, while the L1 writer deals to a lesser extent with "linguistic barriers" affecting the writing process (p. 92). Contrary to the situation of an L1 writer, the L2 writer has more than one language available, which "naturally involves a behavior unique to L2 writing" (Woodall, 2000, p. 2). In addition, L2 writers have to deal with difficulties in composing in a language "in which they are not as competent as they are in their first" (Jones & Tetroe, 1987, p. 34). This implies that although the L2 learner needs to learn the syntax, phonology, morphology, and semantic properties of the L2, he or she needs to be familiar with appropriate writing conventions in the L2 as well. Moreover, for the L2 writer, "lexical and syntactical barriers" may "constrain their writing processes" (Frankenberg-García, p. 92) affecting cohesion and coherence in their writing (Connor, 1984).

1.1 The Role of L1 in L2 Writing

Previous research suggests that "Second-language writers sometimes switch languages during the writing process" (Woodall, 2000, p.2) as a way to compensate for "problems in expressing ideas" while producing text in the L2 (Cumming, 1990, p. 502). It also has been documented that relying on L1 while writing in L2 is "a fairly common strategy among L2 writers" (Krapels, 1990, p. 49). Many researchers (Bean, et al. 2003;

Chelala, 1981; Friedlander, 1990; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Lay, 1982; Martin-Betancourt, 1986; Qi, 1998; Wang, 2003; Wang & Wen, 2002; and Woodall, 2002, among others) have attempted to describe and explore the interaction of selected variables within L1 use on L2 composing processes, and have addressed the issue from various perspectives.

Researchers exploring language switching in L2 writing have been limited to the cognitive aspect of L1 influence, relying for most of their data analysis on the thinking-aloud method (although some included retrospective interviews and small surveys) while composing in L2. It has been documented that L-S, as measured through thinking aloud, is an observable behavior in the cognitive processes of L2 learners while writing. Woodall (2002) and Qi (1998) are among the few researchers who identified causes for the spontaneous use of L1 while composing in L2. Woodall stated that relying on the first language in the process of generating text in English, without being instructed to do so, is known as language switching. Woodall defined L-S as “any *non-instructed* use of the first language during the L2 writing process” where the “switch occurs privately” and may be similar to “talking to oneself” (p. 8).

The use of L1 while writing in L2 elicits contradictory viewpoints from researchers of second language writing. For instance, Arapoff (1967) stated that allowing students to use “first-hand experiences” is to allow them think in their L1, which in most cases results in ungrammatical sentences because of “word-for-word” translation into English (p. 34). Consequently, the students end up with “so many grammatical errors” that part of the original meaning in the composition is lost (Arapoff, p. 34). Similar

counterproductive effects on text quality identified with L1 use on L2 writing has been documented by Chelala (1981) and Martin-Betancourt (1986). Although Arapoff's (1967) assertion may be true, the problem is not only attributable to L1 retrieval, but to the way that content is transferred to convey meaning into English written text and to the many variables affecting second language writing. Such variables may be, but are not limited to, writing expertise, educational background, age, gender, ethnicity, social and institutional context, task difficulty, writing mode, linguistic competence, individual differences, and learning styles.

According to Bean et al. (2003), "Students can get the benefits of writing in a home language and still avoid the problems of direct translation" (p. 35). Following a positive trend, other research indicates that relying on L1 while writing in L2 represents more benefits than constraints for the L2 writer. In Lay's 1982 study, the Chinese ESL informants who switched to their native language more while writing produced essays of "better quality in terms of ideas, organization and details" (p. 406). In addition, L1 retrieval while composing in L2 enhanced generation of ideas in the planning stage (Friedlander, 1990), thought development, and facilitation of the composing process (Qi, 1998). On the other hand, in Wang and Wen's (2002) study of Chinese informants, L1 use varied for the different composing activities, indicating higher use of L1 when the informants were able to control their writing (i.e., controlling procedures, word, time limit). In this study, the Chinese informants also relied on both English and Chinese when deciding on what to write and how to organize their writing.

Similarly, Uzawa and Cumming's study (1989) with Anglophone students indicated that the participants used "their mother tongue extensively to generate ideas, search for topics, develop concepts, and organize information" (p. 180). Consequently, the native language (English) of the participants was used to write a first draft before translating it to Japanese and for mental translation of Japanese text.

Research suggests that the use of L1 for L2 writing is affected by L2 proficiency (Wang, 2003; Woodall, 2000), topic knowledge (Friedlander, 1990; Lay 1982), writing mode (Wang & Wen, 2002; Manchón, Roca de Larios, & Murphy, 2000), language group (Woodall, 2000), task difficulty, and linguistic constraints (Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Woodall, 2002). For instance, in a study by Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992), low-proficient writers translating text from L1 produced better L2 text in terms of content and style. In another study, by Wang and Wen (2002), the amount of L1 use decreased with L2 development, indicating that the L2 writers' proficiency may be a determinant factor for L1 use while composing in L2. Wang and Wen also found that L1 use varied for writing modes, suggesting that narrative writing was related to use of L1 more often, while argumentative writing represented less use of L1.

According to Woodall's study (2002), the frequency of spontaneous use of L1 is related to L2 proficiency, while the duration of switching to the L1 has been associated with task difficulty. In addition, in studying the relationship between language group and L-S, Woodall found that for cognate languages, such as Spanish and English, relying on L1 for a longer period in a difficult task resulted in better-quality text.

Findings of studies comparing two different writing processes (e.g., writing in L1 and translating the text versus writing directly in the target language [TL]) also support L1 use in L2 writing. For instance, Cohen and Brooks-Carson's study (2001) of learners from various language backgrounds writing directly in L2 (French) versus writing in L1 (English or Spanish) and translating it, suggested that L2 learners "may actually write out a L1/dominant language version and then translate it into the TL" (p. 183). In a similar study of writing in L2 (English) versus writing in L1 (Japanese) and translating it, Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) found that students with low proficiency in English relied on L1 even when asked to write directly in English. However, students with high proficiency in English were "more capable of writing directly" and did not depend "so much upon the first language" (p. 203). In this same study, when L1 was used for the translating task, the students' perceptions indicated "they could think more deeply and better express their thoughts and opinions . . . because the content was clearer" (Kobayashi & Rinnert, p. 204). In another study of second-language proficiency and its interaction with writing expertise in L2 composing performance, Cumming's findings (1989) suggested that "Students' mother tongues proved to be an important resource in their continual processes of decision making while writing" (p. 128).

Some of the research (Wang, 2003; Wang & Wen, 2002; Woodall, 2002) exploring the role of L1 in L2 writing has focused on the perspective of the cognitive view in L1 writing models such as the one expressed in the Flower and Hayes (1981) protocol where writing is considered "a type of problem-solving behavior" (Woodall, 2000, p. 7). Similarly, Bereiter and Scardamalia (1987) devised a model of knowledge-

transforming and knowledge-telling processes that has been used as a theoretical framework in L2 writing process research. The writing approach considered for this study “takes the writer . . . as the point of departure” and emphasizes “the expressive abilities” of L2 writers in “produc[ing] writing that is fresh and spontaneous” where the writing activities are “considered a creative act of self-discovery” (Hyland, 2003, p. 8). As Zamel (1976) pointed out, in teaching writing to ESL learners, “The primary emphasis should be upon the expressive and creative process of writing” (p. 74).

1.2 Latinos as ESL Writers

As previously stated, many significant factors have been associated with the use of L1 in L2 writing, and several studies have provided useful information for a better understanding of the role of L1 in L2 writing. However, the impact of L-S of ESL writers for whom the L1 is Spanish has been under researched and needs to be explored for the various Latino subgroups (i.e., Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and others from Central and South America, as well as the Caribbean).

In previous studies, researchers refer to participants with a Spanish language background as “Spanish speakers” (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Woodall, 2000), instead of identifying their ethnic origin, such as being Argentinean (Chelala, 1981), Venezuelan (Jones & Tetroe, 1987), Mexican (Montaño-Harmon, 1991), and Puerto Ricans (Martin-Betancourt, 1986), among others. I believe it is important to identify the research participants with their cultural background and not solely on their language background because it situates research findings within the cultural and language-

learning context of the writer. However, one must note that considering a participant's characteristics for research purposes depends on the particular goals of a research study.

Lack of identification of Latino students by national origin and generational status has been critical in reviewing literature and in conducting research among the various Latino subgroups. In studying the Latino population as research participants, it is essential to understand that Latinos are not a "generic or monolithic category" and "failing to distinguish between subgroups" has produced inconsistencies in the research on Latino students (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, 2001, p. 357). As Narro (2001) stated, "There is no *typical* Latino child!" because a feature characteristic of this heterogeneous group is frame of reference or "where they are born," considering both foreign-born and U.S.-born students (p. 308).

One of the objectives of this research study was to consider Latinos as research participants. Regarding the characteristics of the participants, this research study was concerned with ethnic origin and generational differences among Latinos. Identifying research participants by ethnic subgroup in this study referred to being of a particular group of Latinos such as Puerto Rican, Cuban, Panamanian, Mexican, and Colombian, among others. In addition, classifying participants according to their generational status in this study referred to "the number of generations the student's family has lived in the United States" (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES], 1998, p. 1). Analyzing data by considering some of the characteristics of the Latinos who participated in this research study contributed to filling the gap created when identifying Latinos "under one collective umbrella or as a single group" (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, p. 357).

1.3 Purpose of Study

To my knowledge, language-switching research has not been addressed at the lexical level, where frequency of first-language use is measured in the written text itself without considering think-aloud protocols. In addition, very few studies concerned with second-language writing research focus on the characteristics of the participants, as is the case in identifying Spanish speakers according to their ethnic origin, English proficiency, and generational status in the U.S.

The main objective of this research study was to explore the extent to which language switching occurred at the lexical level¹ during the composing process of a writing task to be completed in English. This research was undertaken by recruiting a group of Latinos at the high school level in Fairbanks, Alaska, from different ethnic subgroups at various English proficiency levels, whose families had been living in the U.S. for about two generations. In addition, in an attempt to understand how language switching occurred in the writing of ESL writers learning English in a non-English-speaking country, I also collected data from a group of Puerto Rican college-level students learning English in Puerto Rico.

Since language-switching is a “behavior unique to L2 writing,” and it is not described in L1 writing models (Woodall, p.8), further research on the significant factors influencing L-S and its effect on L2 writing is needed. As a contribution to second-language writing research investigating qualitative differences between L1 and L2

¹ In this study L-S at the lexical level refers to the use of Spanish during the composing process of written text in English as evident through content words (i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs) or function words (i.e., conjunctions, prepositions, articles, or pronouns [Fromkin & Rodman, 1998]).

writing (Woodall, 2002), and to L2 writing instruction, this research is directed at the pedagogical implications of whether or not L-S “should be encouraged” (Qi, 1998, p.2).

Because the language switches discussed in Woodall’s study (and in other studies) represented the use of L1 while thinking about writing, and were not necessarily L1 words incorporated into the text itself, it is necessary to expand on Woodall’s definition for this study. That is because “there are lots of important differences between uttering and constructing sequences of words” (Elbow, 2005, p. 1). Switching languages while speaking may be considered code-switching (Odlin, 1989) and from a bilingual perspective, switching languages while writing is distinct from the communicative goal of code-switching (Qi, 1998). Code switching and language switching are different concepts and the function of L-S is not the “conversational exchange between two interlocutors who share two languages” (Woodall, 2002, p. 8). Instead, code switching “occurs wherever there are groups of bilinguals who speak the same two languages,” and happens in “specific social situations” as in the case of Latinos who speak English and Spanish “simultaneously” (Fromkin & Rodman, 1998, p. 418). Thus, I consider code-switching to be out of the scope in my study. Hence, a working definition for L-S in this study is the strategic use of a first language by an L2 learner while writing in an academic context, generating text, and organizing words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs as part of the process of developing a first draft in order to accomplish the objectives of a writing task in the L2. In this study, a strategy refers to the “general approaches and . . . specific actions or techniques used to learn a second language” (Cohen, 1998, p.9).

After reviewing literature on the role of L1 in L2 writing, in which most of the research is directed toward a positive influence of L1 on L2 writing, the research questions that guided this study are formulated as follows:

1.3.1 Research Questions

1. Does language-switching frequency at the lexical level vary in the English compositions of Latinos of different ethnic subgroups?
2. Is language-switching frequency at the lexical level related to the generational status of a Latino student in the U.S.?
3. Is language-switching frequency at the lexical level in English compositions of Latinos related to their English language proficiency?
4. How is first-language use in English writing perceived by Latino high school students in Alaska and college-level students in Puerto Rico?

Based on the guiding research questions, and after examining the existing literature related to the role of L1 on the composing process of L2 writing, hypotheses are formulated as follows:

1.3.2 Hypotheses

1. Language-switching frequency at the lexical level will vary for learners of different Latino subgroups.
2. Language-switching frequency at the lexical level will be higher for immigrant students and lower for U.S.-born students.

3. Language-switching frequency at the lexical level will be higher for beginner learners and lower for intermediate and advanced English language proficiency learners.
4. Latino students at the high school and college level will perceive language switching as an effective strategy for second-language writing regardless of their English proficiency level, subgroup, and generational status.

1.4 Organization of the Study

Chapter 2 of this study presents a review of relevant literature in the following areas: Current demographics of Latinos in the U.S., Latinos in Alaska, similarities and differences among Latinos, the learning of English in Puerto Rico, and selected empirical studies exploring L1 use in the composing process of L2 writers. Chapter 3 describes the research methods of this study, recruitment of participants, and procedures for approval and data collection in Fairbanks, Alaska, and Puerto Rico. Chapter 4 discusses the results of high school data, while Chapter 5 details the results of college-level data. Chapter 6 presents the discussion of findings as related to the hypotheses that guided this research study, and Chapter 7 concludes with implications of the findings, recommendations for future research, and limitations of the study.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The purpose of this chapter is to discuss the areas of concern that provided a basis for the present study. I review the current demographics of Latinos in the U.S. and in Alaska. I also discuss some of the similarities and differences among Latino subgroups, including generational differences and English language proficiency. I provide an overview of second-language writing process research and discuss empirical studies in the field of second-language writing concerned with language switching.

2.1 Current Demographics of Latinos in the U.S.

According to estimates of the U.S. Census Bureau for the year 2005, Latinos accounted for 14.4% of the U.S. population, placing them as the largest minority group in the U.S. (U.S. Census Bureau, *State & County QuickFacts USA*). The distribution of Latino people in the U.S. indicates that they are becoming more geographically dispersed across the U.S. and are residing in more metropolitan areas than in previous years (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004). For instance, the Latino population growth rate, according to estimates of the U.S. Census Bureau (*American FactFinder*) for the year 2005 in states such as North Carolina (533,087) and Georgia (625,028), showed an increase when compared to the Latino population in those areas in the 1990's (North Carolina, 76,745; Georgia, 108,933 [Chapa & De La Rosa, p. 132]). However, a majority of the Latino population in the U.S. resides in states such as California, Colorado, Arizona, Florida, Nevada, New Mexico, Rhode Island, Texas, and Utah, with Latino population increasing

in states such as Idaho, Kansas and Oregon, among others. Regarding the Latino subgroups, people of Mexican origin, Puerto Ricans, and Cubans outnumber those representing people from Central and South America in the U.S. (Chapa & De La Rosa). Based on Latino population demographics and projections, “Latinos are a young population” and their growth still is at a very high rate, suggesting that they “will continue to compose larger and larger portions of the preschool, school-age, college-age, and general populations” (Chapa & De La Rosa, p. 136).

Trueba (1999) pointed out that “the education of Latinos will be the most critical challenge to be faced by the next century’s educators” because of their continuing population growth rate (p. 48). For example, by the year 2020, more than 20% of the children and youth in the U.S. are projected to be Hispanic (Narro, 2001, p. 308), and current demographics in the U.S. indicate that “the Latino population will continue to grow at a much faster rate than the U.S. population” (Chapa & De La Rosa, p.131). Currently, the Hispanic school-age populations in grades K-12 accounts for the largest segment in states like New Mexico (53.3%), California (47.7%), Texas (44.7%), Arizona (38.2%), Florida (23%), and Colorado (26.2%) (NCES, *State Profiles*).

Latino or Hispanic people “are not an easily identifiable group” (Ovando & Collier, 1985, p. 121), and although they share “culture, language, history, values, worldview, and ideals,” they are “racially, socially, and economically highly diversified” (Trueba, 1999, p.31). According to the 2000 U.S. Census, a Hispanic or Latino is “a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish

culture or origin regardless of race” (Grieco & Cassidy, 2001, p. 2). Research addressing educational issues related to Latino students uses the reference terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” interchangeably.

However, some Latino researchers have a stated preference over the terminology used to identify the population of Hispanic origin in the U.S. For example, DeBlassie and DeBlassie (1996) stated that “Latino” is a preferable term when referring to people of Hispanic origin, while Gimenez (1997) defended the term “Hispanic” as one that “ensures greater population coverage” (p. 226). Other researchers (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004; Espinoza-Herold, 2003; Reyes, 2002; Rodríguez, 1999; Rolón, 2002; and Trueba, 1999, among others) have shown preference for the term “Latino” over “Hispanic” when describing educational issues related to Latino ethnic subgroups.

Similarly, Hayes-Bautista and Chapa (1987), in an attempt to standardize the terminology for people of Hispanic origin, reviewed the political and geographical links of Latin America and the U.S., concluding that the term “Latino” is better because “it preserves the flavor of national origin and political relationship between the U.S. and Latin America” (p. 65). As has been stated, there are contradictory views about the reference terminology for people of Hispanic origin in the U.S. In this research, Latino will be the reference term throughout the study (as related to data analysis and self-identification of research participants) because it is a descriptive term “to refer to persons residing in the U.S. whose nationality group, or the country in which the person or person’s parents or ancestors were born, is a Latin American country in the Western Hemisphere” (Hayes-Bautista & Chapa, p. 66). However, it seems that “The very term

Latino has meaning only in reference to the U.S. experience” since, outside the U.S., people in places such as Puerto Rico call themselves Puerto Ricans rather than Latinos (Suárez-Orozco & Páez, 2002).

2.2 Latinos in Alaska

Ethnically diverse people migrate from their home country to places all over the U.S., including Alaska, which “has been more diverse and multiracial than much of America” (Williams, 2001, p. 17). Moreover, “Alaska is a state of migrants; only 38.1 percent were born here,” where a part of those immigrants include people from Latin America who immigrate to places such as Kodiak Island and the Aleutians to work in the fish processing industry (Williams, 2004, p.4). Currently, Alaska serves as a host for people who identify themselves as being Asian/Pacific Islander, Black, African-American, White, Hispanic or Latino, and Alaska Native or American Indian. For the year 2005, the Hispanic population in Alaska was estimated to be 30,843, representing 5.1% of the state population, placing them as the second largest minority group in the state, preceded only by Alaska Natives (U.S. Census Bureau, *State & County QuickFacts Alaska*).

Latinos in Alaska represent various ethnic subgroups such as Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, and others from the Dominican Republic, Central America (e.g., Costa Rican, Guatemalan, Honduran, Nicaraguan, Panamanian, Salvadoran), and South America (e.g., Argentinean, Bolivian, Brazilian, Chilean, Colombian, Ecuadorian, Paraguayan, Peruvian, Uruguayan, Venezuelan), among others who self-identify as being

Spanish American, Spaniard, and Spanish (U.S. Census Bureau, *Hispanic or Latino by type: 2000*). During the last decade, Latino, Asian, and Alaska Native people accounted for half of the growth of the Alaska population (Williams, 2001). People of Hispanic origin in Alaska are projected to “increase from 3.8 percent of the 1995 state population to 6.7 percent of the 2025 state population” (U.S. Census Bureau, *State population rankings summary*, p. 5).

The majority of the population of Latino origin in Alaska lives in the Anchorage Municipality and the Fairbanks North Star Borough. In 2005, the population of Latino origin represented 6.9% (18,584) of the total population of Anchorage and 5.5% (4,356) of the total population of the Fairbanks North Star Borough (U.S. Census Bureau, *State & County QuickFacts, Anchorage Borough and Fairbanks North Star Borough*). However, there is a representation of self-identified Latino population in other boroughs or census areas of Alaska, including rural sites such as Barrow, Angoon, and Bethel.

As of October 2006, of all students enrolled in the public schools of Alaska, 4.1% were Latino, 4.2% Black, 0.9% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 5.4% Asian, 24.4% Alaska Native, 1.2% American Indian, 3.4% Multi-Ethnic, and 55.7% White (Alaska Department of Education and Early Development [AK DEED], *Total statewide enrollment by ethnicity, 2007*). Because of such an increase in the ethnically diverse student population and because of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) legislation, which focuses on the performance of minority students, the Alaska Department of Education and Early Development had to adapt its programs to meet the needs of students of various language backgrounds.

Based on enrollments of October 2006, of the total enrollment of students in grades 7 to 12 in Alaska public schools, the Latinos' dropout rate was 4.8% of the total dropouts by ethnicity statewide in Alaska (AK DEED, *Public school dropouts, 2007*). The percentage of dropouts for Latino students for the academic year 2005-2006 (4.8%) was among the lowest by ethnicity during that year, and lower than the dropout rate (5.1%) for Latinos during the academic year 2004-2005 in grades 7 to 12 statewide in Alaska. The highest dropout rate in grades 7 to 12 for the academic year 2005-06 was 46.8%, which means that almost half of all dropouts for that year were white students, followed by Alaska Natives/American Indian students, whose dropout rate was 36.6% (AK DEED, *Public school dropouts, 2007*). Latino students across the educational ladder face similar educational challenges across the U.S. (M.E. Reyes, personal communication, August 2004).

Although the Latino student population in the State of Alaska still is a minority in the public school system, enrollment for this population in grades 7 to 12 is increasing. For instance, in the academic year 2000-01, statewide enrollment in grades 7 to 12 of Latino students was 1,795 (3.0%) of statewide enrollment in those grades. As of October 1, 2005, there were 2,384 (3.8%) Latino students enrolled in grades 7 to 12 statewide in Alaska (AK DEED, *Public school dropouts, 2007*).

The majority of Latino students at the high school level (grades 9 to 12) in Alaska for the academic year 2005-2006 were enrolled in (a) Anchorage Borough Schools (918), (b) Fairbanks North Star Borough Schools (209), (c) Mat-Su Borough Schools (122), (d) Juneau Borough Schools (76), (e) Kenai Peninsula Borough Schools (66), and (f) Kodiak

Island Borough Schools (61). Latino students were also enrolled in other school districts, but enrollment was less than thirty students in grades 9 through 12 (DEED, *Assessment and accountability*, 2007).

Considering the diversity of English second-language learners and an increase of Latino students as a minority group in the U.S., the present study had as an objective to recruit a sample of the Latino population at the high school level in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District in Alaska. As of October 1, 2006, statewide enrollment of Latino students in Alaska accounted for 4.1% (5,486) of the student population from Pre-Elementary through twelfth grades (DEED, *Total statewide enrollment by ethnicity*, 2007). As of October 1, 2006 there were 209 Latinos enrolled in grades 9 through 12 in the public schools of Fairbanks. When data for this study were to be collected, during the academic year of 2005-2006, there were 101 Latino students enrolled in grades 10 through 12 attending the four major high schools in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (N. Stayrook, personal communication, October 11, 2005). District-wide, in grades K through 12 in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, there were approximately 330 Latinos, of which 88 were limited in English proficiency (J. Randall, email communication, November 11, 2005).

In the particular case of Alaska, students in grades 10, 11, and 12, including Latino students and limited-English proficient students, are under pressure to perform well due to the requirements of the Alaska High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE), which assesses competency skills in reading, writing, and math. Beginning with the academic year 2003-04, passing the HSGQE is a requirement for high school

graduation, together with the course requirements established by the State Board of Education and the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. Writing is one of the competency skills assessed on the HSGQE, offered starting in the grade 10, with retakes in grades 11 and 12.

Certainly, since Latinos comprise the largest minority group in the U.S. and as a relatively young population, school age Latinos can be found in any state of the U.S. This implies that the more we learn about their characteristics and educational needs, the better the school systems can serve them by providing quality education, regardless of minority status. Alaska is not the exception. The population of Latinos has increased in the main urban cities of Alaska and the school-age population still is also increasing as compared with statewide enrollment of Latinos for previous academic years.

2.3 Differences and Similarities among Latino Subgroups

Understanding ESL learners means learning about the differences and similarities that exist among them. For instance, Latinos in the U.S. are a very heterogeneous group, with “varied histories, cultural sensibilities, and current social predicaments” (Suárez-Orozco & Pérez, 2002, p. 4), and although there are similarities among them, there are various differences such as their level of English proficiency, generational status, and socio-economic status, among others. Latinos who are English second-language learners may vary “in terms of language and cultural backgrounds, prior education, gender, and age,” placing the students in a position of diversity with respect to their “needs and objectives” (Reid, 1993, vii). In the particular case of Latino students, although they may

share similar language backgrounds, they “have individual identities beyond the language and culture they were born into and we should avoid the tendency to stereotype individuals according to crude cultural dichotomies” (Hyland, 2003, p. 37). Members of the Latino population also share cultural values, family values, and religion.

However, it is essential to consider that self-identification, through one of many labels like Latino, Hispanic, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Mexican, is a part of the identity of each individual and should be taken into consideration for research.

Assuming Latino students are homogeneous is stereotyping and inaccurate and “we need to take into account the fact that students who crisscross borders are not just products of culture; they are creators of culture” (Spack, 1997, p. 772). Therefore, an individual self-identification under a specific ethnic group is important and deterministic in analyzing data because the researcher is not “defin[ing] and construct[ing] their own identities” but allowing research subjects to express themselves and to expand “our own world view” (Spack, p. 773) regarding the diversity of ESL students.

In addition, regardless of the preferred term to identify Latino people, one of the considerations for research is “to have . . . as much information as possible about the populations under study” (Gimenez, 1999, p. 226). Therefore, learning about the similarities and differences that exist between Latino students is part of understanding ethnic diversity in the school system in order to increase their academic performance. Moreover, for research purposes and teaching, it is important to consider “students as individuals, . . . in order to understand the complexity of writing in a language they are in the process of acquiring” (Spack, 1997, p. 772).

As mentioned earlier, among the differences, one can state that the generational status, socio-economic status, parents' educational attainment, and English language proficiency of Latino high school students are important variables to consider for research purposes because of their impact on academic achievement. Educational issues relevant to Latino students at the high school level have been studied from various perspectives, and many factors are considered for placing Latino students at "risk of educational failure" (Narro, 2001, p. 313). For example, according to Narro, if the English proficiency of a Latino student is limited, if he or she is foreign born, if he or she comes from a home with low socio-economic status, and/or if he or she is a recent immigrant, he or she will likely be at risk of failing at school and will face difficulties in a U.S. mainstream classroom. Therefore, on many occasions, these students may be stereotyped, labeled, misunderstood, and not well served by the U.S. educational system.

Enrollment of non-English-speaking students from various national origins is the norm at all grade levels throughout schools in the United States. Hence, providing effective education to ethnically diverse students is a challenge for the K-12 public school system because of the many factors influencing second-language learners.

Even when Latino students and other immigrants have "an acquaintance with English" and with the American popular culture due to pervasive America media experienced before arriving in the U.S., they still "face the difficult transition to new school settings" in which the coursework is in English and perhaps different from the English learned in their home countries (Narro, 2001, pp. 308-09). Although it is a fact that learning English as a second language "provides learners with a cross-cultural

experience,” the learning of “new cultural and linguistic codes that might differ from the ones learners are familiar with” (Kubota, 2004, p. 21) may have implications for the academic performance of a second-language learner. For instance, differences concerned with writing in English as a second language and writing in the native language of a student should be considered by teachers of writing as “ESL students can be found in many writing courses across the United States” (Matsuda, 1999, p. 699) as is the case for Latinos.

Many researchers have investigated the effect of variables such as language proficiency (García-Vázquez, Vázquez, López, & Ward, 1999), previous educational learning experiences (Cota, 1997), residential segregation (Arias, 1986), and socioeconomic and demographic characteristics (Chapa & De La Rosa, 2004) as possible causal factors related to academic achievement. Most of this research has been conducted by studying members of specific subgroups (i.e., Mexican, Puerto Rican, and Cuban, among others). For instance, Chapa & De La Rosa pointed out that Mexican students “have the lowest educational attainment” at all levels when compared to the other Latino subgroups, while Cubans are known to have “the highest high school completion rates” (p. 137). In all, 49% of the Mexicans have less than a high school diploma. There are historical and socio-economic explanations for some of these differences. For example, many Mexican immigrants have a rural background in agriculture, while many middle-class or upper-class, well-educated Cubans fled to the U.S. under Castro (María E. Reyes, personal communication, October, 2005).

As previously mentioned, the social and economic characteristics of Latino populations residing in the United States are diverse. Various reasons account for the disparity between Latinos' socioeconomic status and educational attainment. Some contributing factors are the educational attainment of Latino parents, occupation, immigration status, English language proficiency, and frame of reference, among others. According to statistics on immigrant generations of Latinos in the U.S., "parental educational attainment increases with generation as does mean family income" (Brindis, Driscoll, Biggs, & Valderrama, 2002, p.1). However, third-generation Latino parents are known to "have less education and lower incomes" than third-generation white parents. (Brindis et al., p. 1).

Chapa and De La Rosa (2004) pointed out that "one of the strongest indicators of social mobility is educational attainment" (p. 137). Regarding the distinct Latino subgroups of different generations, it is essential to understand differences in their educational attainment according to their socio-demographic characteristics. However, there still is "a large gap between the Hispanic population and the non-Hispanic White population" in educational attainment (Bauman & Graf, 2003, p. 6).

The rate of Latino youth and immigrants completing high school varies by generational status. For the year 2000, 56% of immigrant Latinos within the age range of 16-24 remained in school or finished it. The percentage increased to 80% for the second generation, and 84 % for the third generation (Brindis et al., 2002). In Alaska, for the year 2000, 78.3 % of the Latino population reported having a high school diploma or better, and 15.3 % had a college, graduate, or professional degree (Williams, 2002, p. 12).

However, “the absence of consistent generational patterns makes it difficult to construct a clear picture of the impact of generational status on Latino youth” (Brindis et al., 2002).

According to Hayes-Bautista and Chapa (1987), Latino is a “generic” term and “there are vast differences between different national origin Latino groups” and “between U.S.-born and foreign-born Latinos” (p. 66). Therefore, there is a need for careful identification of members of the various subgroups of Latinos under study. Among the many factors that contribute to the academic performance of Latino students, the “distinctive features” of a student’s minority status certainly represents “different implications for schooling” (Ogbu, 1987, p. 320).

Generational status in this study refers to “the number of generations the student’s family has lived in the United States” (NCES, 1998, p. 1). One way to understand academic performance of language minority students in the U.S. is by learning about their generational differences. Classification by generational status includes: (a) immigrants or first-generation students (a foreign-born child who immigrated to the U.S.), (b) second-generation students (U.S.-born child with at least one foreign-born parent), and (c) third-generation students (U.S.-born child of U.S.-born parents [Brindis et al., 2002]).

It has been documented that Spanish language use declines by generational status. According to Brindis et al. (2002), 44 % of the first generation of Latino youth, 31 % of the second generation, and 9 % of the third generation live in linguistically isolated households (p. 1). According to an overview of the context of education for Hispanic students, Latinos’ “persistence of Spanish” and “shift to English” is a “three-generational

process rather than one- or two-generational as experienced by other immigrant groups” and it is influenced by residential zone and the rate of immigration in that zone (Arias, 1986, p. 40). Arias also pointed out that Spanish is one of the languages that a population persists in speaking longer than any language of other immigrant groups. In a study of attitudes toward Spanish and English language use by Mexican people in Juarez, Hidalgo (1986) concluded that “loyalty to Spanish seems to be one of the means utilized by Mexicans to assert their ethnic identity” (p. 215).

With respect to the English language proficiency of minority students, it varies for those who speak a native language other than English, for those who have the opportunity to be raised by a “multilingual” family, and even for those who are able to speak English at home (Narro, 2001, p. 307). As Ovando and Collier (1985) explained, “Language is usually the most salient challenge” to students with limited English proficiency (LEP) and the “dominant theme in the instructional process and the driving force” of bilingual education (p. 11). Montero-Sieburth and Batt (2001) stated that although Latino students in the U.S. need to learn English in order to be successful, learning English can be “detrimental” for “retaining their linguistic, cultural, and ethnic pride” (p. 342). Therefore, while parents “may support language retention,” the goal of the school system is to “promote language assimilation” (Montero-Sieburth & Batt, pp. 342-43). Unfortunately, the lack of English proficiency is one of the many causal factors for failing and dropping out of school (Narro, 2001). This clearly indicates that language proficiency is an issue that needs to be addressed in second-language research.

2.4 The Learning of English in Puerto Rico

Learning English as a second language represents an advantage for a second-language learner who eventually will be able to master the four language skills (i.e., reading, writing, speaking, listening) in two languages or more. This is certainly the case for Puerto Ricans living in Puerto Rico. The learning of English in Puerto Rico may be of benefit as related to good job opportunities on and outside the Island. However, not everyone in Puerto Rico is eager to learn English. There may be resistance because of the implications that the learning of English represented to Puerto Ricans decades ago. As Clachar (1997) pointed out:

The learning of English in Puerto Rico symbolizes the capitulation to a foreign colonial power—a power whose hegemony is omnipresent on the island in science, technology, commerce, mass media, federal agencies, educational testing and accreditation bodies, the judicial system, and the military. The English language, synonymous with this hegemony, is seen as a real threat to Puerto Rican cultural and national identity. (p. 476)

Since 1898, the teaching of English in Puerto Rico has been a political issue tied to the United States. The public school system in Puerto Rico has gone through various language policy changes and finally since 1949 “Spanish is the medium of instruction at all levels . . . with English taught as a preferred subject” (Algren, 1987, p.10). The issue of language in Puerto Rico has been “motivated by political reasons, . . . to advance the cause of political autonomy” by “fostering the conception of language as a symbol of national identity” (Algren, p.1). Various attempts have been made by Puerto Rican

leaders to defend Spanish as the vernacular language while encouraging a movement against teaching English in Puerto Rico.

The language situation for Puerto Rico is different from that of other Latin American countries because Puerto Ricans have been U.S. citizens since 1917 and can travel to the U.S. without restrictions. Thus, the learning of English becomes a very important goal for many who want to move to the U.S., but feel their English language skills are limited. However, Spanish is still the vernacular language of Puerto Rico and the language used as a medium of instruction in the public school system. English is a required content area in grades K-12 and at the college level. Various institutions such as the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez, require a minimum of twelve credits in English courses for all majors to meeting graduation criteria.

2.5 Overview of Second-Language Writing Process Research

Understanding “how writers write” and how ideas are formulated has been of particular interest for teachers and researchers of writing (Zamel, 1982, p. 195). Interest in exploring what writers do while composing emerged as a shift in composition studies, which traditionally focused on the written product and the effect of teaching methodologies on writing improvement (Zamel, 1982). As a result, process-oriented research (Emig, 1971) grew rapidly and researchers of native English speakers (NES) started designing studies to learn about the composing processes of NES. Since then, process-oriented research in English as a first language (Perl, 1979; Pianko, 1979) has

“informed” research in the composing processes of second-language learners (Krapels, 1990, p. 39).

Early studies on the composing processes of L2 writers (Chelala, 1981; Jones, 1982; Lay, 1982; Martin-Betancourt, 1986; Zamel, 1982, 1983) described “the nature of L2 composing” by identifying behaviors that were “successful or unsuccessful” in “producing effective” L2 written text (Krapels, 1990, p. 39). Research on L2 writing has focused on comparing the writing processes of L1 and L2 learners (Arndt, 1987), showing that strategies used by L2 learners while composing were similar to those used by native English speakers (Lay, 1982; Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Raimes, 1987; Zamel, 1982). Due to the similarities in the composing processes of L1 and L2 writers, L1 process-oriented instruction in writing was suggested for L2 writers, specifically for elementary school children (Urzua, 1987).

Among the various aspects studied in the composing process of L2 writers, some researchers have focused their attention on the differences between the composing process of L1 and L2 writers. One of those differences is the role of the L1 on the L2 composing process, as the L1 has been found to be a mental activity (measured through think-aloud methods) in the L2 composing process (Chelala, 1981; Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Martin-Betancourt, 1986; Wang, 2003; Wang & Wen, 2002; Woodall, 2000).

In trying to understand what is meant by “composing process,” I noticed that its definition is one that varies according to a researcher’s objectives in a study. Zamel (1982) stated that the process of composing is “an extremely complex undertaking” that goes beyond the learning of grammar and entails various stages as part of the process (p.

196). On the other hand, Raimes (1991) pointed out that it is essential to understand the complexity of the composing process in relation to “form, writer, content, and reader” as important elements in writing (p. 422). Emig (1967), in her article “On Teaching Composition: Some Hypotheses and Definitions,” stated that “there is a strong tradition” of understanding writing as a process “made up of three discrete components—planning, writing, and revising” (p.130). However, Emig argued that “there may be processes of writing” and that “writing may be recursive, a loop rather than a linear affair,” suggesting that the order of the stages will vary and “one can write, then plan; or one can revise and then write” (p. 131). Since the present study focuses on the L2 composing process while planning a draft and not in a final product, I consider Emig’s definition for planning to reflect part of the activities that occur during the planning stage of the L2 composing process. As defined by Emig, planning is “the sum of those activities, mental and written, the writer engages in prior to producing a first draft” (p. 130).

Understanding the composing processes of L2 writers is as complex as the diversity represented by the second language learners’ cultural, educational, and linguistic background. Therefore, “the combination of complexity and diversity makes it imperative for us not to seek universal prescriptions” (Raimes, 1991, p. 421), but to learn about the composing processes and the factors influencing the writing of second language learners from various cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

2.6 L1 Use in the Composing Process of L2 Writers

In studying L1 use in the composing processes of L2 writers, some researchers (Martin-Betancourt, 1986; Wang & Wen, 2002; Woodall, 2000) have designed their studies by relying on the Flower and Hayes (1981) model of L1 writing processes, which focus on the cognitive aspects of writing. Flower and Hayes placed emphasis on the writing process as a “hierarchical system” rather than being a “stage process” (Martin-Betancourt, 1986, p. 198). Zimmerman (2000) challenged the L1 writing model described by Flower and Hayes by proposing an alternative L2 model “in which the central formulating component is substantially elaborated through the introduction of several functionally discrete subprocesses” for the L2 writing process (p. 73).

Since “There exists, no coherent, comprehensive theory of L2 writing” (Silva, 2001, p. 201), some researchers exploring L1 use in the composing processes of L2 writers conclude their studies by providing suggestions of aspects that need to be included in an L2 writing model. For instance, Wang and Wen (2002) proposed an L2 composing process model that considers the “linguistic code for the thoughts,” which takes into account the task environment, the composing processor (i.e., task-examining, idea-generating, idea-organizing, text-generating, and process-controlling), and the writer’s long-term memory (pp. 241-42). One of Wang and Wen’s arguments is that instead of considering the composing process to be linear, L2 writing should be seen as a recursive process in which the language of thought needs to be a part of an L2 writing model (p. 242). Similarly, Woodall (2000) suggested the inclusion of language switching for an L2 writing model as a behavior that “plays a significant role in L2 writing” (p.

188). From a different perspective, Matsuda (1997), in his article “Contrastive Rhetoric in Context: A Dynamic Model of L2 Writing,” draws attention to a dynamic model of L2 writing, in which aspects such as the linguistic, educational, and cultural background of the L2 writers play a part. Specifically, Matsuda’s L2 writing model “provides a conceptual framework for research that examines how second language writers may negotiate their backgrounds through the use of textual features in the process of writing” (Matsuda & Silva, 2001, p. xxi).

Language switching is a concept operationalized according to a researcher’s objective. Understanding language switching is more than just describing whether L2 writers use the first language during the L2 composing process. Researchers strive to understand why language switching is used and how it aids or hinders text quality and quantity. Moreover, “researchers who investigate L-S should be cautious that not all L1 use in L2 writing can be identified as L-S behaviors” (Wang, 2003, p. 369). There should be consistency in identifying language switching, as in the case of coding a language switch based on think-aloud protocols to avoid misinterpretation of what constitutes a switch to the L1 (Wang). However, what constitutes a language switch depends to some extent to the definition given to language-switching by a researcher, as in the present study, I looked for content and function words written in Spanish.

The role of L1 in L2 writing has been studied from various perspectives in many studies of L2 composing processes. Researchers (Chelala, 1981; Lay, 1982; Martin-Betancourt, 1986; Jones & Tetroe, 1987) have addressed language use as one of the mental activities of L2 writers. Following are a selected set of empirical studies that

reflect the different perspectives from which the role of L1 in L2 writing has been examined. In addition, various studies focus specifically on language switching as the main objective of research.

Chelala (1981) conducted a case study to explore behaviors, language use, and strategies employed by two participants while writing in their L1 (Spanish) and their L2 (English). As criterion for recruitment of the participants, Chelala controlled for the following variables: age, sex, native language, educational background in humanities, being a proficient writer in the native language, and absence of writing courses from any English-speaking country. Two women from the Argentine community in New York agreed to participate in her study. They were asked to compose aloud during four separate writing sessions. After the four writing sessions, the two women were interviewed to learn about their experiences in language learning and writing. One of Chelala's main objectives in the study was to find out which languages the two women used when asked to write in Spanish versus the language used when asked to write in English.

When the two participants in Chelala's study were asked to write in English, Spanish was used "as a source of lexical items" that were translated into English or became words invented or false cognates because of "an incomplete mastery of the target language" (93). Spanish was also used to seek for the "right spelling for a word" and in other instances to "make comments" and to talk to the researcher (p. 95). Chelala concluded that using Spanish while writing in English was an unsuccessful strategy used

by the participants because “Spanish seemed to pervade their composing process whatever the language of the text” (p. 92).

Although one of the participants in Chelala’s study decided to think in the language in which the text had to be written (English), she wrote “whole phrases in Spanish” for later translation into English (p. 93). One of the participants, who used to speak “English approximately 50% of the time,” used English for Spanish writing (p. 95), which may suggest that the language spoken by the participants influenced the language used in the written tasks.

Chelala concluded that the strategy of relying on the Spanish language for English composition “was successful in terms of being able to solve a momentary problem” but “unsuccessful” for text coherence (p. 95). An interesting finding in Chelala’s study was the presence of words at the lexical level written in Spanish or that reflected L1 influence at the sentence level. For example, a language switch in written text was a word written in Spanish in parentheses next to an English word about which the participant was not sure in English. The two participants in Chelala’s study reported that they preferred writing directly in English because writing in Spanish for later translation was difficult.

Another case study to explore the L2 composing process of ESL learners was conducted by Martin-Betancourt (1986) with four college-level students learning English as a second language in Puerto Rico. Her research had a dual purpose. One objective was to “verify ESL writers’ use of the first language writing processes of planning, transcribing, and reviewing” the other objective was “to focus on the identification of processes which seemed unique to writing in the second language” (p. 3). The four

participants in Martin-Betancourt's study were intermediate English learners and one of the criteria for their recruitment included placement in an ESL course at the University of Puerto Rico-Mayagüez. Questionnaires such as the Cognitive Style Preference Inventory, The Educational Sciences: A Conceptual Framework, and a language questionnaire were employed in Martin-Betancourt's research study. In addition, participants were asked to write a composition and were instructed to think-aloud while writing, that is, to verbalize their thoughts while writing.

Findings in Martin-Betancourt's study indicated that the first language was used for planning, and in the case of one of the participants, "Spanish was probably the language of her inner speech, for she spoke in Spanish during most of the planning process" (p. 210). However, using Spanish during the composing process was problematic and did not benefit the writer. On the contrary, translation from Spanish into English was difficult, causing a problem rather than solving one.

An interesting observation in Martin-Betancourt's study was that one of the participants used the first language to review what she had already composed in English. It was evident that difficulty in mastering the English language accounted for many of the problems faced by the college-level participants while writing. Martin-Betancourt's study is one of the few studies that correlate the verbal reasoning ability (Spanish) to the use of English and Spanish by the participants while thinking-aloud in the composing process. According to Martin-Betancourt, the participant who "produced much of her protocol in Spanish" had the highest score for verbal reasoning in Spanish as measured by the College Entrance Examination Board exam.

Martin-Betancourt stated that the ability of verbal reasoning in the L1 seems to be related to high use of the L1 in the protocols for composing in the L2. This assumption of the relationship of the spoken language of an individual with the frequency of that language used in think-aloud protocols was also inferred by Chelala (1981) in her study. Martin-Betancourt's findings regarding L1 use in the protocols contradicts findings of other studies (Qi, 1998; Wang & Wen, 2002) in that "reliance on the L1 (Spanish) as the medium for verbalizing during planning seemed to restrict the generation and development of ideas and information" (p. 223). Martin-Betancourt concluded that the composing processes for the Puerto Rican students in her study "strongly resemble the first language writing process" but the main difference lies in the use of the first language for planning, for translating in the transcribing process, and in reviewing text.

Lay (1982) studied the composing processes of four adult Chinese participants learning English as a second language in the U.S. Her purpose in the study was to investigate the difficulties in composing in a second language, and the amount of native language use, as well as the patterns that emerged from using L1 in the composing process of English as a second language. The Chinese students were asked to write an essay in Chinese and two essays (one narrative and one argumentative) in English. In addition, they had to compose on a topic of their preference. They were also interviewed in order to learn about their "writing perceptions and memories of writing" (p. 406).

Lay found that L1 retrieval was related to better quality essays. In other words, the more the students switched to their L1, as "(compared to the same essay without native language switches)," the better the quality of organization, details and ideas (p.

406). However, Lay suggested that L1 use was influenced by the writing topics and its relation to the writers' experience. Lay concluded that for the Chinese students, writing in ESL was difficult, but they were able to use some of the strategies that a NES uses while composing in English.

From a different perspective, Jones and Tetroe's study (1987) of six Spanish speakers from Venezuela learning ESL focused on the transfer of skills from L1 writing to ESL writing. They also had an objective of studying the quality of planning in Spanish and English by each of the ESL learners. The participants were recruited from an intensive ESL program and a commonality among the participants was that they all had plans for entering graduate school in the U.S. In addition, all the participants had undergraduate degrees from Venezuela, which suggests that they had good L1 skills.

Various writing sessions, including conventional, narrative, and argumentative writing in Spanish and English, elicited samples from the six ESL students. Data analysis of the protocol transcripts indicated that students' switches to L1 depended on task difficulty, suggesting that L1 use may be influenced by task difficulty. Findings were directed toward positive transfer of planning skills from L1 writing while composing in ESL. In addition, the lack of L2 proficiency affected the quality of texts, limited the "effectiveness of the process," and reduced the quantity of planning, but not the quality

(p. 55). Jones and Tetroe concluded that when L2 writers “naturally fall back upon their native language” while composing in L2, it was “principally a matter of vocabulary” (p. 55).

In an attempt to understand first language use in the L2 composing process, Friedlander’s study (1990) of 28 Chinese-speaking students learning English in the U.S. examined first-language use in relation to knowledge of the writing topic. The students were asked to answer two letters in which they had to generate writing in Chinese and in English. The Chinese compositions were translated into English for consistency of analyzing data. In addition, think-aloud protocols and time spent on planning, drafting, and revising each of the compositions was important in understanding the relationship of first-language use and topic knowledge. Friedlander found that generating ideas in the language in which the topic knowledge was acquired resulted in better texts, specifically “longer texts and plans, as well as more detailed plans” (p. 117).

Data from Friedlander’s study indicated that “Writers benefit when they match the language to the topic” (p. 117). Friedlander also noticed that for the Chinese ESL writers, planning content in Chinese for a composition in English about a Chinese topic “would be able to produce better texts and their writing would be enhanced if they planned in the language related to acquisition of a topic area” (p. 123). Friedlander concluded that because students from different linguistic backgrounds often decide to write about a topic related to their language, “they should be encouraged to use their first language while composing initial drafts” (p. 124).

In a study conducted outside the U.S., Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) focused on the writing processes and products of 48 Japanese university-level students learning English in Japan. Students were recruited from an English composition course and, using a grammar test, they were grouped in two proficiency levels (high-proficient and low-proficient learners). As part of the research procedures, students were asked to write in Japanese for later translation into English versus composing directly in English. Writing tasks elicited “the expository rhetorical patterns of comparison” (p .189). Various writing sessions took place for a composition to be written directly in English, another in Japanese, and another to translate the Japanese version into English. A post-writing questionnaire gathered data on the participants’ background, on the participants’ perceptions of the writing processes, and on self-evaluation of the quality of their compositions.

Kobayashi and Rinnert found that there were differences in the quality and quantity of texts when students wrote in Japanese and then translated into English versus writing directly in English. Low-proficiency students benefited from translation and produced better-quality texts in terms of content and style, suggesting that “composing initially in the first language allows students, . . . easier and freer discovery of meaning” (p. 201). However, translated texts of highly proficient students had more errors interfering with meaning than the version written directly in English. The highly proficient students thought that writing directly in English was easier, while other students favored writing in L1 first and then translating into English. Kobayashi and

Rinnert (1992) concluded that “the use of a first language enables many students to explore ideas fully on their own intellectual and cognitive levels” (p. 204).

To date, Qi (1998) is one of the first researchers to explore first language use as language switching in writing. Qi investigated the possible factors influencing language switching of one Chinese-ESL- proficient graduate student composing in English while studying in Canada. The Chinese participant had been learning English in China before arriving in Canada, and at the time of the research, her length of time in Canada was three years. Qi was interested in learning about the conditions in which a bilingual student with high proficiency in English would rely on L1 while thinking during a composing process for writing in L2. In addition, Qi wanted to determine how effective L-S was for in L2 composition.

Research methods in Qi’s study included thinking-aloud, specifically while composing a text, solving a math problem, and translating text from Chinese. Each of the tasks demanded a low and a high level of knowledge. Protocol analysis, together with a retrospective interview, provided data for identifying patterns and factors that influenced L1 use. A factor that influenced language-switching in the composing process of the participant in Qi’s study was “lexical meaning verification” (p. 10). It was common for the participant to translate words in English that were difficult into an equivalent Chinese word in order to verify the meaning. Qi found that L1 use by his informant helped in the initiation of ideas, in developing a thought, in verifying the meaning of a word that was difficult in English, and in compensating for working memory limitations as related to

task difficulty. Qi concluded that switching to L1 while writing in L2 facilitated the composing process of the Chinese ESL learner.

In understanding L1 use as a strategy during the L2 composing process, Manchón, Roca de Larios, and Murphy (2000) studied the use of L1 (Spanish) in backtracking as a composing strategy in L2 writing. Although thirty students of differing English proficiency levels (pre-intermediate, intermediate, and advanced), as measured with the Oxford Placement Test, were part of the study, just data from three (all women) intermediate-level students were reported. Students were recruited from a training course for teachers of English at the faculty of Education at a university in Spain. Backtracking was analyzed in terms of its relationship to the writing behavior and dominant language of the subjects (Spanish ESL learners) and mode of writing (i.e., narrative and argumentative essay). Manchón et al. (2000) reported that translating and paraphrasing through the L1 were strategically used by some of the ESL writers. Besides backtranslating (i.e., the written text in the L2 is translated or paraphrased back to L1), one of the students was able to initiate material in L1 and then translate it into L2. A conclusion regarding backtracking behavior in L1 and L2 was tentatively based on the writers' dominant language, suggesting that "the more use of the L1 in the composing process, the more use of the L1 while backtracking" (p. 31).

Another study that included participants with a Spanish language background was conducted by Roca de Larios, Marín, and Murphy (2001). Roca de Larios et al. study of 21 native Spanish speakers at different proficiency levels (high school, university, and graduate level) aimed to find the effect of L2 proficiency and language used for task

assignments on “time allocated to formulation processes and their distribution throughout the composing process” (p. 503). A questionnaire elicited information on prior writing instruction from the participants in advance of the writing tasks. Participants were asked to verbalize in L1(Spanish) and L2 (English) while performing the writing tasks for each language which were performed one week apart from each other. Composing sessions were tape recorded and a “follow-up” questionnaire was given to the participants to assess “their attitudes toward the writing environment” and the composing process (p. 509). Roca de Larios et al. found that language is not a significant factor in determining the percentage of composing time for formulation (i.e., verbalization of written material and other utterances that could become part of the text [p. 511]). Findings also suggest that a decrease in the composing time for formulation is related to an increase in the proficiency level of the participants. A relationship between fluent versus problem-solving formulation processes was dependent on the language use for composing, suggesting that composing in L2 (English) is more “laborious” because of the L2 constraints that are “imposed on [the] writers’ composing capacities” (p. 521).

Second-language proficiency and task difficulty had been identified with frequency of first language use in the L2 composing process, as was the case in Wang and Wen’s 2002 study of 16 Chinese students majoring in English in China. Their focus was on the use of L1 as related to the type of writing task and L2 development. Data collected were based on think-aloud protocols while writing a story and an argument, along with a retrospective interview about the composing process and L1 use. Data and protocol analysis were based on a coding scheme of five categories (i.e., task-examining,

idea-generating, idea-organizing, text-generating, and process-controlling activities) that were generated according to the concerns of the participants regarding the composing process.

Wang and Wen found that students used both Chinese and English while composing in the L2. In all, 31 out of 32 think-aloud protocols included the use of two languages (i.e., Chinese and English) in the composing process for each writing task. However, the students used L1 more while in the stage of generating ideas (i.e., planning the content and evaluating it) and organizing ideas (i.e., planning the organization and evaluating it) in the composing process, while L2 was used more for text generation (i.e., producing and reviewing the text). More use of L1 was reflected in narrative writing and less use in argumentative writing (considered the most cognitively demanding writing task), suggesting that relying on L1 may not be related to task difficulty. The difference in the writing prompts may have influenced such results. Wang and Wen pointed out that the narrative writing task, with pictures and no linguistic codes, led to L1 use, while the argumentative writing task, consisting of a passage in English, led to thinking in English. Wang and Wen stated that “the more the cognitive processing is related to the textual output, the less L1 is used in it” (p. 240). With respect to the L2 writers’ development, they found that the amount of L1 use decreased with L2 development.

Another study that investigated language switching in relation to task difficulty and language proficiency was conducted by Woodall (2002). Woodall’s study included 28 university students with native and with non-native English language background (i.e., Japanese and Spanish) studying in the U.S. Participants’ L2 proficiency levels were

determined on course enrollment; the ESL participants were in an intensive English program. The Spanish second language learners and the Japanese second language learners were recruited in foreign languages courses. Participants were classified as intermediate or advanced learners.

The main objectives of Woodall's study included investigating language switching by L2 proficiency, task difficulty, and for cognate languages. In addition, he analyzed written text for length and quality in order to determine any effect of language switching. Data for L-S were collected by using think-aloud protocols of a letter and an essay-writing task, including observation and video tape of the protocols for corroboration of language switches on text length and quality. A questionnaire was also distributed to the participants after the two writing tasks were completed in order to learn about their educational background and writing skills, including questions about L1 use in L2 writing and selecting from a list of possible reasons for L-S (Woodall, 2000).

Woodall's measure of L-S frequency and duration through thinking-aloud while writing was analyzed according to various coding schemes of specific writing activities (i.e., pauses, rehearsing, talking/writing, reading the prompt, reading the text, editing, using a dictionary). Woodall found that duration of L-S was affected by task difficulty, L2 proficiency, and language group. However, frequency of L-S depended more on L2 proficiency, while L-S duration depended on task difficulty. Woodall's study (2000) is the only one that investigated L-S behavior "systematically" (p.188) by examining the relationship between a student's spoken language (classified as cognate or non-cognate) and its effect on L-S. The hypothesis of the relationship between language group and L-S

was that “language family would not be a significant factor in L-S during L2 writing” (p. 10). Woodall’s assumption was based on the fact that L2 language learners would rely on previous knowledge when learning L2, regardless of the L1 and L2 relationship.

However, Woodall’s analysis of protocol data on L-S indicated that for learners studying cognate languages such as Spanish and English, better-quality texts were related to the duration of L-S on a difficult task such as essay writing. On the other hand, the quality of texts of non-cognate languages was negatively affected by the time spent switching to the L1. Based on Woodall’s (2002) study, it appears that task difficulty influences the duration of L-S, suggesting a positive effect on the quality of texts for learners of cognate languages and a negative effect for learners of non-cognate languages. Woodall (2000) concluded in his dissertation that “If it is indeed true that language-switching permeates the writing of developing L2 writers, any model of L2 writing will need to account for this behavior” (p. 181).

In a more recent study of the relationship of language-switching and L2 proficiency, Wang’s (2003) findings contradicted those of Woodall’s study in which the amount of language-switching for high proficient learners was higher than that of low proficient learners. In Wang’s study, eight Chinese-speaking ESL learners were recruited from an ESL school in Toronto, Canada. All eight participants were recent immigrants (length of time in Canada ranged from 3 months to 1.5 years) and all had university degrees from their country of origin, China. English language proficiency (high or low proficient) was determined based on ESL course placement according to test scores of a standardized exam of English language proficiency in Canada.

As part of the research methods, the Chinese ESL students were asked to think-aloud while writing an informal personal letter and an argumentative essay. Other research methods included retrospective interviews that were conducted right after each writing task and two sets of questionnaires. One questionnaire was administered previous to the writing sessions and was intended to gather demographic data on the participant. A post-writing questionnaire administered after the second writing session elicited retrospective self-reports of language switching in the L2 composing process.

Although the high and low proficient Chinese ESL learners in Wang's study switched to the L1 while composing, it occurred more often in the writing of the high proficient learners. Language switching for low proficient learners was a way "To compensate for their L2 linguistic deficiencies in their writing processes" in which "direct translation from L1 to L2" was evident. The fact that the low proficient learners switched to the L1 for translation purposes suggested that "their writing processes were firmly embedded in their L1 framework" and because of their lack of L2 proficiency, relying on the L1 did not work as a problem-solving strategy (p. 367).

However, the case for the high proficient learners was different because they switched languages "for problem-solving and ideational thinking" (p. 366). Although the high proficient learners switched languages more often than the low proficient learners, "their writing intentions" were directed to "high-level writing goals," which included "formulating and monitoring contextual meaning, consulting discourse plans, and considering task constraints and intended readers" (pp. 366-67). Wang found no significant differences for the relationship of the two writing tasks by proficiency level.

An explanation may be that the high proficient learners seemed to have control of their L2, as the strategic use of L2 to L1 “might create a genuine opportunity for them to achieve their writing intentions by transforming their knowledge flexibly and steadily across the two tasks” (p. 367).

According to Wang’s study, there are differences in the goals of the high and low proficient learners when they are asked to write in the L2. The Chinese low and high proficient writers in Wang’s study did switching back and forth to the L1 in the L2 composing process of ESL with different purposes. When switching to the L1, high proficient writers were more aware of “rhetorical concerns,” while the low proficient writers “were incapable of separating the linguistic varieties at several levels of discourse in their writing,” which eventually “could create potential interference” in developing a meaningful and coherent text. Wang concluded that the high proficient writers in his study switch to the L1 strategically and the switching seemed to be of benefit for “rhetorical choices and discourse,” whereas the low proficient writers “failed to use the L1 effectively and strategically to generate comprehensible and coherent texts” (368).

2.7 Summary

Research suggests that the use of L1 for L2 writing is affected by L2 proficiency (Wang, 2003; Woodall, 2000), topic knowledge (Friedlander, 1990; Lay 1982), writing mode (Wang & Wen, 2002; Manchón, Roca de Larios, & Murphy, 2000), language group (Woodall, 2000), task difficulty, and linguistic constraints (Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Woodall, 2002). Some of the research (Martin-Betancourt, 1986; Wang & Wen, 2002;

Woodall, 2002) exploring the role of L1 in L2 writing has focused on the perspective of the cognitive view of L1 writing models such as the one expressed in the Flower and Hayes (1981) protocol where writing is considered “a type of problem-solving behavior” (Woodall, 2000, p. 7).

Previous researchers investigating the influence of first-language use in the composing process of English second-language writers relied on research methods such as audio and video recording of think-aloud protocols (Friedlander, 1990; Lay, 1982; Manchón, Roca de Larios, & Murphy, 2000; Qi, 1998; Roca de Larios, et al. 2001; Wang & Wen, 2002; Woodall, 2000) and writing samples of letters (Friedlander, 1990; Qi, 1998; Woodall, 2000) or essays composed in various writing modes (Lay, 1982; Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Manchón et al. 2000; Wang & Wen, 2002, Woodall, 2000) and at various difficulty levels (Wang, 2003; Wang & Wen, 2002; Woodall, 2000).

Other researchers (Lay, 1982; Wang & Wen, 2002; Qi, 1998) have also collected data by either doing retrospective interviews, direct observations, or questionnaires prior to a writing task or as a follow-up after completion of a writing task (Roca de Larios et al. 2001; Wang, 2003; Woodall, 2000). Considering the perspectives from which language switching has been studied, there is a need for analyzing the written text itself in terms of first language use without the need of relying on the think-aloud protocol as a research method. Research on language switching has been limited to the cognitive process of L2 composing by coding language switches in transcripts of think-aloud protocols, but not in the written text itself. Moreover, to my knowledge, language switching research studies have not included focus groups as a research method. Such direction is the one I take in

the present study. Exploring language switching at the lexical level by analyzing the written text of Latino students will provide a new perspective to understanding language switching by ethnic subgroups in diverse ESL contexts.

2.8 Conclusion

One of the objectives of the present research study was to consider Latinos as research participants, which is a reason why this chapter detailed current demographics for Latinos in the U.S. and Alaska. I also provided a brief description of the learning of English in Puerto Rico, as the direction of this research study was modified to include data of college-level participants from Puerto Rico. As another area of concern for the present study, I reviewed research on the composing processes of L2 writers, including empirical studies of language switching.

Most of the research concerned with language switching involves adults or college-level students, but rarely high-school participants. Therefore, the focus of the present study expands the data to explore the relationship of L-S in English writing of Latino students at both the high school and the college level. It has been documented that switching languages between L1 and L2 is an observable behavior among L2 writers when asked to verbalize their thoughts during the composing process. However, little attention has been given to exploring L-S at the lexical level during the L2 composing process as measured in the text itself by considering Latino students in diverse ESL contexts with differing L2 proficiency and representing two generations of Latinos in the U.S.

In the next chapter, I discuss the process of recruiting participants including the approval process for conducting research with high-school and college-level students. I also explain the research methods employed in this study and the objective of each method in measuring language switching data. The next chapter also includes a detailed description of how I carried out the research procedures with the high school students in Alaska and the college-level students in Puerto Rico.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this chapter is to explain the criteria and recruitment process for selecting research participants from a sample of Latino students in Alaska and Puerto Rico. It describes the research methods used, and the design of the survey instruments. It also discusses the approval process for conducting research with human subjects and the procedures followed in carrying out the research.

This dissertation employs a non-experimental descriptive type of research with focus on quantitative and qualitative research methods for researching writing in English as a second language. An objective of descriptive research is to describe “the current state of some phenomenon” without the need of having a treatment or control group (Salkind, 2003, p. 188). Thus, the focus of this research study is to describe and explore first-language use in the composing process of English text among Latino research participants with differing English proficiency levels, generational status, and of diverse English learning contexts.

Previous researchers investigating the influence of first language use in the composing process of English second-language writers relied on research methods such as audio and video recording of think-aloud protocols (Friedlander, 1990; Lay, 1982; Manchón, Roca de Larios, & Murphy, 2000; Qi, 1998; Roca de Larios, et al. 2001; Wang & Wen, 2002; Woodall, 2000) and writing samples of letters (Friedlander, 1990; Qi, 1998; Wang, 2003; Woodall, 2000) or essays composed in various writing modes (Lay, 1982; Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Manchón et al. 2000; Wang, 2003; Wang & Wen, 2002,

Woodall, 2000) and difficulty levels (Wang & Wen, 2002; Woodall, 2000). Other researchers (Lay, 1982; Qi, 1998; Wang & Wen, 2002) have also collected data by either doing retrospective interviews, direct observations, or questionnaires prior to a writing task or as a follow-up after completion of a writing task (Roca de Larios et al. 2001; Wang, 2003; Woodall, 2000).

Data collected for this dissertation came from a questionnaire (Appendix A) that I designed, a writing sample, and a focus group using a protocol (Appendix B) that I designed; the objective was to have three different sets of data “with the attempt to relate them so as to counteract the threats to validity identified in each” (Berg, 2001, p. 5). The four research questions were: (a) Does language-switching frequency at the lexical level vary in the English compositions of Latinos of different ethnic subgroups?, (b) Is language-switching frequency at the lexical level related to the generational status of a Latino student in the U.S.?, (c) Is language-switching frequency at the lexical level in English compositions of Latinos related to their English language proficiency?, (d) How is first-language use in English writing perceived by Latino high school students in Alaska and college-level students in Puerto Rico?

3.1 Selection of School and Participants

A primary objective of this research was to recruit a selected sample of the Latino student population at the high school level in an urban area in Alaska. As criteria for

participation, students whose parents self-identified as being Hispanic² at the time of their child's school enrollment in Fairbanks, and reported to have an undetermined level of Spanish use at home, were considered possible research participants. In addition, the student had to be willing to participate in the study and have parental consent for participation.

The high school selected for this study had the highest number of Latino students enrolled in grades 9 to 12 during the academic year 2005-06. Grade levels 9, 10, 11, and 12 were selected since there is a lack of literature on the composing processes of Latino students at these grade levels.

In the particular case of Alaska, 10th, 11th, and 12th graders are under the pressure of a high-stakes testing named the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (HSGQE), which assesses competency skills in reading, writing, and math. A high school senior who has not passed the HSGQE does not receive a diploma. Effective the academic year 2003-04, the results of the HSGQE assessment were considered part of the high school graduation requirements, together with the course requirements established by the State Board of Education and the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. Because writing is one of the competency skills assessed on the HSGQE offered starting in the 10th grade, with retakes in the 11th and 12th grades, it is important to describe the unique needs and characteristics of Latino high school students regarding their English second-language writing skills.

² Instead of Latino, Hispanic is the term used by the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District when referring to students self-identified as being Hispanic or Latino of any race.

3.2 Instrument Design

3.2.1 Parental Consent

As with any research involving human subjects, assuring the participants' "rights, privacy, and welfare" (Berg, 2001, p. 39) was a part of the ethical procedures followed in conducting this research. For the recruitment of participants younger than 18 years old, it was necessary to design a written parental consent and student assent form (Appendix C) that had to be signed by the parents and students as an agreement for participating in the study. Since the Latino students were considered English second language learners, I translated the parental consent and student assent forms into Spanish, with the objective of providing both versions when recruiting the participants. The information contained in the parental consent and student assent form indicated that participation in this research study was voluntary and confidential. The form also provided contact information in case questions or concerns arose.

One section of the parental consent and student assent form asked for permission to access academic records of the participants, specifically: (a) the academic transcript, (b) the test scores on the writing assessment of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, (c) the test scores on the English Language Proficiency Assessment (ELPA), and (d) a Parent Language Questionnaire (PLQ). Access to the participants' academic records supplemented data collected for this study. The purpose of reviewing the academic transcript was to have a better understanding of the participants' educational background and academic performance. The score obtained in the writing assessment of the High

School Graduation Qualifying Exam indicated whether a participant's writing proficiency met grade-level expectations.

The English Language Proficiency Assessment provided information to determine the high school participants' English proficiency level. In L2 writing research, the English proficiency level of L2 writers has been determined in different ways. Some researchers (Manchón, Roca de Larios, & Murphy, 2000) consider placement exams and scores on standardized language proficiency tests such as the Test of English as a Foreign Language (Qi, 1998). Others usually select participants already enrolled in English second language classes (Woodall, 2000), enrolled in English second language schools (Wang, 2003), or in composition courses (Martin-Betancourt, 1986). In the study conducted by Wang & Wen (2002), English language proficiency was measured according to the "years of contact with English as a foreign language," including English writing courses in China (p. 228). Chapter 4 presents a discussion of the procedure followed in determining each participant's English proficiency level for the present study.

Having access to the Parent Language Questionnaire was necessary for learning about the family language background of the participant. It also provided data such as a student's place and date of birth, as well as the language used by the student with family and friends. The Parent Language Questionnaire is a home language survey administered by the English Language Learning program in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District at the time of a child's school enrollment.

3.2.2 Participation Letter

In addition to the parental consent and student assent form and as part of the procedure to recruit participants, I also developed a participation letter (Appendix D). The purpose of the participation letter was to explain to the parents and the students the objective of the research study and the procedures to be followed for participation. Along with the participation letter, a student contact information form (Appendix E) was designed with the purpose of asking participants' address, email, and phone number for further contact. Once the documents to recruit participants were finished, I proceeded to design the instruments for data collection. As appropriate research methods for this study, a questionnaire (Appendix A), a writing sample, and a focus group (Appendix B) elicited three sets of data from the participants.

3.2.3 Questionnaire

Questionnaires are commonly used in second language research in the social sciences and for researching writing (Hyland, 2003). A self-report questionnaire has the advantage of being relatively easy to design. It elicits a large amount of information in a short time (Dörnyei, 2003). A questionnaire was used in this study because such an instrument facilitated the collection of educational and linguistic background information from a selected sample of the Latino population at the high school level that provided quantifiable data that could be coded quickly for further interpretation of findings (Nunan, 1992).

I developed the questionnaire (Appendix A), which included questions from Woodall (2000) and from the home language survey of the ELL program; the criteria for constructing it followed Dillman's (2000) recommendations. Most of the items were "close-ended questions," where the participants chose among various responses, with the exception that some questions also had blank spaces for the participant to fill in (Dörnyei, 2003, p. 35). Specifically, data gathered through the questionnaire included information about the native language of the participants, self-identification of ethnic group, schooling experience outside the United States, place where students learned Spanish, self-evaluation of skills in Spanish and the English language, interests and barriers for continuing college education, and reasons for living in Alaska.

Due to the importance of "judging the adequacy of measuring instruments," pre-testing the questionnaire contributed to its validity and reliability (Wolf, 1997, p. 425). The questionnaire was pre-tested to verify its layout, ease of understanding, and clarity of questions. People who were asked to review the questionnaire did not know the objectives of the study or the purpose of the questionnaire. The age range among these reviewers was 15 to 31 years. Reviewers included females and males who were all English second language learners with Spanish as the L1.

A young Mexican woman who worked at a day care reviewed an English version of the questionnaire and a college-level student from Mexico reviewed the Spanish version of the questionnaire. Two high school students from Mexico (who attended a different high school from the one selected for this study) also reviewed the Spanish and

English versions of the questionnaire. According to the reviewers' feedback on the wordiness and the choices of some of the items, changes were made to the questionnaire.

3.2.4 Writing Sample

Research methods used to collect data for researching writing vary, depending on the researcher's objective. Most of the research addressing the issue of L1 use on ESL writing has focused on the think-aloud method, where the participants report their thoughts verbally while writing. For this research, the think-aloud method was not used since the focus of this study was not on the cognitive processes of writing. The main objective of this study was to learn whether language switching was present at the lexical level (i.e., content and function words) in the English writing of participants from various Latino subgroups. Therefore, what seemed relevant was to ask the participants to write about a topic with the objective of gathering a sufficient amount of data for further analysis of language-switching frequency and patterns.

For the writing task, I wanted the data collection procedure to be accomplished in a more "realistic" (Silva, 1993, p. 669) setting than has been described in previous research, where the participants were asked to think aloud while composing. A realistic setting for this study was understood as a place where a writing task is completed in a similar way as it would be accomplished for an English course at school; specifically, where students are not required to verbalize while writing, but may do so privately if it is a part of their learning strategies and learning styles. However, it is not always possible to

have a natural setting for data collection because when participants know that the purpose of the writing is for research, this may influence the accomplishment of the task.

As “a major source of data for writing research,” written text provides numerous alternatives for a researcher in learning about the language used in the writing, the composing process of the learners, differences of writing in various genres, the final product, and an analysis of the context in which the writing was completed (Hyland, 2003, p. 260). In this study, written text was selected as a research method because it was expected to gather data about the language used by the participants during the composing process of English second language writing.

The participants were asked to write about a prompt related to a personal experience, a strategy adopted from a sample of a writing practice exam of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam (AK DEED, *Alaska comprehensive system of student assessment*, 2003). Participants were not required to achieve specific length in their writing; they were told to write as much as they needed to in order to express their thoughts about the topic chosen in the time allotted. In addition, part of the objective of the writing sample was to have the participants plan their content, lay out their ideas first, and then organize notes in paragraph format. Following is the writing prompt chosen to elicit writing in this study:

Writing Prompt

If you could choose to live anywhere in Alaska or anywhere else in the world, where would you live? Would you rather live where you do now? Explain why you would choose to move or why you would stay.

An after-school meeting was scheduled with the participants, with the objective of doing the writing sample in a classroom. The instructions for the writing sample indicated that the writing was not a test, that there was no right or wrong answer, and that it was not related to the participants' academic achievement at school. It was explained that the assessment of the sample was not going to be reflected in the participants' academic transcript or grades. The participants were asked to write for 25 minutes and were instructed to do so by writing notes on more than one paper, with the purpose of formulating ideas and planning the content of their essays on the topic chosen. Participants were also asked to number the papers in the order in which they wrote them. Then, participants had to organize their notes in paragraph format.

People who were asked to review the instructions and the writing prompt for the writing task did not know the objectives of the study or what was expected to be found through the writing sample. The writing task was reviewed by a college-level student from Mexico, by a college-level student from Poland who still speaks her first language with friends and family, but English with husband and daughter, and by my brother,

whose primary language is Spanish and who is a graduate student in Puerto Rico. According to suggestions made, I decided to rephrase the instructions for the writing sample.

3.2.5 Focus Group Protocol

After completion of the writing sample, participants had a 5-minutes break, and then were asked to participate in a guided focus group discussion. I began conducting the focus group by using a focus group protocol (Appendix B) that I designed to better understand the participants' perceptions regarding first language use on English writing. The focus group protocol included ten open-ended questions, with the objective of letting the participants determine the direction of their responses (Krueger, 1988). Usually, participants in a focus group vary in number from four to twelve, with members of the group sharing some commonalities among them. In this study, the focus groups consisted of four participants in each session; the participants were in the same school, or the same grade level, and were of Latino descent.

The focus group is a qualitative research method commonly used in the social sciences (Berg, 2001), but not in researching second language writing. However, since it is a research method that could be used with other quantitative procedures and provides a substantive amount of data in a relatively short time, its use seemed appropriate to “confirm findings and to obtain both breadth and depth of information” (Krueger, 1988, p. 40) regarding language switching. In addition, I believe that a focus group is in a way

similar to the discussions that occur in regular classes where a teacher asks a question and students give their perceptions about the topic in question.

Instructions for the focus group indicated that the discussion was going to last approximately 45 minutes, that it was going to be audio-recorded, and that it was confidential. Participants were encouraged to express their own views and not necessarily agree with comments of other participants. Questions were asked in the order in which they appeared in the protocol and participants were instructed to take turns answering them. Some of the questions for the focus group were adapted from Cohen and Brooks-Carson (2001) and Woodall (2000), while the probes adopted from Reyes (1991) were used to encourage a more complete response. Some of the questions were related to the writing sample completed, while other questions focused on the participants' perceptions of writing in Spanish for an English language academic writing task.

As with any research method, knowing that the procedure used for collecting data “really measures what it proposes to measure” is always of concern for a researcher (Krueger, 1988, p. 41). Although one of the advantages of focus groups is their high face validity because of the nature of the method, pilot testing was also important (Krueger). In this study, the focus group protocol was reviewed by the faculty members on the graduate committee and by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) designated review members, who suggested modifications to the instrument. As stated by Krueger (1988, p. 67), “the second pilot test procedure is actually the first focus group.” This was the case in this study; the first focus group tested the procedures followed, the questions discussed, the environment, and my role as the moderator. Even though I reflected on the

experience of the first focus group, no changes were made to the procedures in the second focus group.

3.3 Approval Process for Collection of Data

Once the graduate committee approved the instruments designed for this study, a research protocol was completed as a requirement of the Institutional Review Board, Office of Research Integrity, at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF) for review of research involving human subjects. Prior to submitting the IRB protocol on March 21, 2006, the faculty members of the graduate committee reviewed the application and confirmed it by signing a form provided by the IRB. The IRB protocol required a detailed written description of research methodology, including copies of all instruments, description of the population for the study, and an overview of research literature, including hypotheses. I was required to specify how the confidentiality, storage, and retention of data were going to be handled.

The IRB research protocol qualified for an expedited review, and when the IRB members designated to review the protocol submitted their comments, I scheduled a meeting with the IRB coordinator in order to go over each of the suggestions. All suggestions were considered and incorporated into the instruments, which then were sent back to assure IRB compliance. However, IRB approval was conditional on fulfilling a training requirement. All faculty members of the graduate committee and I needed to complete an online training core course on the protection of human research subjects

prior to receiving final approval. On April 11, 2006, the IRB granted approval (Appendix F) to conduct research with participants from one public high school of Fairbanks, Alaska.

In order to conduct research with students from the public schools in Fairbanks, Alaska, a similar research review process was required by the Program Planning and Evaluation Department (PP & ED) of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District. I solicited authorization from the PP & ED by submitting a research form and providing samples of instruments to be used in the data collection process. Once reviewers had turned in the recommendations, including changes in the instruments, a meeting was scheduled with the Director of the PP & ED in order to discuss the reviewers' comments. Approval to conduct research with students in one public school of Fairbanks, Alaska, was granted on April 11, 2006 (Appendix G).

Although I had approval from the IRB and the FNSBSD to conduct research with human subjects, it was indispensable to have permission from the high school principal. Therefore, a meeting with the high school principal was scheduled on April 14, 2006, to discuss the project and receive permission prior to the recruitment of participants. This was the last step in the approval process, and I then proceeded to begin recruitment of participants and data collection procedures.

3.4 Procedure for Collection of High School Data

3.4.1 Recruitment of Participants

For recruiting the participants, I followed the IRB requirements and the FNSBSD policies. The first step for recruitment was to contact all the Latino students attending the high school selected. The students who were contacted, received through the U.S. mail, in the form of a packet, the participation letter (Appendix D), the parental consent and student assent form (Appendix C), and the student contact information form (Appendix E), along with a pre-addressed, pre-stamped envelope to return the signed participation documents. All the documents were sent in both languages, English and Spanish, for the convenience of the parents and the students.

When the packets were verified for quantity and quality of documents, I delivered them to the PP & ED staff on April 14, 2006, for labeling and direct mailing from the FNSBSD. Following this procedure assured confidentiality of students' names and addresses, which I was not allowed to know until parental consent and contact information were returned by U.S. mail.

Forty students received the documents. Two weeks after the documents were sent, only five students had returned the contact information form and/or consent form, indicating their positive or negative interest in participating in the research study. Out of these five students, two indicated that they did not want to take part in the research study because their primary language was English and they were currently learning Spanish at school. However, I decided to contact by phone one of the students to ask him once more for voluntary participation, but the student said he was of Italian descent rather than

Latino, and since he considered his native language to be English, he was not interested in the research study. From the returned responses by U.S. mail, only three students agreed to participate in the study.

Since the participation return rate was low and because I had to meet the deadline (May 5, 2006) given by the FNSBSD to finish data collection at school, it was necessary to contact the ESL staff at the high school and ask for assistance. With approval from the school principal, a meeting was scheduled on April 27, 2006, with one of the ESL teachers to discuss alternatives in order to contact some of the Latino students at the school. The ESL teacher was very supportive and volunteered to call the Latino students enrolled in the ESL program through the school intercom at the end of the school day and ask them to meet her in the ESL classroom. The day that the teacher called the students after school, I was in the ESL classroom waiting for the students in order to talk to them about the research study and ask for their voluntary participation. Four students volunteered for the study and received a copy of the recruitment documents to be completed by their parents.

While in the process of recruiting participants in the ESL classroom at the high school, some students mentioned that they had received the recruitment documents at home but did not respond to them or were not sure where they had placed them. They also said they knew other Latino students who received the documents, but were not interested in the study or did not take the time to respond. In summary, by April 27, 2006, there were 7 participants for the study.

Because not all of the students who were called by intercom met at the ESL classroom as instructed, the ESL teacher was willing to keep copies of the participation letter, contact information form, and parental consent form in order to distribute them throughout the week to other students she knew were of Latino descent. The ESL teacher gave the documents to two other students who accepted to be volunteers in the study. These students completed the requested documents and gave them to the ESL teacher, who confidentially and securely saved them for me to be picked up later at school. By the first week of May, there were 9 participants; six students were recruited with assistance from the ESL teacher and three had responded by U.S. mail.

Of the 9 participants who volunteered for the study, one was eliminated because the student did not complete the research procedures; valid cases for the study were 8 participants. All data collected from the high school participants were identified with a number from one to nine, where number eight would have been the participant eliminated. All information about the participants was kept strictly confidential throughout the research process and data analysis; no one but me or faculty from the graduate committee, when necessary, had access to the participants' names or contact information.

Prior to asking the participants to provide any kind of data, I verified that consent forms were signed by the parents and the participants, and that contact information was accurately provided. Participants were contacted by phone in order to schedule a day and time for meeting after school to complete the research data collection procedures. I tried to have all 8 participants form only one group, but because the participants had busy

schedules after school and graduation day was approaching for some of them, the only possible arrangement was to have the participants form two groups of four each.

The first meeting was scheduled for April 28, 2006 (Group #1), and the second meeting for May 3, 2006 (Group #2). Group #1 (P1, P2, P3, P5)³ consisted of three males and one female, while in Group #2 (P4, P6, P7, P9), all four were females. I met with each group from approximately 2:30 pm to 4:15 pm in the ESL classroom of the high school selected. Healthy snacks were provided for each meeting, as was specified in the participation letter.

3.4.2 Administering the Questionnaire

The self-report questionnaire (Appendix A) was intended to be mailed to the participants' home for completion, but because of the constraints in the recruitment process, the questionnaire had to be completed at school before beginning the writing session. Completing the questionnaire took approximately 8 to 10 minutes, and all 8 participants filled out the English version.

Participants were instructed to identify the questionnaire with their assigned number instead of their names. When the participants returned the completed questionnaires, I verified that all questions were answered, and in some cases, participants were asked to be more specific in the fill-in-the-blank responses.

³ For confidentiality purposes, when referring to the participants in this study, the letter P, together with the assigned numbers, was used as a reference.

3.4.3 Eliciting a Writing Sample

Since the participants were arranged in groups of four each, the discussion of the procedure followed for collecting the writing samples is described by identifying them as writing session #1 (for group #1) and writing session #2 (for group #2). Both groups received two handouts; one handout was the writing prompt with the instructions, and the other one was a blank page titled “Student Writing Sample,” asking for the participant assigned code and date. Instructions were discussed orally with all the participants and when all concerns and questions were answered, I asked the participants to begin writing and time began counting. All participants identified their writing sample with the assigned number. The participants were informed about the time left for finishing the writing five minutes before the time limit was reached.

Both writing sessions were conducted in the ESL classroom at school, and participants had the option of sitting individually or as a group at a table. However, in both writing sessions, all participants decided to sit at the table. The classroom arrangement provided a quiet and calm environment and, during both writing sessions, one of the ESL teachers was working at her desk while the research procedures were taking place. I decided not to sit at the table with the participants while they were writing, but I was present in the classroom, observing the students.

Most of the participants in writing session #1 finished writing before the time limit, except P2, who still had to translate the draft into English. In writing session #2, all participants finished within 25 minutes. After I collected the writing samples, the

participants had a 5-minutes break and then they were asked to participate in the focus group discussion.

I noticed some particularities among the group of participants in writing session #1 and writing session #2. In the first writing session, three of the participants seemed to be very good friends, and while they were beginning the writing, the female suggested to the males not to waste time and not to use their first language because the writing task had to be completed in English. However, despite the recommendations given by the female in the group (P5), P2 wrote his draft in Portuguese and then translated it into English. Group #1 was very talkative, extroverted, and spoke a lot of Spanish among them most of the time while in the ESL classroom.

The group of writing session #2 knew each other but did not seem to be friends. Participants in this group limited their conversation to the research procedures and worked very much individually. However, at the end of data collection, participants were more relaxed and spoke Spanish among themselves. Specifically, they talked about foods representative of their country of origin.

3.4.4 Conducting the Focus Group

After the 5-minute break, the focus group protocol (Appendix B) was distributed among the four participants in group #1 and group #2 during separate meetings, as previously discussed. Since each participant already had a number assigned, all were instructed to self-identify with that number when answering a question. I was the moderator of the focus group, and I audiorecorded it (by using a SONY M-570V

microcassette recorder) for later transcription and data analysis. The participants and I all sat at the same table to assure a better quality of voice recording.

The focus group was conducted in English, lasted approximately 45 minutes, and was guided by using the list of questions included in the focus group protocol. However, on some occasions I asked additional questions, with the objective of having a more complete response from the participants. Occasionally, some participants asked questions related to the topic under discussion among themselves. The focus group completed the procedure for data collection with high school participants. Once I verified that I had collected all the data for each participant, \$10 was given to each participant as a token of appreciation.

Once the data collection process with the high school participants was over, I reviewed the quality and quantity of the data and determined that they were not substantial enough to support conclusions about each of the research questions. The main reason was that most of the high school participants were proficient in English and had good writing skills in English. Contrary to what I expected, some of the participants were learning Spanish as an elective at school and were not academically proficient in Spanish.

I realized that researching language switching with Latino students learning English in the U.S. where they are immersed in the L2 did not provide the kind of research participants I needed for the study. I noticed that, in order to be able to measure language switching in L2 writing, proficiency in the L1 was one of the characteristics a research participant must have. Therefore, I decided to collect additional data in a

different English language learning context such as Puerto Rico, where Spanish is the dominant language and English is learned as a second language.

3.5 Modifications for Collection of Additional Data

3.5.1 Selection of College and Participants

Since I had ESL teaching experience at the college level in Puerto Rico, an option was to recruit participants from an ESL context where I could seek faculty collaboration. A three-credit undergraduate English course (INGL 3102)⁴ offered during the summer session of June 2006 by the Department of English at the University of Puerto Rico Mayagüez Campus (UPR-M) was selected as an appropriate ESL setting for additional data collection.

Selection of the English course was based on the description of the course⁵ and on the course requirements for placement. Course placement in ESL courses at UPR-M is determined at the time of college admission according to the scores of an English Second Language Achievement Test (ESLAT) that is administered by the College Entrance Examination Board (CEEB). Such criteria of ESL course placement at UPR-M have been previously considered for research purposes (Martin-Betancourt, 1986).

The course I selected for data collection from college students at UPR-M is the second English course in a twelve-credit basic sequence (i.e., INGL 3101, 3102, 3201,

⁴ Courses are labeled in Spanish in the 2005-2006 Undergraduate Catalogue at UPR-Mayagüez Campus.

⁵ “This course is designed to meet the student’s immediate needs, and to give him or her a command of the fundamental structure of the English language. The oral approach is used. Skills in reading and writing are developed. Students are grouped according to their ability to use the language, and arrangements are made to give additional help to those students who show poor preparation in English.”

3202) of required courses in English at UPR-M. Freshman students who get a score below 570 in the ESLAT are required to start with a basic course in English (INGL 3101) instead of intermediate English. In many cases, depending on the ESLAT scores, students are required to enroll in a pre-basic English course (INGL 0066), a developmental course of three hours of lecture per week, without credit, on a pass/fail basis. If the student passes the pre-basic English course with a score of 70 or above, then the student may enroll in the Basic English course (INGL 3101).

3.5.2 Informed Consent

In order to begin collecting additional data from college-level students in Puerto Rico, it was necessary to modify the documents designed for the high school participants in Fairbanks. For the college-level audience, a parental consent was not necessary because participants were expected to be at least 18 years old or older; instead, a student consent form (Appendix H) was essential. The student consent form explained the objective of the study and indicated that participating in the study was voluntary and confidential. It was necessary to keep student contact information forms for the college-level participants in case they needed to be contacted; it was similar to the form designed for the high school participants, but asked for the student's major area of study, year of study, and hometown.

3.5.3 Questionnaire

The questionnaire designed for the high school participants was modified to fit the college-level audience. Therefore, the modified version of the questionnaire (Appendix I) had additional questions about previous schooling in Puerto Rico in terms of public or private education, about a participant's source for paying tuition, the student's grade point average, and the grade obtained in a previous English course (INGL 3101). In addition, participants were asked to indicate with yes or no if it was the first time they had taken the English course INGL 3102 and if they had to take a pre-basic English course (INGL 066). The main reason for learning about previous English courses was that students who are placed in a remedial English course might be considered to be at a lower English proficiency level than those students who were enrolled directly into INGL 3101 during their first semester at UPR-M as freshman students.

Some of the questions included in the high school questionnaire did not apply to the Puerto Rican college-level audience. Therefore, the question (#10 in the high school questionnaire) about a student's professional area of interest was eliminated for the college-level participants because their major area of study was provided in a contact information form. The question (#12 in the high school questionnaire) about the language spoken by the parents, guardians, or siblings at home was eliminated because it was assumed that in Puerto Rico, Spanish is the dominant language. Moreover, the question about the language used by the participant when talking to family or friends was expected to provide information related to the language used at home. It was not expected that there was any rule for speaking Spanish only at home because Spanish is the native

language for Puerto Ricans; therefore, question #13 (from the high school questionnaire) was also eliminated. The question (#14) about the reasons for living in Puerto Rico (Alaska for the high school participants) did not apply to the college-level participants.

Other minor changes to the questionnaire included the substitution of the word “Spanish” for “English” in questions #3, #4, and #5. Question #6 included the choice of “roommates,” as it was applicable for the college-level participants, and question #7 was rephrased. All other questions remained the same in both questionnaires, with the difference that the questionnaire for college-level participants ended up with sixteen questions, while the questionnaire for the high school participants had fourteen questions.

3.5.4 Writing Sample

Different from the writing sample for the high school participants, the writing sample for the college-level participants had a dual purpose: one was to fit the research goal and the other was to reinforce the pedagogical objective for the English course. Specifically, the writing task was worth 10 points in the exam that the participants had for the English course during the week in which the data were collected. However, instead of this being a constraint for collecting data, it provided face validity (i.e., the task would be meaningful for the student because it was a part of the English course and not only for research purposes) to the writing task. The participants’ names were required to facilitate the tracking of each student’s writing by the professor of the English course. The writing prompt was similar to the one used for the high school participants, with the difference

that the term “Puerto Rico” was substituted for “Alaska.” Following is the writing prompt that elicited writing from college-level participants in this study:

Writing Prompt

If you could choose to live anywhere in Puerto Rico or anywhere else in the world, where would you live? Would you rather live where you do now? Explain why you would choose to move or why you would stay. Please make your response as complete as possible.

The instructions for the writing sample indicated that the writing was part of the INGL 3102 requirements and that it was to be used for research purposes as well. The participants were asked to write for 25 minutes and were instructed to do so by writing notes on more than one paper, with the purpose of formulating ideas and planning the content of the response to the topic chosen. Participants were also asked to number the papers in the order in which they used them. Then, they had to organize their notes in paragraph format.

3.5.5 Focus Group Protocol

The focus group protocol (Appendix J) explained the instructions for the discussion and included eight open-ended questions. The focus group discussion was estimated to last approximately 45 minutes, and it was scheduled to take place in the classroom assigned for the English course.

Modifications from the original focus group protocol included rephrasing, reorganizing, and reducing the number of questions. The question (#2 in the high school focus group protocol) about the participants' perception regarding the instructions for the writing sample, and the question (#3 in the high school focus group protocol) about comparing the writing sample to the academic English writing at school were eliminated because they were irrelevant in the context of the college-level audience.

The format was slightly modified; specifically, college-level participants were asked to answer in writing four of the focus group questions (questions #2, #4, #5, and #7) prior to beginning the focus group discussion orally. These were very important questions, and the time was a constraint for all the 23 participants to provide an answer orally to each one of the guiding questions included in the focus group protocol. As it was suggested by the course professor, providing the answers in writing was useful for not missing any of the participants' responses.

3.6 Approval Process for Collection of Additional Data

Once the instruments were modified to fit a college-level audience in Puerto Rico, an IRB modification request form was completed and sent to the IRB coordinator on May 22, 2006. An authorization letter to conduct research at UPR-M was required by the IRB coordinator. Such a letter (Appendix K), signed by the Chair of the Department of English and the professor of the basic English course INGL 3102 at UPR-M was sent by fax to the IRB coordinator. After a review from a designated member of the IRB, the modification request was approved on June 1, 2006 (Appendix L) with some suggestions.

Specifically, concerning the student consent form, it was suggested to include a statement indicating that the student must be at least 18 years old to participate.

Once IRB approval was granted, communication by email between the professor for the English course and me made it possible to coordinate the details for collecting data in Puerto Rico. I met with the professor of the English course on June 19, 2006, in his office at UPR-M to discuss the procedures and the time needed to complete research procedures in his English course.

3.7 Procedure for Collection of Additional Data

3.7.1 Recruitment of Participants

The college-level sample consisted of 23 participants enrolled in a Basic English course (INGL 3102) in one of the summer sessions at UPR-M. Prior to meeting the students in the English course, the professor had informed them about a visitor coming to the class to collect data for research purposes. In addition, the professor had already discussed with them the dual purpose of the activities taking place that day. The data collected with the college-level participants were collected during class time, in one day only.

At the beginning of the class, on June 21, 2006, the professor introduced me to the class and then I explained my purpose for being there and proceeded to carry out the research procedures. The classroom was arranged in a semi-circle, doors and windows were opened, fans were on, and both the professor and I were present at all times when collecting data.

As the first step for data collection, two copies of the informed consent form (Appendix H) and a contact information form were distributed to each student in the class. I briefly discussed the content of the consent form in English and then in Spanish; no one had concerns or questions about the study. Consent forms and contact information forms were completed in Spanish, as it was the most comfortable language for the participants. While I collected the consent forms and contact information forms I verified that participants had signed both copies of the consent form, and then I signed both copies too. I kept the original of the consent forms for each participant and a copy remained with the participants.

For confidentiality purposes, I gave each participant a card with a number written on it and explained the importance of using a number for identifying data in the research instead of using the participant's name. In order to be able to match numbers with names when analyzing data, a sheet containing a list of numbers from 10 to 32 was passed around the classroom for the participants to write their names on the line corresponding to the assigned number.

3.7.2 Eliciting a Writing Sample

With assistance from the professor, handouts for the writing sample were distributed among all the participants. One handout was the writing prompt with instructions; the other one was a blank page titled "Student Writing Sample" which asked for the participant's number and date. The directions for the writing sample were discussed first in English and then in Spanish, but participants were told that the writing

had to be in English. The professor kept track of the time and students were informed when five minutes were left for finishing the sample. All drafts and notes were collected from each participant. Since the writing counted as an assignment for the English course, when all activities were completed and students were dismissed, the professor and I went to the office of the Department of English to make copies of the drafts and notes of each student's writing sample; I kept the originals and the professor the copies.

3.7.3 Conducting the Focus Group

Once the writing session was over, participants were informed about a group discussion that was part of the research. Prior to beginning the group discussion, the participants answered four of the questions that were to be discussed. Participants answered the questions (in writing) in Spanish as it was their most comfortable language. It took the participants approximately 5 to 7 minutes to answer the questions. When the participants finished answering the questions, I explained the objective of the oral group discussion as it was detailed in the focus group protocol designed for this study.

With assistance from the professor of the English course, a Spanish version of the handout explaining the instructions and objectives for the oral group discussion was distributed among the participants. The group discussion took place in a classroom setting. The discussion was audio-recorded by using a microphone and a tape recorder (microcassette recorder M-570V). The tape recorder was placed close to the microphone speakers, and since I was the moderator, I passed along the microphone to the participants when answering the questions. The group discussion was conducted in

Spanish, lasted approximately 40 minutes, and participants were encouraged to express their own thoughts and not necessarily agree with other participants' comments.

To begin the group discussion, I asked all 23 participants to answer the first question, which was about their native language and the most comfortable language used for writing. For the other seven questions, participants volunteered when answering. When I noticed that the same students were answering most of the questions, I asked other students for their opinions. As with any group discussion, some participants liked the idea of talking in front of others, but not all students who were asked to give their opinion agreed to do it. When the group discussion was over, I collected the answers to the four questions and participants were dismissed for a 20-minute break.

3.7.4 Administering the Questionnaire

After the 20-minute break, participants returned to the classroom to complete the questionnaire, as it was the last instrument needed to complete for the research. Questionnaires were completed in Spanish. I collected them to verify that all questions were answered and to thank each participant individually. Completing the questionnaire ended the participation of these students in the research. As a token of appreciation, I gave each one of them an Alaskan stained glass bookmark. I asked the professor if I could stay in the class once data collection was over. Being able to stay in the classroom after the research procedures were completed gave me the opportunity to observe the participants' attitudes, behavior, and the language used in a real classroom setting.

3.8 Summary

In this chapter, I have described the main objective of this study, the data collection process followed with high school participants in Fairbanks, and reasons why collection of additional data with college-level participants in Puerto Rico seemed appropriate. The instruments used for data collection were described and an explanation of the reasons for selecting such methods was provided. I also detailed the approval process followed for conducting research involving students from one public school in Fairbanks, Alaska and one group of college-level students in Puerto Rico.

Next chapter presents the results of questionnaire data, along with analysis of writing samples and focus group data for eight Latino high school students learning English in the U.S. Analysis of data in the next chapter focuses on frequency of language switching as it occurred at the lexical level in the writing of the eight participants with differing English proficiency levels representing various Latino subgroups of two generations in the U.S.

Chapter 4: Results of High School Data

This chapter presents the results of data elicited through a questionnaire, a writing sample, and a focus group from eight Latino research participants in an urban high school in Fairbanks, Alaska. In addition, it reports the data accessed from the academic records of the participants and the procedures for determining the participants' generational status and English proficiency level. It also includes a brief discussion of major findings regarding language-switching frequency at the lexical level in English compositions for the eight Latino participants learning English in the U.S.

4.1 Questionnaire

As mentioned in the previous chapter, the main objective of the questionnaire (Appendix A) was to gather information about the educational and language background of the research participants, specifically, to better understand the frequency of Spanish language use, years of schooling in the United States and in Spanish-speaking countries, native language, ethnicity, and self-evaluation of English proficiency and skills.

Results are reported for all eight participants who responded to the fourteen questions of the self-administered questionnaire. In this chapter, questionnaire data are discussed in the order in which the items were organized in the instrument. For reporting questionnaire data, instead of using a coding system where the answers for each item are converted into a “*numerical score*” (Dornyei, 2003, p. 98), I decided to report the frequency of responses per question. In this study, frequency refers to “the number (or

tally) of people . . . who fall into a particular category” (Brown, 1988, p. 183). Then, percentages were calculated by dividing the frequency of responses by the total of possible responses per question.

Information on participants’ age, grade level, and gender came from the student contact form and the academic records accessed through the school district. The age range of the high school participants was 16 to 18 years old; three were males and five were females. The grade levels of the participants were as follows: three were enrolled in grade 12, three in grade 11, one in grade 10, and one in grade 9.

Table 1 shows the frequency of responses and percentages of the first language of the participants as reported in question number one. Specifically, the wording of the question was, “Which language do you consider to be your first language?” Participants chose Spanish, English, or specified another language. Most of the participants reported English as their first language while two of them considered Spanish to be their first language; participant number four reported both languages.

Table 1

First Language of High School Participants

Language	<i>f</i>	%
Spanish	2	25
English	4	50
Spanish and English	1	12.5
Other: Portuguese	1	12.5
Total	8	100

As a response to question number two, Table 2 shows the participants' self-identification in an ethnic group. There were participants from various Latino ethnic subgroups, and although most of the participants were raised in the U.S., their ethnic identity represents either their place of birth or the country of origin of their parents. Participant number four self-identified as Puerto Rican, Panamanian, Hispanic, and Latina, perhaps because her mother was from Panama, her father from Puerto Rico, she has lived in the U.S., and she has educational background from Spanish-speaking countries.

Table 2

Participants' Self-Identification of Ethnicity

Ethnic Group	<i>f</i>	%
Hispanic	1	12.5
Mexican	1	12.5
Chicano(a)	1	12.5
Puerto Rican	1	12.5
Mexican American	1	12.5
Other:		
Panamanian	1	12.5
Brazilian	1	12.5
Puerto Rican, Panamanian,	1	12.5
Hispanic, Latina		
Total	8	100

Table 3 reports the frequency of responses for question number three and number four. Both questions had choices of Yes or No, and for affirmative responses, participants had to specify where and for how long they studied in or traveled to Spanish-speaking countries. In Table 3, “Study” represents the question, “Have you ever studied Spanish in a country where only Spanish is spoken?” while “Travel” represents the question “Have you ever traveled to places where Spanish is spoken?” Results indicated that, overall, just one participant had studied in Spanish-speaking countries, while the other seven participants have not had such an opportunity yet. For instance, P4 reported that she studied 4 years in Panama (from ages 13-17) and 3 years in Puerto Rico (from ages 9 to 12).

With respect to traveling to Spanish-speaking countries, most of the participants have had the opportunity to travel to places such as Panama, Florida, Texas, New Jersey, New York, Puerto Rico, Costa Rica, and Mexico; the length of travel ranged from 3 weeks to 4 ½ years. It is noteworthy to mention that some of the places considered as Spanish-speaking countries by the participants were in the U.S. However, it seems that since the Latino influence in places such as New York, Florida, Texas, and New Jersey is notable, some participants may consider those places as Spanish-speaking countries.

Table 3

Participants' Opportunities in Spanish-Speaking Countries

Reply	Yes		No		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Study	1	12.5	7	87.5	8	100
Travel	7	87.5	1	12.5	8	100
Total	8	100	8	100	16	

Question number five asked about the learning of Spanish at home or in formal courses. Regarding the participants' knowledge of Spanish, 37.5% reported that they learned it in formal courses, another 37.5% learned Spanish at home, and 25% learned it both in formal courses and at home.

Table 4 shows the frequency of responses for the language used the most by the participants when talking to family and friends as reported in question number six. Not all participants reported language use for all the alternatives because they did not apply. English was the language mostly used by the participants when talking to family and friends, although some use of Spanish was reported.

Table 4

Participants' Language Use with Family and Friends

Reply	Spanish		English		Spanish and English		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Mother/Guardian	2	25	5	62.5	1	12.5	8	100
Father/Guardian	2	25	5	62.5	1	12.5	8	100
Brother(s)	2	25	5	62.5	1	12.5	8	100
Sister(s)	1	16.7	5	83.3			6	100
Friends	2	25	5	62.5	1	12.5	8	100
Children	1	20	4	80			5	100
Total	10		29		4		43	

Question number seven asked the participants about their years of schooling in the United States. The two participants who were participating in an exchange program for the academic year 2005-2006 reported to be living in Alaska for one year or less. Specifically, P2 reported that he has been attending school in Alaska for one year, while P3 reported being in Alaska for 9 months. All the other six participants have been living in the U.S. for more than 3 years, with a minimum of 4 years and a maximum of 11 years. The years of schooling in the U.S. is discussed later as it is relevant for determining the generational status of the participants.

In question number eight, participants self-evaluated their English proficiency level in terms of beginner, intermediate, or advanced. Since none of the alternatives were defined to the participants, the responses shown in Table 5 represent the participants' own understanding of who a beginner, intermediate, or advanced English learner may be. The majority of the participants considered themselves advanced English learners.

Table 5

Participants' Self-Evaluation of English Proficiency

Proficiency Level	<i>f</i>	%
Beginner	-	-
Intermediate	3	37.5
Advanced	5	62.5
Total	8	100

Question number nine asked the participants to indicate how they considered their English language and Spanish language skills to be in terms of excellent, very good, good, limited or extremely limited. Data for the English language skills are presented separate from the Spanish language skills. Table 6 reports the frequency of responses and percentages for the participants' self-evaluation of English language skills. This information contributes to understanding what the participants consider are their strengths and weaknesses in terms of writing, speaking, listening, and reading in English. As reported, 100% of the participants indicated that their writing, speaking, understanding,

and reading skills in English were excellent, very good, or good; no participants reported that their English skills were limited or extremely limited.

Table 6

Participants' Self-Evaluation of English Language Skills

Skills	Excellent		Very Good		Good		Limited		Extremely Limited		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Writing	2	25	1	12.5	5	62.5	-	-	-	-	8	100
Speaking	5	62.5	1	12.5	2	25	-	-	-	-	8	100
Under- standing	3	37.5	3	37.5	2	25	-	-	-	-	8	100
Reading	3	37.5	1	12.5	4	50	-	-	-	-	8	100
Total	13		6		13		-		-		32	

As shown in Table 7, participants' self-evaluation of their Spanish language skills indicated that 87.5% understood Spanish and 75% said their speaking skills in Spanish were excellent, very good, or good. However, in skills such as writing and reading, the majority (62.5%) of the participants reported to have limited Spanish writing skills; 50% reported to be limited or extremely limited in reading Spanish.

Table 7

Participants' Self-Evaluation of Spanish Language Skills

Skills	Excellent		Very Good		Good		Limited		Extremely Limited		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Writing	2	25	-	-	1	12.5	5	62.5	-	-	8	100
Speaking	3	37.5	1	12.5	2	25	2	25	-	-	8	100
Under- standing	4	50	1	12.5	2	25	-	-	1	12.5	8	100
Reading	2	25	-	-	2	25	3	37.5	1	12.5	8	100
Total	11		2		7		10		2		32	

As reported in question number ten, the participants' professional areas of interest for pursuing a college education were Engineering, Health, Natural Sciences, Social Sciences, Business Administration, and Computer Animation. In question number eleven, 87.5% of the participants reported lack of financial support as a barrier for continuing post-secondary studies, while 12.5% reported a lack of family support as a limitation for pursuing a college education.

Question number twelve asked about the use of the Spanish language by the participants' parents and siblings at home. Table 8 shows that the highest percentage of Spanish use at home was by the participants' parents, while siblings seemed to use less Spanish at home.

Table 8

Spanish Language Use by the Participants' Family

Reply	Yes		No		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Father	5	71	2	29	7	100
Mother	6	75	2	25	8	100
Brother(s)	3	37.5	5	62.5	8	100
Sister(s)	2	29	5	71	7	100
Total	16		14		30	

Question number thirteen asked about any existent rules for speaking Spanish only at home. Seven participants reported that they did not have rules at home for speaking Spanish only, but one participant (P5) stated that her parents did not speak English and that she had to speak Spanish at home; her father did not allow English use at home.

Table 9 shows the various reasons for the parents or guardians of the participants to be living in Alaska; only the choices that were selected are reported. While some indicated living here because of the military, others, such as the students from the exchange program, had other reasons for being in Alaska. As in the case of P2 and P3, they applied to participate in the exchange program, but did not choose the place; instead, they are assigned according to availability of opportunities in schools.

Table 9

Participants' Reasons for Living in Alaska

Reply	<i>F</i>	%
Military Service	3	37.5
State-employed	1	12.5
Self-employed	1	12.5
Not Job related	2	25
Other: Family related	1	12.5
Total	8	100

4.2 Academic Records

Four sets of academic records (i.e., academic transcript, scores of the writing assessment of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, a Parent Language Questionnaire, and scores on the English language proficiency assessment) were accessed through the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District, with the objective of supplementing the data collected for this research study. With the information contained in the records mentioned above, I was able to better understand the educational background of the participants. For instance, access to the scores obtained by the participants on the writing assessment of the HSGQE gave me an idea of the English writing ability and composing competence of the participants. Moreover, through access to the Parent Language Questionnaire, I learned about the language background of the

participants and his or her family, including other data that were used to determine the participants' generational status.

Access to the participants' academic transcript provided an overview of the courses they had taken, including grades and progress made throughout the school year. Additionally, access to the English Language Proficiency Assessment provided very useful data about the process followed in the FNSBSD for identifying non-English speakers and determining their need of English language services.

4.2.1 Participants' Writing Proficiency

Learning about the participants' writing proficiency in English was important for further interpretation of data from the writing samples in this study. According to the Department of Education and Early Development of Alaska, students at the high school level are expected to have certain levels of knowledge in writing compositions, using conventional English, and revising writing, among other skills as described in the content and performance standards for Alaska students in the English/Language Arts class. Therefore, students at the high school level were expected to be familiar with the writing process, including its stages and available techniques for writing a composition in English for academic purposes.

In the writing assessment of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, students are tested in different skills such as writing compositions, revising writing, and demonstrating knowledge of discourse and conventional English, with the objective of measuring writing skills by grade level. The scale score obtained by a student in the

writing assessment of the HSGQE evaluates the students' performance in terms of proficient or not proficient for that specific skill.

Table 10 shows that a majority of the participants were proficient according to the standardized test that assessed writing. These results indicate that the writing skills of most of the participants met grade-level, basic expectations in this content area. However, the scores obtained by two of the participants (P1 and P2) were below the proficient scale score, indicating that their writing proficiency did not meet grade-level expectations. It is relevant to mention that since P1 was a ninth-grade student, his writing proficiency was not measured through the HSGQE since the HSGQE is administered in Grade 10, but through other standardized exam for his grade level.

Table 10

Participants' Writing Proficiency

Reply	<i>f</i>	%
Proficient	6	75
Not Proficient	2	25
Total	8	100

4.2.2 Participants' Generational Status

One of the objectives of this research study was to classify the high school participants according to their generational status, which refers to "the number of generations the student's family has lived in the United States" (NCES, 1998, p. 1). The

information contained in the Parent Language Questionnaire and the answers provided by the participants in the questionnaire for this study were useful in determining a participant's generational status. Specifically, participants' place of birth and years of schooling in the U.S. were used as indicators of their family immigration status to the U.S. In addition, as detailed in Table 11, it was important to consider the participants' parents' place of birth as a way of better understanding generational differences among the participants.

Table 11

Participants' Generational Status

P	Participants' Place of Birth	Schooling in U.S.	Parent(s) Place of Birth	Generational Status
1	Puerto Rico	Since the age of 4	Puerto Rico	1 st generation
2	Brazil	1 year	Brazil	1 st generation
3	Mexico	9 months	Mexico	1 st generation
4	Panama	4 ½ years	Panama and Puerto Rico	1 st generation
5	Mexico	8 years	Mexico	1 st generation
6	California	11 years	Mexico	2 nd generation
7	Texas	11 years	Panama	2 nd generation
9	Not available	10 years	Cuba	2 nd generation

The information necessary to determine generational status was available for some of the participants, but for others the data were not provided. As shown in Table 11,

each participant was classified either as a first-generation immigrant (a student who was born outside the U.S.) or second-generation student (a student who was born in the U.S. with at least one parent who was born outside the U.S. [NCES, 1998]). Classification on third-generation status (where both parents and the student were U.S. born) did not apply to any of the participants.

4.2.3 Participants' English Proficiency

As an objective of this research study, I classified the high school participants by English language proficiency level by considering the procedure followed in the FNSBSD in the assessment of non-English speakers. As part of the procedures of the school district when identifying English second-language learners, students who report to have an influence of a non-English language background at home are assessed on their reading and writing proficiency, and speaking and listening comprehension of academic English. Scores obtained in the English language proficiency test indicate the proficiency level of the student and the need of services from the English Language Learning (ELL) program.

If a student reports to be a fluent English speaker, then the ELL program just follows up on the progress of that student, but does not give him or her English language assessment. Instead, a student with a non-English-language background who considers himself or herself a native English speaker is evaluated by an English-speaking teacher who completes a language observation checklist about the student. The language checklist indicates how the student (non-English speaker) compares to a standard

English-speaking student of the same age in the four language skills. This was the case of P5, who reported having a non-English-language background because she was born in Mexico. However, she considered English to be her L1, and after an evaluation by an English-speaking teacher, P5 did not need to receive services from the ELL program.

Table 12 details the English proficiency level of each participant, beginning from the least English proficient participant to the most English proficient participant. It is important to notice that the scores on the English language proficiency assessment may reflect a student's English proficiency level at a specific time (e.g., Spring 2005, Fall 2005, and Spring 2006) and a student's proficiency in English may have developed from that time. Participants 6, 7, and 9 were considered English proficient due to their academic English language proficiency as reported by the ELL program coordinator.

Table 12

Participants' English Language Proficiency

Participant	Overall English Proficiency Level
02	Beginner
03	Early intermediate
01	Advanced intermediate
04	Fluent English proficient
05	Fluent English proficient
06	Fluent English proficient
07	Fluent English proficient
09	Fluent English proficient

4.3 Procedure for Analysis of Writing Sample Data

The main objective of collecting a writing sample was to gather data for text analysis on frequency and patterns of language switching at the lexical level. Data are reported for each one of the eight Latino participants who were learning English in the U.S. and who had differing English proficiency levels, represented various Latino ethnic subgroups, and have been living in the U.S. for one or two generations.

For purposes of this research, a language switch was identified as the presence of any lexical content word (i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs) or any function word (i.e., conjunctions, prepositions, articles, or pronouns [Fromkin & Rodman, 1998]) written in Spanish while generating text on paper, organizing ideas on paper, or writing a rough draft or essay in English.

Data from the questionnaire (Appendix A) accompanying this study and from the focus group (Appendix B) were considered when analyzing the writing samples. Specifically, questions #2, #3, #8, and #10 from the focus group provided perceptions of the participants regarding the writing topic and instructions for the writing sample. In addition, during the focus group discussion, some participants mentioned the techniques they use during the composing process, which were compared to what the participants actually did in the writing sample.

Participants reported that the writing sample was easy and the topic was good. As P6 said, "It's not something you really had to think about, you pretty much know it from the top of your head." For P5, the writing was easy because she understood it in English and did not need to ask for a translation as she used to do for some tasks at school where

the tasks had “bigger words” she could not understand. Most of the participants thought that time allowed for completing the task was sufficient, and for P7 “the time was good, and the topic with the time was just right . . . because we’ve lived here and we know if we want to stay here or if we want to go.”

Some of the participants perceived that there were differences in terms of difficulty and in the process followed between the writing sample for this research study and the writing tasks given at school. At school, writing topics were harder, compositions had to be a specific length, the timeline given at school was usually a week for completion of a writing task, and feedback from teachers and classmates was a part of the writing process.

For P7, who had been three years in the public school system and had attended private school previously, the writing sample was “. . . just as easy as the one we get in school.” Perhaps P7 responded this way because, as P7 mentioned, in private school teachers put many expectations on the students and the school work was harder. Overall, as perceived by the participants, the topic of the writing sample was not a difficult one, and time provided for completion of the writing seemed sufficient. It is noteworthy to mention that task difficulty was not a variable measured in this study; therefore, it was out of the scope in this study to have a writing task demanding extensive knowledge.

4.3.1 Language Switching and English Proficiency

For purposes of reporting results about the relationship of language-switching and English proficiency, major findings will focus on the three levels of proficiency

(beginner, intermediate, and advanced) in which the participants were classified. Since the participants were volunteers, and I did not know their English proficiency level prior to their recruitment, it was not possible to balance the same number of participants per proficiency level. Therefore, one participant (P2) was a beginning English learner, two were at the intermediate level (P3 and P1), and five (P4, P5, P6, P7, P9) were fluent English proficient.

It was expected that participants with the lowest proficiency in English would rely more on their L1 than participants with the highest English proficiency. However, not all the participants with the lowest English proficiency relied on the L1, but some reported in the focus group that they sometimes switched to the L1 while generating ideas about the writing topic. The participant with the lowest English proficiency level, P2, was the only one who relied on his first language (Portuguese) while planning and developing the content of the writing topic.

Although P1 used the word “familia,” a Spanish noun meaning “family” in English, he wrote the remaining content in English. None of the other participants (P3, P4, P5, P6, P7, P8, and P9) switched languages while writing in English. The writings of these other participants varied in length, in organization of content, in sentence structure, in paragraph format, in grammar errors, and in techniques used for planning the content, but they all were coherent.

Among the eight Latino participants, I consider P2 one of the most valid cases because he was learning English as a second language and he still was fluent in his native language, Portuguese; not all the participants could be considered ESL learners, as I had

expected. While planning the content and generating ideas about the topic for the writing sample, P2 generated a first draft in Portuguese. Then, he translated the content into English. However, the translated version was shorter (one paragraph) than the Portuguese version, which consisted of two paragraphs, and the content was not exactly the same as the English version. Perhaps one reason for the variation in length between the Portuguese and English version was that P2 spent too much time writing the draft in Portuguese, and did not have enough time to translate the content into English.

Time seemed to be an important factor for P2 in deciding what language to use in a writing task. As he mentioned during the focus group, if he is given enough time for writing, he prefers to write in Portuguese to “get some more ideas” and then translate it into English. To some extent, time allowed for completing a writing task definitely is a major concern for an L2 writer in deciding whether to use the L1, as in the case of P2. Even when most of the participants finished the writing task within 25 minutes, P2 was still working on content translation.

Although P2 was a beginning English learner and his writing proficiency was below grade level, his writing in English did not have that many errors beyond mainly comma placement and word order. Writing in Portuguese first seemed to help P2 in developing content and ideas about the writing prompt. Even when his English proficiency was lower than that of the other participants, his English version was coherent. However, it seemed that some writing skills from his L1 (Portuguese) were transferred to the L2 (English). For example, separating sentences with commas instead of using periods in his Portuguese writing was evident in the English version as well.

Below is P2's Portuguese version, followed by the English version, as he wrote them for the writing sample:

Portuguese Version:

Eu gostaria de morar no Hawai, porque é meu sonho ir para lá, e eu acho que não tem lugar tão bonito que aquele, um amigo meu foi para lá messas ferias, e ele me dice que e o melhor lugar do mundo, mais até os quarenta anos de idade, porque depois não tem mai graça, e você vai se cansar de tanta turista.

Mais tambem eu queria visitar outras partes do mundo, eu morro de vontade de visitar a Tailandia, porque ten praias muita bonitas lá, e eu são apaisonado por praias.

English version:

I would like to live in Hawai, because that is my dream go to there, I don't think that has another beautiful place like that in the world.

One of my friends went to Hawai, and He said that is the best place in the world, so I want go to there, it will be so much fun.

Writing in Portuguese for P2 was easier than writing in Spanish or English, as he reported. During the focus group discussion, he reported that he would plan content of a writing task in English, but would not rely on his first language when writing in English. However, he said that he used to switch languages while speaking and writing at the beginning of the year when he just came from Brazil, but now he will write in English.

He also said that if a task was “. . . really hard, really important . . . like a test for the university” he would write in Portuguese and then translate it into English. It seemed that P2 contradicted himself saying that he would not rely on his L1, but he actually did it in the writing sample. Moreover, he also mentioned that he would rely on L1 if the task was difficult or important, which may imply that the writing sample for this study was either difficult or important for him, and in order for him to do his best, he had to write it in Portuguese first.

In the questionnaire for this study, P2 self-evaluated as an intermediate English learner and reported that his English language skills were good. It seems that the English proficiency of P2 has improved since he moved to Alaska to participate in the student exchange program. Regarding his Spanish language skills, which he said were learned in the U.S., he reported that he spoke and understood Spanish well, but was limited in reading and writing.

Data from P2 suggest that P2 recognizes that he used to rely heavily on Portuguese when he began schooling in the U.S., but he does not do it anymore. Perhaps P2 feels more confident in using English after being in an English-speaking context for about nine months than he was before he came to Alaska. It seems that P2 is not aware that he still uses his L1 when writing because he said he does not rely on Portuguese, but he actually did when developing the writing topic for this research. This implies that even when the linguistic competence in English for P2 is acceptable for communication with friends, his academic language and writing competence in English still is developing, and this may be an explanation for why he falls back on his L1 when writing in English. In

addition, morphological, syntactical, and phonological rules in Portuguese may differ from those in English and may account for language-switching frequency in the case of P2.

In any case, the fact that P2 used Portuguese to generate text for the writing task in this research suggests that his writing competence in Portuguese outweighs his writing competence in English. Moreover, P2 is one of the participants who did not meet grade-level expectations for writing competence skills as assessed by the school district in Fairbanks, Alaska. This means that, besides any linguistic constraint that P2 may have with English, his lack of composing competence in English may account for his reliance on Portuguese when writing in English.

Although it is not clear whether P2 had previous English learning experience while living in Brazil, being able to live in a country where English is the dominant language definitely benefited his English language development. Moreover, P2 lived in Fairbanks with a host family who spoke English, which is another asset for practicing the language. Some friends of P2 at school in Fairbanks spoke English as well, while others spoke Spanish, but P2 was able to communicate with the Spanish-speakers, too. However, P2's relatives and most of his friends still live in Brazil. In contrast to other participants in this research, even when P2 improves his English proficiency, he may be able to maintain his L1 (Portuguese).

The case of P2 is unique among the group of the eight high school Latinos in this research because of his educational and cultural background. The reason for P2 being in Alaska takes a different direction from that of other participants (except P3, who was also

participating in the exchange program) in this research. Certainly, having the opportunity to participate in an exchange program in the U.S. may be a socio-cultural issue for many, and to some extent representative of a student's socio-economic status. Perhaps not everyone in Brazil can afford to send a child to participate for a year in an exchange program in the U.S.

P2 had to pay tuition while enrolled in twelfth grade during the school year in Fairbanks, Alaska. In some circumstances, a student participating in an exchange program in the public schools in Fairbanks, Alaska, needs to go back to his country and retake that school year. In this situation, the student participating in the exchange program is not required to pass the High School Qualifying Exam (for high school students), and will not receive a high school diploma, either, from the school district in Fairbanks. Thus, it seems that there may be many reasons for being in an exchange program and for P2, just the English language learning experience in the U.S. was worthwhile.

A participant classified as an intermediate English proficiency learner was P3, who was participating in an exchange program from Mexico. He self-evaluated as an intermediate English learner and reported that his English language skills were good and Spanish language skills were excellent. Classified as an intermediate English learner for this study, P3 did not rely on Spanish while generating ideas in writing or while organizing content in paragraph format. However, he reported that writing in Spanish is easier for him because it is his first language and writing an essay in English would be more difficult.

For P3, writing in Spanish for later content translation was considered “double work,” although he admitted he thinks in Spanish “sometimes” to decide what to write, only if the task is “very hard.” In addition, if the writing instructions asked for writing in English, he would write in English and not in another language. In the focus group discussion, P3 did not report use of any technique that facilitated the composing process because he said that he just writes the things he knows, “like normal” and as he was taught in his ESL class. In the writing of P3, the notes and the draft were organized in paragraph format with some errors in word form and verb tense. For example, he would write the word “leave” instead of “live” since the pronunciation is similar, but the meaning and spelling are different. In contrast to other participants, P3 wrote very long sentences.

Although P3 was living in Fairbanks for about nine months (by the time these data were collected), his English language skills seemed to have improved since he moved from Mexico to participate in the exchange program. Perhaps, since he lived with a host family who speak English and the dominant language in Alaska is English, this may have contributed to his English language development. Even if P3 continues improving his English language skills, he will be able to maintain his Spanish language because his relatives live in Mexico and he was planning to return to Mexico after the exchange program. The question will be if he can still keep up his English proficiency in Mexico or if his continuous use of Spanish in Mexico will replace English.

Similar to the situation of P2, the ability of a parent to send a child on an exchange program from Mexico to the U.S. may be an issue of socio-economic status. P3

also had to pay tuition for the school year (grade 12) he was enrolled in Fairbanks, Alaska. It is not clear, whether P3 had previous experience learning English in Mexico or if P3 decided to participate in the exchange program with the goal of improving his English language skills. However, it is noteworthy to mention that even if P3 learned English in Mexico, the dominant language for Mexico is Spanish, and perhaps the opportunity to practice English in Mexico was minimal. Thus, P3 had an advantage to be learning English in an English-speaking country, which may help him improve at a faster rate than if he were in Mexico.

P3's English proficiency was at the intermediate level, but he did not switch to Spanish while developing the writing topic for this research. A possible explanation of why P3 did not fall back on Spanish is that P3 wanted to improve his English language and he would try to avoid writing in Spanish because it represented double work for him. Instead, he preferred to write directly in English. Another reason may be that his English language skills (including his writing competence) have improved and if he had used Spanish at some point for English writing, it was probably when he just moved to Alaska. Data from P3 suggest that the language-learning context and the motivation for learning a second language may contribute to second-language development. Consequently, if the goal of an individual is to improve the language skills in an L2, then avoidance of the L1 may be an option; in these circumstances, language switching will not occur.

The other participant whose English proficiency was at the intermediate level was P1. P1 was born in Puerto Rico and raised in New Jersey since he was four years old. He reported that he used to speak Spanish a lot, but then he kept speaking English because

kids at school did not understand him. His parents waived services from the English language-learning program in the school district in Fairbanks, Alaska. Perhaps P1 did not need to receive services from the English language program because, although he had a Spanish-language background, all his schooling has been in English.

For P1, writing in English was easier, while writing in Spanish was more difficult because he does not write in Spanish very often. However, he would rely on Spanish if a topic were difficult or if it were “about anything in Spanish” or related to his country, Puerto Rico. He reported in the focus group that “most of the time” he could write faster in Spanish, but he contradicted himself while responding. For instance, he said that if he could write in English and Spanish he would have done better in the writing sample because he relies on both languages for writing; however, he reported in the questionnaire that his writing and speaking skills in Spanish are limited. His English writing proficiency was below grade level, according to a standardized exam (in the school district) that assessed writing skills, but he considered that his writing skills in English were good.

For writing, P1 reported that he begins planning content in English and just writes what comes to his mind. While developing the topic for the writing sample, he did an outline by writing words such as “1. live- living in New Jersey/New York city or Miami,” “3. stay,” and “2. why” in this order. He also wrote phrases to the side of each one. Then he wrote a paragraph with the ideas he had written in the outline. He used the word “familia” while organizing the ideas but later on wrote it in English for the rough draft.

Some of the errors in his writing were in the use of contractions, punctuation, subject-verb agreement, and spelling.

Data from P1 suggest that age is a very important factor for second language acquisition, as age differences have been associated to successful second language acquisition (Gass & Selinker, 1994). Moreover, the learning context in which the second language is learned, along with peer pressure, contributes to a faster second language development. The case of P1 whose parents moved to the U.S. when he was 4 years old, is a vivid example of what happens with migrant families who move to the U.S. and have school-age children. The case of P1 is representative of many other children who used to speak their native language very well, but once they began schooling in the U.S., their L1 was replaced by English. P1 is able to speak and understand Spanish, but academic proficiency in reading and writing in the L1 has been lost.

P1, classified as an intermediate English proficiency learner for this study, did not rely on Spanish as expected. An explanation may be that he is more fluent in English than in Spanish, and what once was his first language (Spanish) has been replaced by his second language (English). P1 did not need to fall back on his L1 in order to write a composition in English because he has been educated for 10 years in English in the U.S., and that now is his more competent language.

While analyzing the writing sample of advanced English learners such as P4 from Panama and P5 from Mexico, I observed that language switching was not present in their writing. P4, who considered herself an advanced English learner and self-evaluated her English language and Spanish language skills as excellent, wrote a very long draft but did

not plan the content on a separate paper as she was instructed to do for the writing sample.

P4 just kept writing and did not organize the content into paragraphs. She reported in the focus group that she did not use any technique while developing a writing topic. She said that she “. . . usually writes and things come out just right.” She also reported that she “. . . may have a little trouble writing in English because some words may sound the same, but are not the same to spell,” which was evident in her writing. For example, some misspellings in words such as *carreer*, *profesional*, *mecanical*, *technologian*, *agreedable*, and *beeing* were common in her draft, along with errors of word form, run-on sentences, as well as verb tense and subject-verb agreement problems. Similar to P3 (the participant from Mexico), P4 also wrote very long sentences.

P4 is one of the participants among the group of high school participants who have had schooling experience in Spanish-speaking countries. This situation places P4 with unique language-learning experiences. Data from P4 suggest that being able to attend schools in Spanish and English-speaking countries is what contributes to bilingualism. P4 can write in English and Spanish very well. However, she did not switch to Spanish while developing the writing topic for this research. It seems that her linguistic and writing competence in English allows her to develop the writing in English without the need of using Spanish for writing. However, she admitted that she thinks in Spanish sometimes when taking notes or writing in English. This implies that the L1 is available at the cognitive level for P4, but at the lexical level, she is able to generate content in English with almost no difficulty.

It is noteworthy to mention that P4 started learning English when she was 6 years old and was able to have schooling in English in the U.S., which certainly provided her with unique language learning opportunities. Similar to the case of P1, age and the learning context seem to be important factors that may have contributed to successful second-language acquisition for P4. However, contrary to P1, P4's writing and reading proficiency in Spanish was good, perhaps because P4 has been able to maintain both languages, at "equal level" as she reported, because her relatives speak Spanish at home, but P1's family does not speak Spanish at home.

Overall, data for P4 suggest that when an individual is bilingual, that is proficient in the L1 and an L2, falling back to the L1 when writing in the L2 may not be necessary because of the mastery of the L2. This implies that even when an individual is academically proficient in the L1, being proficient in the L2 is significant in deciding which language to use when writing.

P5, another advanced English learner who did not switch languages while writing, provides valuable information regarding the diversity of Latinos in the U.S. P5 was born in Monterrey, Mexico, but has lived for about eight years in the U.S. Her parents do not allow the use of English at home. However, she prefers English because most of her friends speak English. P5 is living in Alaska with her sister, but as I understand, her parents still live in Texas. She was sent to Alaska to help her sister with a new baby since her brother-in-law was in the military and had been deployed.

P5 did not like living in Alaska, but she seemed to be getting along fine with friends who spoke Spanish and English. However, she reported that her use of Spanish

was mainly with relatives, and most of her relatives were not in Alaska. This implies that even when she practices the language (Spanish), being immersed in a community of English speakers will eventually contribute to L1 loss.

Although P5 did not use Spanish while developing the writing topic for this research, she explained in the focus group that sometimes she does think in Spanish and would write in Spanish if a task were difficult or if it were related to Spanish. P5 planned the content for the writing sample in this research in paragraph format on one paper and then wrote a rough draft by slightly rephrasing some of the ideas she had written without changing the meaning. She self-evaluated as an advanced English learner and considered her writing skills to be good in both languages, Spanish and English. The writing of P5 was coherent, sentences were shorter than sentences in other participants' compositions, and her main errors were punctuation, use of articles, verb tense, and spelling. Data from P5 suggest that in order for an advanced English learner to fall back to the L1 when writing in the L2, a task must be difficult or related to knowledge acquired in the L1.

The other three participants, P6, P7, and P9, who were advanced English learners, did not switch languages while writing. These three participants considered English their first language, self-evaluated as advanced English learners with excellent, very good or good writing skills in English, but limited writing skills in Spanish. Among the techniques they reported to use for composing, P6 would brainstorm about the different topics and subtopics she had to write about, while P7 would sometimes do an outline or freewrite to get ideas and write a rough draft. P9 would brainstorm in her head and write it down. All three participants reported that they would write in English because

that was their dominant language. Moreover, as they all explained, using Spanish was not going to facilitate their writing but delay it because they would have to use a dictionary.

The writing of P6, P7, and P9 was coherent and the content of their compositions was developed in paragraph format. Compositions varied in length. P9 wrote less than P6 and P7. The word choice for P7 showed use of more elaborate words (*fond*, *atmosphere*, *vicinity*, and *plethora*) than the vocabulary used by other participants, who seemed to write the way they speak. The writing proficiency of P6, P7, and P9 met grade-level expectations, but P7 and P9 had the highest scores on English writing proficiency among the group of participants for this research study. There were not many errors in the writings of P6, P7, and P9, just a few misspelled words or verb tense errors, mainly in the writing of P6.

A similarity among P6, P7, and P9 is that they all were born and raised in the U.S., contrary to the other participants, who were born outside the U.S. In addition, P6, P7, and P9 learned most of their Spanish in formal courses and may understand and speak Spanish, but have limited skills in reading and writing Spanish. In contrast to P6, P7, and P9, most of the other participants (P4, P5, P1, P3, and P2) learned Spanish or Portuguese at home.

Data from these eight Latinos learning English in the U.S. indicate that the learning context has been a significant factor for English language development among the participants because of the years they have been living in the U.S. I expected to find language switching in the writing of all these participants because I assumed that they were learning English as a second language and that they were proficient in their L1.

However, I did not consider the context in which I was recruiting them. I noticed that even the least proficient participants, who were in the U.S. for less than a year, had some knowledge of English and just the fact of being immersed in an English-speaking country, lowered the probability of using their first language.

4.3.2 Language Switching and Generational Status

Writing samples were analyzed by considering the generational status of the participants. Only P2 a first-generation immigrant on an exchange program, and P1, a first-generation immigrant whose schooling experience had been only in the U.S., relied on their first language while writing in English, although the frequency of L-S varied between them. Data suggest that language switching may occur among students who are first-generation immigrants with good language skills in the L1, as I expected. However, P3, P4, and P5 also were first-generation immigrants, but they did not switch languages. An explanation may be that since all of the participants were learning English in the U.S., the learning context may have contributed to the progress of English language development in these participants, leading consequently to L1 loss.

Another possible explanation is that the years of schooling in an English-speaking context are significant for an individual's improvement in English language proficiency, which suggests that when L2 proficiency increases, L1 use may decrease. However, English language development was not a variable measured in this study. In the case of the high school research participants, the participant from Brazil, P2, was the one with the highest frequency of language switching. This may be due to his academic

proficiency in Portuguese and to his lack of linguistic and writing competence in English. In addition, P2's English language proficiency seemed to be developing, which may be a reason why he had to rely on his L1.

The other participants, P6, P7, and P9, were second-generation students who learned most of their Spanish at school, with the exception of P6, whose family spoke Spanish and made it possible for her to learn the language representative of her culture and identity. As she explains in the focus group,

My Mom, when I was like the age of 5, I mostly spoke English until my grandma started to get upset because we are Mexican and I don't know any Spanish. So, there is when she started teaching it to me. All the babysitters I had only spoke Spanish so there was that language barrier so I had to show them what I needed or they had to talk like show me what they wanted from me, and things like that. But I don't know, like after I got the hang of it, it got a lot easier. If I hear Spanish words compared to reading them, I'll get them. I know that sometimes I'm reading and I'm, like, I don't know what that word is and someone will read it out loud to me, and I'll say, "Oh, I know what that word means. Never mind!" So, I think it's hard for me because my family mainly speaks English compared to, like, my Dad's side, where they speak so much of Spanish. So, there are times when I think I should hang out more over there with them so I can get the hang of my Spanish, and then, you know, come back and speak English.

I expected the first-generation participants to be more proficient in their L1 than in English. However, that was not the case. Once more, I did not consider the fact that I

was recruiting these participants in an English-speaking country. Even if the participant's family had been living in the U.S. for one generation, the years they have been living in the U.S. is what may be indicative of their English-language proficiency. Therefore, language switching in writing for these participants is less likely to occur. In the case of the participants whose relatives had been living for two generations in the U.S., first language loss is evident. Thus, language switching in academic writing is inexistent.

4.3.3 Learning Context and Language Switching

Considering that the eight Latino participants were learning English in an English-speaking country, I decided to briefly discuss how the learning context might be related to language switching. Although the selected sample representing Latino students in the U.S. was small, it was a very diverse group, with differing English proficiency levels from various cultural backgrounds. However, as heterogeneous as this group may be, a similarity among them was the fact that they were all immersed in an English-speaking environment. Even the participants with less than a year in the U.S. have good English language skills, although at a lower level than those who have been in the U.S. for more than nine years. Findings of this research suggest that the more years a Latino spends in an English-speaking country such as the U.S., the less they need to rely on Spanish, unless they live in a community where others were Spanish-speakers as well. My assumptions and expectations regarding language-switching were not entirely fulfilled because of the learning context in Alaska, where the Latino community is still increasing but is dispersed.

Despite the fact that English proficiency may be a determinant factor for switching languages while writing, data from the high school participants suggest that the learning context is a significant variable to consider when researching language switching. The learning context in which use of an L2 takes place contributes to the rate of the L2 learning, which makes me realize that in order to measure language switching with Latinos in the U.S., I needed to consider recent immigrants, perhaps with less than one or two months of living in the U.S.

I also must point out that for individuals (school-age children) learning English in the U.S., language acquisition is expected to happen at a faster rate than for an individual learning English in Brazil or Mexico, where the dominant language is not English. Additional research is needed to better understand the relationship of language switching and the importance of the learning context in acquiring English as a second language when the dominant language in the country is not English, as in Mexico and Brazil, for example.

4.4 Focus Group Data

The first step in analyzing focus group data was to review the main objective of this research study and the purpose of the focus group itself (Krueger, 1988), which was to learn about the participants' perceptions regarding first language (Spanish) use on English academic writing. I transcribed data systematically for group sessions #1 and #2

by going back several times while listening to the tapes and reviewing notes of additional comments. Focus group transcripts were organized by following the order of the guiding questions and by identifying the responses with the participants' assigned codes.

I began the analysis of transcripts by reading the responses to the ten guiding questions (see Appendix B) of the focus group for all 8 participants. Then, I selected questions #1, #4, #5, #6, #7, and #9 as the most relevant for understanding the perceptions of the participants regarding first language use in English writing. While reading the responses to the questions selected, I looked for patterns that repeated themselves among the participants and highlighted comments that were worthy of direct quotation (Krueger, 1988). I re-listened to the tapes to verify the accuracy of the transcripts, emphasis and intensity of words, tone, and internal consistency of comments (Krueger, 1988).

After working on several versions of a coding system, I developed the coding scheme detailed in Table 13. The emphasis of the coding scheme was on "identifying units of analysis and classifying each unit according to the categories in [the] coding system" (Grant-Davie, 1992, p. 272) as a way to organize raw data for further interpretation. The coding scheme I developed was adapted from Brice's (2005) coding scheme of interview transcripts.

Table 13

Coding Scheme for Focus Group Transcript Data

Categories and Codes	
Write in English (WE)	Reported English as the language used for writing.
Write in Spanish (WS)	Explained when and why would rely in Spanish for English writing.
Think in Spanish (TS)	Reported thinking in Spanish while writing in English.
Factors related to L-S (F)	Reported reasons for using L1 while writing in English.
Benefits of L-S (B)	Explained that writing in L1 may have advantages when writing in English.
Constraints of L-S (C)	Perceived use of L1 for English writing as a disadvantage.
Subcategories	
Task Difficulty (TD)	Considered a difficult task will influence use of Spanish for writing.
Topic Knowledge (+/-TK)	Reported knowledge of topic was/was not important when relying on Spanish for English writing.
Mental Translation (MT)	Reported mental translation from Spanish into English while writing in English.
Content Translation (CT)	Reported writing in L1 for later content translation into English.
Linguistic Constraint (LC)	Reported that sometimes lack of vocabulary knowledge or spelling were a constraint when writing in English.
Writing Instructions(WI)	Expressed that instructions (e.g., time limit, language of the writing task) were important elements when deciding which language to use for writing.

The coding scheme detailed in Table 13 assisted in organizing the focus group data into the following categories: language used by the participants for academic writing and for planning content, factors related to language switching, benefits of language switching, and constraints associated with language switching as perceived by the participants. In addition, I developed subcategories that assisted in identifying factors associated with language switching, including task difficulty, topic knowledge, mental translation, content translation, linguistic constraints, and writing instructions, which were often mentioned by the participants.

4.4.1 Language Use and Writing

The majority of the participants reported English as their first language. However, some of them mentioned that they would use Spanish when talking to their family. For instance, P1 mentioned that he would use “a little Spanish when talking to grandparents and godparents,” while P5 said “when I talk with my family and, like, my close relatives, I talk to them in Spanish.”

English was often mentioned as the most comfortable language for writing. However, the participants who reported other native languages than English stated a preference for writing in their L1. This was the case of P2, who said he feels most comfortable writing in Portuguese. P3 reported Spanish, and P4 mentioned that she was comfortable writing in both English and Spanish.

English was the language reported by the majority of the participants for planning the content of an academic task in English and for taking notes. Participants who reported

that they might rely on their L1 for planning the content of an academic task in English would do so if they were given enough time so they could translate the content, if the writing topic was difficult, or if topic knowledge was acquired in the L1.

For P2, whose L1 was Portuguese, deciding what language to use for writing depended on the instructions for the writing task. Specifically, P2 said, “If somebody says that I need to write like in five minutes, of course I’ll write in English, but if they say you have time, I write in Portuguese first to get some ideas.” For two other participants (P1 and P5), using Spanish for planning the content of an academic English task might be a matter of task difficulty. They said that if they got “a really hard topic,” they would plan the content in Spanish and translate it into English.

For the participant (P4) who reported to have formal education in Spanish-speaking countries, planning content in Spanish was normal. She said, “When I take up notes, I always write them in Spanish.” Moreover, she would take notes in Spanish if the knowledge of the writing topic was acquired in Spanish because “when I do tasks, um, like I have this wild idea that I learned it in Spanish” and that is how she recalls the information, in Spanish.

Although the majority of the participants understood and spoke Spanish very well, their writing skills in Spanish were not at the same proficiency level as their English skills. Therefore, these participants would not rely on Spanish for English writing because their English proficiency makes it easier for them to write in English rather than in Spanish. Perhaps these participants (P6, P7, and P9) could be considered Spanish second language learners instead of English second language learners. For example, P6

said “I speak Spanish in my household, but I wouldn’t write in Spanish because I was raised in English and it’s a lot easier for me.” Moreover, P6 mentioned that writing in Spanish would take her more time than it would in English because, as she said, “My Spanish isn’t as good in writing” and “It probably looks like a little kiddish compared to people who are more fluent in it.” On the other hand, P7 said,

I personally do everything in English. I’m very English-dependent. I’m not exactly fluent in Spanish, enough, like, to write Spanish notes and then read it, because I feel I don’t know. I may be able to speak Spanish better than I can write it at this point. I’m working on that, but at this point, I do everything in English.

Most of the Spanish that the participants knew was learned in a Spanish class at school or at home, but they did not speak it very often with family. These participants (P6, P7, and P9) reported the use of Spanish only for writing that was related to the tasks of the Spanish class at school or for personal reasons. P6 said about her use of Spanish for writing outside the classroom,

If I have to write a letter to my grandmother, because even though she speaks English, it’s like a custom. You have to. Like, I don’t know if it is like showing respect that you speak to them in Spanish. You know because it’s their first language.

Some of the participants had developed English proficiency since they moved to U.S. and, as they reported, their use of Spanish had decreased with time. P3 believed that, although his native language was Spanish, he had to write in English if he wanted to become more proficient in the language. He said that he never wrote in Spanish here in

Alaska and would write in English “to continue practicing the language.” However, he reported that “Like, at the beginning when I start here in Alaska, I used to think a lot in Spanish but with the time” the use of English became normal. For this participant, it seemed that while English language development increased, L1 use decreased. English proficiency also seemed to be important for P4, who stated that taking notes in Spanish may help “those who aren’t so good with their English” because they can write in Spanish and later ask a teacher for help by explaining what they had in mind. Since P4 began learning English at a very young age, she may be reflecting on the strategies she used for learning ESL, and may recommend them to other students.

4.4.2 Language Switching and English Writing

Various reasons may be related to the non-instructed use of a first language (language switching) while writing in English as a second language. Some participants reported that they translate mentally from Spanish into English while writing in English, although they mentioned different reasons for thinking in the L1. For P5, thinking in Spanish may facilitate generating ideas about a topic. As she said, “I think about it in Spanish first and then I translate my ideas to English because it’s easier for me.” For P3, thinking in Spanish sometimes helped him to decide what to write, but only if the task was very difficult. For P4, who grew up in a Spanish-speaking society, thinking in both languages, English and Spanish, seemed normal, but she said “I think I defend myself more in Spanish than in English.” She also reported,

Um, I actually take notes in Spanish all the time, and um, well, when I think, I think in both languages, English and Spanish. Because sometimes, like I said, I don't remember a word and I will just mentally talk English and Spanish and kind of, like, mix the whole thing up.

As shown in Table 14, participants' comments indicated that reasons such as task difficulty, writing instructions, topic knowledge, and linguistic constraints might have an influence on their decision of which language to use.

Table 14

Factors that may Contribute to L-S in English Writing

Factors	Participants' Comments
TD	(P1) "I rely on Spanish most of the time if I have a hard topic." (P2) "If the task is really hard, really important, I will say I will write in Portuguese and then translate it to English, or both ways. You know like when you are trying to do it, . . . like try in English first, and if I don't do good, try in Portuguese and translate it to English."
WI	(P3) "If I am using, like if, uh, if the task says write in Spanish, then I use Spanish, if it says use English, then I use English."
TK	(P1) "If I had a topic that talks about anything in Spanish or about one's country, I was most likely to write in Spanish." (P5) "If the topic was something about people or Spanish and stuff, . . . I definitely would rely more in Spanish because I know more about this."
LC	(P4) "There's a moment that you can't find a word. For example, I'm Spanglish. When I don't know an English word, I come up with it in Spanish, and when I don't know a word in Spanish, I come up with it in English. I know that's wrong, but anyway."

Relying on the L1 for English writing represented more benefits than constraints for some of the high school participants. Among the benefits of thinking in the L1, one that was often mentioned was that ideas and examples flow better in the L1, which might help in producing more text. Time was often mentioned as an important factor for relying on the L1 because participants would need enough time for later content translation. For instance, P5 mentioned that she would have written more if she “had an example of Spanish on the side,” so she could translate it, although she admitted that it would take her longer. P5 also said that thinking in Spanish “gives you more ideas and more examples.” For P1, writing in Spanish was an advantage “because I can do it faster most of the time.” For P2, who mentioned that he preferred to write in Portuguese and translate it to English, thinking in the L1 would help him to “get some more ideas,” although he recognized that “. . . it takes a little bit longer to translate to English, but for me that’s fine.” It may be a matter of the time given to accomplish the writing task.

Not many constraints were reported for L1 use in English writing. However, for P3, writing in Spanish for later content translation was not convenient. For this participant, relying on Spanish might be a constraint rather than a benefit. As he said, “I don’t write in Spanish first and then in English, because that’s double work if I do that.”

I expected language switching to be perceived as a useful strategy among the eight Latino participants when writing in English as a second language. Although the majority of the high school participants did not consider L1 use as a constraint, the fact was that it did not seem relevant to most of them. The main reason is that most of the

participants were fluent English learners and relying on their first language was probably not a strategy they could consider to improve their writing.

4.5 Summary

Focus group data reported in this chapter came from a very diverse group of participants from various Latino subgroups, with differing educational and cultural backgrounds. However, contrary to what I expected, not all participants were native Spanish speakers. Therefore, the “diversity of perceptions” (Krueger, 1988) from the participants regarding first language use (Spanish) on English writing did not reflect all the participants’ views due to their lack of knowledge of academic Spanish.

Since most of the participants reported English as their first language, they had no need to rely on another language for English writing. The questions related to Spanish use for English writing were not relevant for some of the participants. Therefore, for a participant to be able to rely on his or her L1, the writing competence and skills in that first language may be significant in deciding what language to use. This implies that if an individual is not proficient enough in a first language, then why should he or she fall back to the L1? Instead, if proficiency in the L2 is higher than that of the L1, the dominant language is the one to be used for writing.

Of the eight participants, P1, P2, P3, P4, and P5 could be considered English second language learners. In the case of P2, whose L1 was Portuguese, English and Spanish both were foreign languages. These five participants were the ones who most of the time reported thinking or writing in their first language while writing in English. The

other three participants, P6, P7, and P9, reported that writing in English was easier for them and that for writing in Spanish they might need a dictionary and it would take them longer because of their lack of Spanish-writing proficiency.

Language switching in the writing of the eight Latino participants did not happen as I expected, either. An explanation may be that regardless of their English proficiency level, I did not consider the fact that they were learning English in the U.S., which contributes to their fast English language development. Therefore, an individual who learns English in an English-speaking environment will be constantly exposed to the language and is less likely to rely on his first language.

The next chapter discusses data from a selected sample of college-level participants for whom Spanish was the native language and English was a second language. The main objective of chapter 5 is to describe the relationship of language switching and English proficiency of native Spanish speakers learning English as a second language in their country of origin, Puerto Rico.

Chapter 5: Results of College-Level Data

This chapter presents results of data obtained from a questionnaire, a writing sample, and a focus group with a group of twenty-three college-level participants learning English as a second language in Puerto Rico. The main objective of this chapter is to discuss the frequency with which language switching occurred at the lexical level in English compositions of Puerto Rican college-level students with differing English proficiency levels.

This group of college-level participants shared some similarities. Specifically, the majority (96%) of college-level participants were born and raised in Puerto Rico and, for all of them, Spanish was their dominant language. Most of the participants learned English as a second language in formal courses at school as English is a content area in the public schools from K through 12. In addition, most (78%) of the college-level participants began their sequence of English courses at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez (UPR-M), with a pre-basic English course because of their low proficiency in English at the time of college enrollment.

Some of the differences among the 23 participants were related to their gender, age, hometown, year of study at the university, and area of study. There were 13 females and 10 males. Most of the participants (52%) were students who had completed their first year of study at UPR-M, while 28% reported to be in their third or fourth year; 20% were in their fifth or sixth year. The participants were majoring in areas such as Natural Sciences, Engineering, Agriculture, Social Sciences, and Business Administration.

Participants were from the North, South, and West of Puerto Rico, with a few of them from the Southeast and Interior. The university where college-level participants were recruited is located on the West coast of Puerto Rico.

5.1 Questionnaire

The purpose of the questionnaire (Appendix I) was to gather information about the educational and language background of the research participants. Specifically, the questionnaire was designed to help me understand better the context in which participants learned English, their academic performance in English courses, and their self-evaluation of English proficiency and English language skills.

Results are reported for all the 23 participants who responded to the sixteen questions of the self-administered questionnaire designed for this study. In this chapter, questionnaire data are discussed in the order in which the items were organized in the instrument, except for question number seven, which is discussed along with question number four because of their similarity. Results are reported in terms of frequency of responses per question; percentages are calculated by dividing the frequency of responses by the total of possible responses per question.

For the first question, “What language do you consider to be your first language?” all 23 participants reported Spanish. In question number two, most of the participants self-identified as Puerto Rican, as shown in Table 15. Others stated preference for the term “Latino” or “Hispano American.” For instance, P11 was one of the participants who self-identified as a Latino since she is from Colombia. Other participants (P10, P15, and

P28) who self-identified as Latino or Hispano American, reported to have family in the U.S. or to have spent some time in the U.S.

Table 15

Participants' Self-Identification of Ethnicity

Ethnic Group	<i>f</i>	%
Puerto Rican	19	83
Latino	2	9
Puerto Rican and Latino	1	4
Puerto Rican and Hispano American	1	4
Total	23	100

Question number three asked about studying English in a country where only English is spoken. Only one participant (P26) reported to have had such an opportunity, while 96% have not. However, in question number four, 74% of the participants reported that they have traveled to English-speaking countries in places such as Boston, Miami, Connecticut, Canada, Florida, Texas, Orlando, Alaska, Seattle, California, and New York; the time spent in those places ranged from one week to three years. The remaining participants (26%) have not traveled to places where English is the dominant language. Results for question number seven about the participants' opportunity for

attending school in the U.S. or outside Puerto Rico indicated that 96% of the participants have not attended school in the U.S. or outside P.R.; P26 studied in Massachusetts for 2 years.

In question number five, most of the participants reported that their English knowledge came from formal courses at school, while a few of them indicated they have learned it at home or at work, as detailed in Table 16. However, I did not ask the participants to specify activities that encouraged the learning of English at home, nor did I define the concept of “learning at home.” Therefore, it may have been that the participants’ parents or family spoke English at home or that the participants had access to cable TV in English.

Table 16

Participants’ Learning of English

Reply	<i>f</i>	%
In formal courses	18	78
At home	1	4.5
At home and formal courses	3	13
At home, formal courses, and at work	1	4.5
Total	23	100

In question number six, the majority of the participants (78%) reported to use the Spanish language when talking to family or friends; 22% indicated that, besides using Spanish, they also speak in English to brothers, sisters, roommates, friends, or to their parents. Some of the participants (P15, P28, and P31) who previously reported learning English at home also reported use of English with family or friends.

Question number eight asked about the place where participants attended high school. The majority of the participants (96%) attended high school in Puerto Rico. The education for 70% of the participants came from the public school system, while 26% attended private schools. The participant (P11) from Colombia did not attend high school in Puerto Rico. Among the 26% who attended private school, some (P14, P20, P23, and P24) were in a bilingual school, while others (P16 and P17) attended a Spanish-only private school.

Question number nine asked participants to self-evaluate their English proficiency. As Table 17 shows, no one reported being an advanced English learner; participants considered themselves to be at the beginning or intermediate level. Participants' self-evaluation reflects their own understanding of the various proficiency levels since I did not provide a definition for the concepts.

Table 17

Participants' Self-Evaluation of English Proficiency

Proficiency Level	<i>f</i>	%
Beginner	12	52
Intermediate	11	48
Advanced	-	-
Total	23	100

Question number ten gathered data on the participants' self-evaluation of English language and Spanish language skills in terms of excellent, very good, good, limited or extremely limited. Data for each language are presented separately as they detail the participants' ability in writing, reading, speaking, and understanding of English and Spanish. Table 18 shows the frequency of responses and percentages of self-evaluation of English language skills for all 23 participants. Overall, 70% of the college-level participants reported that they were able to understand and read English at a level of excellent, very good, or good. Fifty-two percent of the participants reported that their writing in English was limited or extremely limited, while 61% of the participants reported they were limited or extremely limited in speaking English.

Table 18

Participants' Self-Evaluation of English Language Skills

Skills	Excellent		Very Good		Good		Limited		Extremely Limited		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Writing	-	-	1	4	10	43.5	10	43.5	2	9	23	100
Speaking	-	-	2	9	7	30	10	43.5	4	17.5	23	100
Under- standing	2	9	3	13	11	48	6	26	1	4	23	100
Reading	1	4	5	22	10	44	6	26	1	4	23	100
Total	3		11		38		32		8		92	

Table 19 reports on the frequency of responses and percentages of the participants' self-evaluation of their Spanish language skills. The majority of the participants reported that their speaking, reading, understanding, and writing skills in Spanish were excellent, very good, or good. None of the participants considered their Spanish language skills to be limited or extremely limited. Therefore, the academic proficiency in Spanish is expected to be high for most of the college-level participants since their primary, intermediate, and high school education has been in Spanish.

Table 19

Participants' Self-Evaluation of Spanish Language Skills

Skills	Excellent		Very Good		Good		Limited		Extremely Limited		Total	
	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%	<i>f</i>	%
Writing	7	30	11	48	5	22	-	-	-	-	23	100
Speaking	16	70	6	26	1	4	-	-	-	-	23	100
Under- standing	21	91	2	9	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	100
Reading	18	78	5	22	-	-	-	-	-	-	23	100
Total	62		24		6						92	

For question number eleven, college-level participants reported different reasons that may impede them from their continuing college education, although financial support seemed to be one of the most important. Table 20 details the frequency and percentages for the responses as reported by the participants. Three participants (P11, P12, and P27) did not provide a response to this question. P17 reported that not being fluent in English is a limitation for continuing a masters' degree, while P20 reported personal problems might be a barrier for completion of a degree. On the other hand, P21 reported that having low self-esteem or no interest in studying are determinant factors for not continuing college education.

Table 20

Barriers for Continuing College Education

Reply	<i>f</i>	%
Financial support	13	56.6
Family support	3	13
Financial and family support	1	4.3
Others:		
Not fluent in English	1	4.3
Personal problems	1	4.4
Low self-esteem and no interest in studying	1	4.4
None	3	13
Total	23	100

In question number twelve, most of the participants reported scholarships as one of the main sources of support for college tuition. Some participants reported other tuition sources such as student loans, self-support, exemption through parents who work in the UPR system, or family support. Table 21 details the main sources for tuition as reported by the college-level participants.

Table 21

Main Sources of Tuition among College Level Participants

Reply	<i>f</i>	%
Scholarships	15	65
Self-support	2	9
Family support	5	22
Other: Exemption	1	4
Total	23	100

As an indicator of the participants' academic progress at college, question thirteen asked about Grade Point Average (GPA). Table 22 shows the frequency of responses and percentages for the participants' GPA represented by letter grades. Eighty-three percent reported a GPA between 2.50 C and 3.49 B.

Table 22

College-Level Participants' GPA

GPA	<i>f</i>	%
4.00 - 3.50 A	2	9
3.49 - 3.00 B	9	39
2.99 - 2.50 C	10	44
2.49 - 2.00 D	1	4
1.99 - F	1	4
Total	23	100

In order to have a better understanding of the participants' academic performance in previous English classes, question fourteen asked about the grade obtained in English 3101. As evaluated with letter grades, 79% of the participants obtained B or C, with few of them reporting A or D, as Table 23 illustrates.

Table 23

Grades Obtained in a Previous English Course

Grade	<i>f</i>	%
A	4	17
B	8	35
C	10	44
D	1	4
F	-	-
Total	23	100

Since the college-level participants were taking INGL 3102 during the summer, it was important to learn if they had taken the course more than once. In response to question number fifteen, 26% of the participants reported that they had taken INGL 3102 more than once, while 74% indicated it was the first time they were enrolled in the English course. The majority of the participants (78%) reported in question number

sixteen that they started their English courses with a pre-basic course (INGL 066) during their first year of college enrollment at UPR-Mayagüez, while 22% began with a basic English course (INGL 3101).

5.2 Writing Sample Data

The purpose of collecting writing samples from college-level participants was to examine the frequency and patterns of language switching while composing in English as a second language. Data from the questionnaire (see Appendix I) for this study and from the focus group (see Appendix J) were considered when analyzing the writing samples. Question #6 from the focus group provided information about the techniques used by the participants during the composing process; question #8 elicited the participants' perceptions regarding the difficulty level of academic writing in Spanish and in English.

5.2.1 Participants' English Proficiency Level

The English language proficiency of 78% of the college-level participants was below the required proficiency level at the time of college enrollment at UPR-Mayagüez, placing them in a remedial English course. Since the participants passed the remedial English course and the English course required before INGL 3102 (the English course in which data for this study was collected), it is expected for the participants to have improved their English language proficiency.

However, since factors such as social distance,⁶ age differences, aptitude, motivation and attitude toward learning English in Puerto Rico, anxiety, learning styles, and learning strategies, among others, “account for differential success in learning a second language” (Gass & Selinker, 1994, p. 250), I did not assume that the college-level participants in this study were at the same English proficiency level. Instead of having the participants lumped into a group as beginners, intermediate, or advanced English learners, I decided to classify the participants according to their self-evaluation of English proficiency.

For the purposes of this research, English proficiency is a means for understanding second language writing and language switching among the participants, but not the only variable for interpretation of data. Therefore, when analyzing writing samples, I considered the participants’ self-evaluation of writing skills in English and Spanish, as well as the learning context in which they acquired English and the time they have spent in an English-speaking country.

According to the participants’ self-evaluation, twelve reported to be beginning English learners and eleven considered their English proficiency to be at the intermediate level, as Table 24 illustrates. I divided the twenty-three participants into two groups for purposes of data analysis and reporting results.

⁶ This refers to the “affinity” that a second language learner may or may not feel with the “target language community” Which “create both a psychological distance and social distance from speakers of the second language community” (Gass & Selinker, 1994, p. 236).

Table 24

Classification of Participants by English Proficiency Level

Proficiency Level	Participant
Beginner (N =12)	11, 16, 17, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 27, 29, 30, 32
Intermediate (N= 11)	10, 12, 13, 14, 15, 18, 21, 23, 26, 28, 31

5.2.2 Procedure for Analysis of Writing Sample Data

In order to analyze writing samples for frequency and patterns of language switching by English proficiency level, I began reading the notes and rough draft written by each one of the participants at the beginning and intermediate level as separate groups. While reading each participant's notes and rough drafts, I highlighted words that were written in Spanish. In a second reading of the data, I circled words that were translated literally from Spanish, words that were false cognates, and grammar errors.

Grammar errors were coded (i.e., vt = verb tense, sp = spelling, wc = word choice, ss = sentence structure) by following Ferris's (2002) recommendation for identifying and treating errors of second language writers. The main objective of identifying errors was to examine first-language influence in the writing of the participants at different English proficiency levels. Conducting an error analysis with the writing sample data was out of the scope of this research study. Therefore, I briefly discuss errors as they are related to first language influence on second language writing.

All words written in Spanish in the participants' notes and rough drafts were coded as content words (i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs) or function words (i.e.,

conjunctions, prepositions, articles, or pronouns [Fromkin & Rodman, 1998]).

Participants' notes in this research refer to the writing where participants planned the content and generated ideas about the writing topic, as it was part of the instructions for the writing sample. Participants' rough drafts in this research refers to the writing where participants organized ideas in paragraph format. However, some participants did generate ideas in paragraph format and revised content by re-writing it in another paper in paragraph format as well.

5.2.3 L1 Influences on the Writing of Beginning ESL Learners

The participants at the beginning level shared some similarities in terms of their educational and linguistic background. Most of the participants reported that their writing skills in English were limited or extremely limited, except P22 and P25, who considered their writing skills in English were good. None of the participants reported to have formal education in the United States or any other English-speaking country, but the majority of the participants have traveled to places where English is spoken. All of the participants at the beginning level learned English in formal courses.

All the participants at the beginning level reported to have good writing skills in Spanish. Spanish is the only language used by these participants when talking to family and friends. Most of the participants have attended public schools in Puerto Rico, except P16 and P17, who were in a Spanish-only private school. P20 and P24 attended a bilingual private school. The majority (75%) of the participants at the beginning level were females, while 25% were males. Most (58%) of the participants at the beginning

level were in their third, fourth, fifth, or sixth year of study at UPR-Mayagüez, while 42% were in their second year.

As previously stated, I identified every word written in Spanish in the participants' notes or rough draft as language switching (relying on Spanish while writing on English). Of the 12 participants classified at the beginning level group, only five participants (P11, P16, P17, P24, and P32) relied on Spanish while developing the writing topic for this research. P32 was the only participant at the beginning level who wrote an entire draft in Spanish and then translated it into English by using a dictionary. The frequency of Spanish use at the lexical level by the other four participants varied from one to three words. Since the frequency of language switching at the lexical level for the participants at the beginning level was lower than I expected, I analyzed the writing of the remaining participants in terms of first-language influence, as it was evident with literal translations and use of false cognates⁷.

P32, a female in the fifth year of study, reported in the focus group that it is difficult for her to write directly in English and the only way she can develop a topic is by writing it in Spanish. Since P32 prefers to write in Spanish, she finds a way to translate the content by using a dictionary or a translator from the Internet, as she reported in the focus group. However, she considers the use of Spanish for an academic task in English to be a disadvantage because the word order is different and meaning changes in the translation.

⁷“False cognates are words that are similar in two languages, in this case English and Spanish, often deriving from a common origin, (most commonly Greek and Roman) and having followed a different evolutionary path through the years, thus acquiring divergent meanings” (Hamel's, 1998, p. 9).

The Spanish version of P32's writing was organized in paragraph format, and consisted of 98 words, of which 45 were content words (i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, adverbs) and 53 were function words (i.e., pronouns, conjunctions, articles, prepositions). The Spanish version had a few misspelled words, mainly with the use of the letter "s" instead of the letter "c" in words such as desidiera (decidiera), serca (cerca), and conoser (conocer). The English version was 83 words long and consisted of one paragraph.

P32 translated most of the content word-for-word from Spanish into English, except two sentences from the Spanish version that were not included in the translation. When translating content from Spanish into English, P32 did not consider the sentence structure of English writing, leaving the same word order she had in Spanish, as is evident in the excerpt below (the words in bold face represent the English translation for the preceding word in Spanish as written by P32):

Si yes yo **I am** desidiera **to take** mudarme **to move** de mi país natal **my land natal** que **what** es **is** Puerto Rico **Puerto Rico**, como **how** quiera **ever** le enseñaría **to teach** a mis **my** hijos **childrens** a otras personas mis **my** costumbres **custom** y **and** tradiciones **traditional**. De no **Do not** mudarme **to move** fuera de **the** Puerto Rico **Puerto Rico** me gustaría **I like** vivir **the city** serca **and to nearness** de **the** mis **my** familiares **family**.

Evident from the ideas developed by P32 in Spanish and into the English version, translating every word by using a dictionary instead of focusing on meaning and usage of vocabulary in context affects sentence structure and meaning of message. The message that P32 intended to convey in the excerpt above is:

If I decided to move from my home country Puerto Rico, I would teach my kids and other people about my customs and traditions. If I decide not to move from Puerto Rico, I would like to live close to my family.

Perhaps, for P32, relying on Spanish facilitated generating ideas about the writing topic without much difficulty, but since she translated the content into English by looking up almost every word in a dictionary, the text in English was more a transliteration than a translation of content in Spanish, and consequently ended up being ungrammatical, lacking coherence and cohesion. Although P32 relied heavily on a dictionary for writing in English, words such as “practic and nesenary” were misspelled. However, since P32 sometimes confuse the “s” and the “c” in Spanish writing, she may have transferred that problem into English writing.

In the case of P32, lack of English language proficiency may have accounted for relying on Spanish to develop the writing topic for this research because her English writing was possible only with a dictionary. Moreover, sentence structure in English and lack of coherence in the English version indicates that P32 is at a very low proficiency level in English. However, she reported in the questionnaire for this study that she understands English very well, but is limited in writing, speaking, and reading English. Perhaps P32 has good listening and comprehension skills, but has difficulty producing text in English because of her lack of linguistic competence.

Another participant who switched to Spanish when writing in English was P11, a female in the fourth year of study, who is a native of Colombia and has been living in

Puerto Rico for five years. In the focus group, she said that if she thinks in English it helps in the development of ideas for writing directly in English. She reported that she does not use Spanish for academic tasks in English because translation is difficult. However, she also reported that sometimes she thinks in Spanish and mentally translates ideas into English. P11 planned the content of the writing topic in paragraph format with few spelling errors, run-on sentences, or grammar errors.

In the draft written by P11, the proper name “España” was translated into English as pronounced by a Spanish speaker, “Espain,” instead of “Spain.” Similarly, the adjective “espectacular” was translated as if it were written in Spanish, as is evident in the sentence “... and I love PR the most something that I have in this moments is thanks to Puertoricans people, but I miss my beautifull country, the food is espectacular, the beach and the hotel are espectacular.” However, even though “espectacular” is a Spanish word, it appears that P11 translated it as “espectacular” too, but it may not be wrong because the difference between the Spanish word and the English translation lies in adding or deleting “e” at the beginning of the word. Perhaps P11 knew how to pronounce “Spain” and “spectacular” but was not sure how to spell the words in English.

A possible explanation for the case of P11 is that the spelling of “Espain” and “espectacular” reflects a kind of American English dialect spoken by native Spanish speakers described by Fromkin and Rodman (1998, p. 418). Specifically, Fromkin and Rodman stated that, since there is not a “homogeneous Latino dialect,” the differences in the dialect spoken by Puerto Ricans, Colombians, Cubans, and Mexican Americans

including Chicanos, among others, might influence their learning of English, as is the case with Chicano English (p. 418).

The words “Espain” and “espectacular” written by P11 seemed to be examples of what Fromkin and Rodman identified as a variation in the phonological system of Chicano English and Standard American English. This refers to the way a Spanish speaker pronounces a word in English and how that pronunciation is influenced by Spanish. For instance, some Spanish speakers may say “Espain” with an “e” preceding the “s” instead of “Spain;” similarly instead of saying “spectacular,” a Spanish speaker is more likely to say “espectacular.” Therefore, in the spelling of the English words, the Spanish speaker may add the “e” as it is done in the pronunciation. This may be because “The Spanish sequential constraint, which does not permit a word to begin with a /s/ cluster, is sometimes carried over” as in the case of Latino English or Chicano English (Fromkin & Rodman, p. 420).

Moreover, in the Spanish language, there is no word that begins with a combination of “s” and another consonant, as in the case of English words such as “spicy,” “stove,” or “scar.” In Spanish, words that have the “sc,” “st,” or “sp” combination are usually preceded by a vowel. For example the words “escoba,” “estufa,” and “espanto” have the combination of “s” and another consonant but are preceded by the “e.” Therefore, this may be a reason why Latinos spell English words that begin with “s” as “es.”

In the case of P11, it seems that her language switching has been influenced by her native Spanish. Instead of considering the words “Espain” and “espectacular” as

being misspelled, these may represent an English dialect as spoken by a native Spanish speaker and to some extent related to the learning context in which English was learned as a second language. However, the relationship of differences in spoken languages among Latinos and its connection to writing in English as a second language is an area for research in itself; this can be addressed by considering the “situational and social differences between writing and speech” (Reid, 1993, p. 67).

Another participant who relied on Spanish was P16, a female in the fourth year of study. She was one of the few students who provided additional comments when completing the questionnaire for this research. Regarding her experience of learning English in Puerto Rico, she said that the academic formation of high school teachers should be similar to a university professor, who is required to have a masters or doctoral degree. As P16 reflected on her experience of English learning at high school, she considered it limited and felt she did not have a good foundation in the English language from high school.

With respect to the writing sample, P16 began organizing ideas about the writing topic in the form of an outline titled “storming,” perhaps referring to “brainstorming,” although “storming” does not carry the meaning of developing ideas. The word “storming” may be a literal translation from Spanish since P16 explained in the focus group that for writing in English, she does “una tormenta de ideas.” The English word for “tormenta” is “storm.” Therefore, it seems that P16 made up the word by adding the -ing form to her literal translation.

P16 mentioned in the focus group that most of the time she relies on Spanish for academic tasks in English and then translates the content into English. However, she said that sometimes she can write in English, “but since ideas come in Spanish it is better to write them in Spanish.” In her rough draft, she wrote the noun “bachillerato” in parentheses after the word “major,” as is evident in the sentence, “If you don’t major (bachillerato) you don’t pay good for your work.” Instead, P16 should have written “If you don’t have a bachelor’s degree . . .,” but since she did not know the right word at that moment, writing it in Spanish seemed to facilitate development of the idea for later translation. As she reported in the focus group, if she does not know a word in English, writing it in Spanish is helpful in finding the correct spelling later; and that is exactly what she did in the writing sample.

The writing of P16 had few spelling errors. She seemed to confuse the use of the modal auxiliary “would,” as, it was evident every time she wrote “I want like move . . .” instead of “I would like to move.” She also seemed to be translating word-for-word from Spanish, although she did not have a Spanish version written on the side. An excerpt from her rough draft is

I want help other person that not speak Spanish. I like my major and I know that not write and speak Spanish fine. This is the problem because I don’t write and speak English fine. I feel frustrate.

P16 translated word-for-word without considering the meaning in context when writing in English. The word order of the excerpt above is equivalent to the word order in

Spanish, which means that P16 was probably thinking in Spanish while writing in English. The excerpt in English translates into Spanish as

Yo quiero ayudar a otra persona que no hable Español. A mi me gusta mi concentración y se que no escribo y hablo Español bien. Este es el problema porque yo no escribo y hablo Inglés bien. Me siento frustrada.

If P16 would have translated ideas instead of word-for-word from Spanish, the sentence structure, grammar, and meaning in English would have been different. An appropriate English version, considering the message that P16 was trying to convey in her writing, is

I want to help other people who do not speak Spanish very well. I like what I am studying and I know how it feels when you do not know how to write or speak in a second language. That is my problem in English. I do not know how to write or speak it very well and I feel frustrated.

Since P16 reported in the focus group that she thinks in Spanish and mentally translates into English, her native language seemed to influence the writing in English, as was evident from literal translations. This implies that, for P16, thinking in Spanish worked as a constraint in terms of coherence and cohesion of her English writing. In addition, her lack of linguistic and composing competence in English may have been a factor that contributed to her thinking and writing in Spanish because she reported to be limited in reading, understanding, speaking, and writing in English.

Another participant who wrote a word in Spanish was P17, a male in the third year of study who reported to be repeating the English course in which these data were

collected. He reported in the focus group that he usually writes in Spanish for academic tasks in English and asks for help when he finds it difficult. He also said that since the writing sample was a part of the English course, he had to write in English because it was to be graded. P17 seemed to be aware of using Spanish for writing in English because he reported that he relies on his first language if he does not know the words in English, but does not do it very often. However, he reported that writing in Spanish for academic tasks in English is not an advantage because sometimes he cannot translate the ideas from Spanish and has to change what he wanted to say.

P17 began planning the content of the writing exercise by listing various reasons for staying or moving out from Puerto Rico. While planning the content of the writing exercise, he wrote the phrase “peleas de gallos” in Spanish, which translates as “cockfights” in English. As I noticed in the notes where P17 generated ideas, he tried to translate “peleas de gallos” word-for-word, but then crossed it out. Perhaps translation was difficult because he was trying to translate the verb “peleas” as “fight” and the noun “gallos” as “cocks” and was not sure how to translate the preposition “de.” Although the translation of each word individually was not wrong, word-for-word translation carried a different meaning from the one P17 intended to convey in his writing.

Literal translations were common in the writing of P17. For example, he wrote the word “extense” for the adjective “extenso” in Spanish. The adjective “extenso” in Spanish is used when referring to something of large scope, as illustrated by his sentence,

“In Spain the Physical Education curriculum is more complex and extensive.” However, the word “extense” does not convey any meaning in English, but since there are cognates⁸ in Spanish and English, perhaps P17 considered “extense” one of them.

Another literal translation was the word “exit,” which may take the form of a noun or a verb in English, but in Spanish “exit” means “salida” and most of the time is used when referring to an exit door. In the sentences, “For first I never exit the Puerto Rico” and “But I obligate to exit for a good reason...,” P17 translated the verb “salir” as “exit.” P17’s writing had spelling errors and grammar errors, mainly with auxiliary verbs. In addition, it seems that since he thinks in Spanish while writing in English, the word order in English follows the word order of Spanish writing. According to the writing sample and to the data provided by P17, he seems to be at a very low proficiency level in English, although he tries to develop text in English and not rely on Spanish. In the case of P17, a lack of linguistic and composing competence may account for literal translations from Spanish and language switching in his English writing. He considered himself to be limited in writing, understanding, and reading English, and extremely limited in speaking English.

P24, a female in the second year of study, was one of the few participants in this study who attended a bilingual private school. However, she considered her writing and reading skills in English to be limited. She relied on Spanish while planning the content and organizing the ideas in paragraph format for her writing exercise. In the focus group, P24 explained that writing in English is very difficult for her, but she tries to write

⁸“Cognates are words in different languages that share a similar meaning and spelling because they originated from the same word” (Zambrano, 2002, p. 6).

directly in English because sometimes she cannot find a translation for the words she has written in Spanish. P24 reported that she thinks in Spanish and mentally translates into English because that way she uses the vocabulary she already knows. P24 began planning content by listing various reasons for leaving or staying in Puerto Rico. Then, she organized ideas in paragraph format in the form of a rough draft. P24 wrote the proper noun “Europa” more than once in Spanish instead of “Europe,” although she also wrote “Europe” once in English.

P24 reported thinking in Spanish while writing in English, which seems to be a reason for literal translations in her writing. In the sentence, “Also is the country that have good food and have different seasoned than Puerto Rico, that I want to prove to compare,” the words “seasoned” and “prove” have a different meaning in English from what P24 intended to convey in her writing. Perhaps P24 thought about the Spanish word “sazón,” referring to the spices used for cooking in Puerto Rico and translated it as “seasoned,” but the English word is “seasoning” or “flavor,” depending on the context.

P24 translated the verb “probar” literally from Spanish as “prove,” but these are false cognates. The verb “probar” in a Spanish context refers *to taste, to test, or to try* on something; the verb “to prove” in English refers *to verify, demonstrate, or to show* that something is true (Longman Dictionary, 1997). The writing of P24 was coherent, had few spelling errors and grammar errors in verb tenses and subject-verb agreement. It is evident that the similarities and differences that exist in the pronunciation, spelling, and meaning of words in Spanish and English were confusing for P24.

P24 may not have realized that she was translating literally from Spanish and that even when the writing in English sounded grammatical, the meaning in English was different from what she intended to say. In the case of P24, it seems that she tried to avoid the use of words that she did not know in English. P24 seemed to compensate with Spanish for any linguistic constraint she faced while writing on English.

Although not many participants switched languages while writing in English, literal and word-for-word translations were common among the participants at the beginning level, which may be related to their thinking in Spanish. For instance, P25, a male in the sixth year of study, reported always thinking in Spanish to organize his ideas and deciding what to write, and then translating the content into English. He said that he relies on a dictionary to find the right spelling or meaning of some words that he does not know in English.

P25 wrote the verb “develope” in the sentence, “I stay here because I born here, I develope here,” as he was referring to growing up or being raised in Puerto Rico. Perhaps he thought of the Spanish verb “desarrollé” and translated it literally. As he reported to think in Spanish when writing on English, word order in his English writing is equivalent to word order in Spanish. For example, the sentence “Finally I’m stay here and now I don’t think move to other side” translates in Spanish as “Finalmente yo me quedo aqui y ahora yo no pienso mudarme para otro sitio.” In Spanish, the sentence is grammatical, but when P25 translated it word-for-word into English, he did not consider usage of vocabulary in context and sentence structure in English writing.

As literal translations were evident in most of the compositions of the participants at the beginning level, false cognates were also identified in the writing notes and rough drafts. For example, P27, a female in the second year of study, reported in the focus group that she thinks in Spanish to generate ideas and to decide what to write. Whenever she needs help with English writing, she looks for it, since she is not proficient in English, as she reported in the focus group. She wrote the verb “implicate” in the sentence, “But this not implicate that don’t want to know new place in the world, . . .” as she was referring to the verb “implicar” in Spanish. However, “implicate” in English conveys a different meaning from the one P27 intended in her writing. Perhaps P27 wanted to say, “But this does not mean or imply . . .,” which translates in Spanish as “Pero esto no significa o implica . . .”

P27 seems to confuse spelling with pronunciation, as in the words “where” and “were.” In addition, her writing reflects thinking in Spanish and translating into English by following the word order of her first language. For example, in the sentences, “Is like say the proverb nothing how the sweethome. I love Puerto Rico and nothing change that.” These two sentences translate in Spanish as “Es como dice el proverbio nada como el dulce hogar. Yo amo a Puerto Rico y nada cambia eso.” Although P27 was making an effort to write directly in English, thinking in Spanish seemed to have influenced her word order in English.

P30, a male in the fourth year of study, reported in the focus group that it is a little bit difficult for him to write in English, and when he does not know a word, he writes it in Spanish for later translation. The writing of P30 seemed to be translated word-for-

word, as it also included the false cognate “base” in the following sentence, “The base for my opinion is demonstrate about started my study university and move of my town...” Perhaps P30 was thinking in Spanish while writing in English and translated literally “La base de mi opinión...” The word “base” is used in Spanish to refer to the reason for one’s opinion, but in English, it has a different meaning and translates as “on the basis of.”

In the sentence, “I like live in Puerto Rico but exist one reason for my obligation out of this island,” P30 translated the verb “obligación” from Spanish as “obligation.” However, “obligación” does not convey the same meaning as the word “obligation” in English because in the context in which P30 is using the word it refers to a reason or a situation that will force him to move out of P.R., not something that is compulsory. Another word translated literally in P30’s writing was “medics” in the sentence, “The reason is my family the health transformed bad and move to the U.S. for best hospital and medics.” The word “medics” is a literal translation from “médico,” a noun used in Puerto Rico to refer to medical doctors. However, in English, “medics” may be used for a medical specialist, as in the case of an “Army medic.” The correct translation for “médico” is “physician,” or “doctor,” and sometimes the specialization of the medical doctor is appropriate.

Although P30 considered his understanding and reading skills in English to be good, he considered his writing and speaking to be extremely limited. An explanation for his word-for-word translations may be the lack of linguistic and composing competence in English and to the fact that he was thinking in Spanish. Overall, the message in P30’s

writing was difficult to understand because of grammatical errors in verb tenses, sentence structure, and literal translations.

P19, a female in the second year of study, mentioned in the focus group that she relies on Spanish when she does not know how to spell a word in English. One of the advantages she reported for writing in Spanish is that she knows what she wants to write and knows how to write it; a disadvantage is that translation takes too much time. As one of the writing techniques for composing, P19 made a list of ideas about the reasons why she would stay in Puerto Rico. Then, she organized ideas in paragraph format. P19's writing had some spelling errors, literal translations, and grammar errors, but meaning was clear. Most of the sentences in her rough draft were shorter than sentences in other participants' compositions. In the rough draft, P19 translated literally the verb "formar" as "form" in the sentence, "I love Puerto Rico and I chosen live in Puerto Rico forever with my friends, my family and the new form family." In Spanish, it is common to say "formar una familia," but "form" does not convey the meaning P19 intended; moreover, "formar" and "form" are false cognates. In the case of P19, a lack of linguistic and composing competence, together with thinking in Spanish, may account for her literal translations.

P20, a female in the fifth year of study, reported in the focus group that writing an essay in Spanish is a lot easier for her since she can develop a topic more in depth as she can express all her ideas in Spanish. However, lack of knowledge of vocabulary and difficulty conjugating verbs inhibits her from expressing her ideas in English well, as she reported in the focus group. She wrote the word "roaded" in the sentence "Is a small town

but very close, the beaches roaded with beautiful sunsets” instead of saying “surrounded by.” In Spanish, the verb “rodeada” translates as “surrounded” in English, but P20 translated it literally as if it were just a matter of changing the suffix “-da” for the past participle “-ed” in English as “rodeada” for “roaded.”

One of the advantages that P20 reported in the focus group for writing in Spanish is that she can organize ideas about what to write, but a disadvantage is that grammar in English is different from Spanish. Perhaps, as she was thinking in Spanish while writing, word-for-word translation was evident in her rough draft. For example, in the sentences, “Almost day I visit this town for eliminate stress. Is a place that I thinking in nothing in other words for to distract my mind of the moment.” These two sentences follow the word order of Spanish as they translate, “Casi a diario yo visito este pueblo para eliminar el estrés. Es un lugar que yo no pienso en nada, en otras palabras para distraer mi mente en el momento.” Although the word “stress” translates as “tensión” in Spanish, it is most likely that a Spanish speaker from Puerto Rico uses the English word “stress” or “estrés” instead. The rough draft written by P20 had misspellings, errors in verb tense, and errors in the correct use of prepositions and pronouns.

P29, a female in the second year of study, reported in the focus group that she prefers to write directly in English because if not she wastes time, but she usually writes in Spanish anyway. She mentioned in the focus group that whenever she forgets how to spell a word in English, she writes it in Spanish and then looks for it in the dictionary because she may know its meaning or how to pronounce it, but not how to write it. P29

generated ideas in paragraph format by crossing out some of the sentences and rewriting the content as a rough draft.

Since P29 reported in the focus group that she thinks in Spanish and mentally translates ideas into English, I believe this may be a reason for the literal translations in her rough draft. For example, in the sentence, “I don’t need more than I have in my Puerto Rico, because that made me feel full and happy,” the word “full” does not convey the meaning that P29 intended. In Spanish, the verb “lleno” translates literally as “full” in English. In Puerto Rico, the use of the verb “lleno” varies, depending on the context, and one of its uses is to express satisfaction for something. Perhaps P29 intended to say that she was satisfied with what she had in Puerto Rico and that made her feel happy.

P29 mentioned in the focus group that she considers writing an essay in English easier than writing an essay in Spanish because in Spanish she has to paraphrase a lot and sometimes feels shame about what she wants to say. On the other hand, she said that when she is writing in English, she does not feel embarrassed for what she wants to say and she does not worry about what the professor thinks about her. Perhaps since P29 understands and knows the implications of what she says in Spanish because of her Puerto Rican cultural background, she feels embarrassed when writing about certain topics in Spanish. However, the opposite happens when she is writing on English, which may be because of her lack of cultural understanding of what she is writing about and how it will be interpreted by the audience. Overall, the rough draft of P29 was coherent and most errors were in word form and word order.

P22, a female in the second year of study, reported in the focus group that although she thinks in Spanish, she prefers to write in English because if she writes in Spanish for later translation it is too time consuming and difficult. P22 began generating ideas about the writing topic by listing reasons for staying in Puerto Rico. Then, she organized the ideas in paragraph format, beginning with a topic sentence and developing content accordingly. The rough draft of P22 was coherent and did not have many grammar errors as compared to the writing of other participants at the beginning level. Most of the errors involved the correct use of prepositions, word order, and use of auxiliary verbs. A type of error in P22's writing is associated with the pronunciation of words in English and with spelling them. For example, she wrote "my hole family" instead of "whole family," and "too" instead of "to" as they sound the same, but spelling and meaning are different.

During the composing process, participants at the beginning level used listing of ideas and brainstorming in the form of paragraphs as a way to plan the content of the writing exercise for this research. In addition, most of them reported in the focus group that they think in Spanish to generate ideas and to decide what to write, but for writing, prefer generating text in English. This was evident in most of the rough drafts for the participants at the beginning level, who in many cases translated word-for-word from Spanish into English, had literal translations, and used false cognates. This implies that thinking in Spanish and mentally translating into English worked as a constraint in the English writing.

Language switching occurred more often in the writing of females, as in the cases of P24, P16, P11, and P32; P17 was the only male who relied on Spanish among the participants at the beginning level. P16 and P17 attended a Spanish-only private school, and they were brother and sister taking the English course during the summer. It is possible that the English foundation of P16 and P17 was limited, as P16 explained at the end of the questionnaire for this study. Moreover, P16 and P17 reported that they have not yet traveled to English-speaking countries. P24 attended a bilingual private school and it was expected for her to have had more exposure to English than a participant who attended a public school; however, that may not be the case, as evidenced by her writing skills in English.

Although language switching was not evident at the lexical level for all participants, it was common to find literal translations and false cognates in the notes and rough drafts of various participants at the beginning level. For instance, participants who reported in the focus group that they think in Spanish while writing in English were most likely to translate word-for-word from Spanish, following the word order structure of Spanish when writing in English.

Although I expected to find more use of Spanish words in the text for the least proficient participants, it was evident that the participants' native language, Spanish, was of some influence even when they avoided writing in Spanish. The frequency with which language switching occurred at the lexical level for the participants at the beginning level may be related to their linguistic competence and writing competence in English. Lack of knowledge of vocabulary and use of the English language in context seemed to be

problematic for the college-level participants when writing in English. In addition, the use of false cognates and spelling errors by the participants may be related to the similarities and differences that exist between English and Spanish that are confusing for Spanish speakers learning English as a second language.

Data from these participants suggest that lack of linguistic and composing competence are important factors that may contribute to the use of a native language when writing in English as a second language. Moreover, the context in which English is learned as a second language plays an important role for language use in writing, since the use of English in Puerto Rico is limited to academic writing in most cases, with exception of those who may use it at work.

5.2.4 L1 Influences on the Writing of Intermediate ESL Learners

Most of the participants at the intermediate level reported that their writing skills in English were very good or good, except P23 and P28, who considered themselves to be limited in their writing skills in English. The educational and linguistic background of the participants at the intermediate level was more diverse than that of the participants at the beginning level. Five participants at the intermediate level (P12, P15, P28, P26, and P31) reported learning English at home, besides learning it in formal courses; some of them (P15, P28, and P31) reported speaking English with family and friends. P26 was the only participant who reported having formal education in the United States. The majority

(64%) of the participants at the intermediate level were males, while 36% were females. Most of the participants at the intermediate level were in their second or third year of study, except P28.

Since the frequency of language switching to Spanish among the participants at the intermediate level was less than expected, I analyzed their writing for first-language influence as it can be identified through literal translations, word-for-word translations, and false cognates. P28, a male in the sixth year of study, was the only participant who wrote a word in Spanish. He considered himself to have limited writing skills in English, but reported in the questionnaire for this study that his reading, understanding, and speaking in English was good. He also reported that he learned English at home and currently speaks English with family and friends. In the focus group, P28 mentioned that the most difficult thing for him when writing in English is the sentence word order. He planned the content of the writing topic (as a rough draft) for this study in paragraph format, then rewrote the content in a separate paper, but did not correct the grammar errors that he had in the rough draft.

First-language influence was evident in P28's writing. For instance, P28 wrote twice the noun "decisión" in Spanish while generating ideas in the form of notes, but in the rough draft, he wrote "decision" in English. Since P28 wrote "decisión" in Spanish, it is considered language switching; however, the only difference between "decisión" and "decision" is the accent used when writing in Spanish and the pronunciation in each language. A literal translation in P28's writing was the noun "forma" as "form" in the sentence, "The best form to explain this is to experiment new things," but "forma" and

“form” are false cognates. In Spanish, it is understandable to say “La mejor forma de explicar esto . . . ,” but in English the word “form” carries a different meaning from the one intended by P28 because in his message he is referring to “the best way” as a manner of doing something. Similarly, the word “experiment” in the previous sentence seemed to be literally translated from the Spanish word “experimentar,” which should have been translated into English as “to experience” or “to try.” In Spanish, “experimentar” could be used in a context when one wants to try something new. However, the word “experiment” in English conveys a different meaning (related to scientific tests and investigations) from the one P28 intended to convey in his message.

Other words translated literally from Spanish by P28 were “conserve” and “progrese.” The verb “conserve,” referring to the Spanish word “conservar,” is a false cognate. As in the sentence, “... for that reason I don’t lose all my Puertorrican filings and conserve the heat that represent P.R.,” the meaning of “conserve the heat” refers to keeping his cultural identity and Puerto Rican values. Perhaps P28 was thinking in Spanish because he seemed to be translating word-for-word when he said, “conserve the heat that represent P.R.,” which translates in Spanish as “conservar el calor que representa P.R.” In the sentence previously cited, P28 wrote the word “filings” instead of “feelings,” which seems to be a confusion of pronunciation and correct spelling. In the context that P28 used the word “filings,” he was probably referring to his attitude toward the Puerto Rican culture.

Another word translated literally from Spanish by P28 was “progrese,” referring to the verb “progresar” in Spanish, which translates as “progress” in English. Because the

meaning of the verb “progress” is appropriate in the context of the sentence, “...and do the best to progress in the new life,” as it means to improve or to make something better, perhaps P28 knew how to pronounce the word in English, but was not sure how to spell it correctly. Data from P28 suggest that even when he had exposure to the English language through family and friends in the U.S., his writing competence in English is still developing. Although he may be able to understand and speak English, his academic writing in English needs to improve. However, such improvement for an individual who is in a sixth year of study at the college level and is repeating the English course (in which data for this study was collected), will be influenced by the learning context in which the second language is learned. This implies that when the second language is learned in a classroom setting and academic writing in English is limited to the classroom, the rate of the second language development is going to be slow if the language used in the community is Spanish, as it is the case in Puerto Rico.

P26, a male in the second year of study who attended school in the United States for two years and learned English at home, reported in the focus group that it is easier for him to write in English, although he still has some difficulty with the orthography. He began generating ideas on the writing topic for this research by listing reasons for moving out of Puerto Rico. A word-for-word translation in his writing was “style of life” in the sentence “I want to learn about the Hawaiian culture and their style of life,” referring to the phrase “estilo de vida” in Spanish. However, in English the correct word is “lifestyle,” and although meaning is the same as P26 intended in his message, translating literally

does not follow an appropriate word order in English, which affects the sentence structure. The rough draft produced by P26 was coherent and well organized, with few spelling errors.

P31, a female in the second year of study, was another participant who learned English at home and was able to speak English with family and friends. She reported in the focus group that she prefers to write directly in English if the task is for an English class, although it is difficult for her to organize ideas and conjugate verbs. She said in the focus group that she relies on Spanish to find the meaning of words when writing a composition in English. She also mentioned that although thinking in Spanish for planning content and organizing ideas seems an advantage, it is confusing if the writing task is in English. She organized notes in paragraph format and then revised her writing as a rough draft. Her writing had a few grammar and spelling errors.

A literal translation in the rough draft of P31 occurred in the sentence, “I have my family, friend, and I want to conclude other planne that I make for my future here in Puerto Rico.” The verb “conclude” is a false cognate for the verb “concluir” in Spanish. Perhaps P31 was referring “to fulfill” her plans in Puerto Rico and translated “concluir” literally but did not consider the meaning in context because the verb “conclude” carries a different meaning from the one P31 intended.

Two other participants who reported learning English at home were P12 and P15; neither had traveled to English-speaking countries. P12, a male in the second year of study, reported in the focus group that he tries to think in English since it is easier to develop content for academic tasks to be written in English. He said that when he does

not know a word, he describes the word in the writing because writing it in Spanish for later translation is a waste of time. However, he mentioned that sometimes he thinks in Spanish and mentally translates into English. P12 began developing the writing exercise for this study in paragraph format, then wrote a well-organized and coherent draft with few spelling errors and literal translations from Spanish. Mainly, P12's difficulty is usage of vocabulary in context because his proficiency in English seems to be higher than that of other participants in this research.

An example of a literal translation in P12's writing is "... I won't change Cabo Rojo for nothing," as it translates "Yo no cambio a Cabo Rojo por nada," which produces a double negative in English. This case of double negative in P12's writing may be one of the syntactic differences that Fromkin and Rodman (1998) identified in the English spoken by Latinos, such as Chicano English, and Standard American English. Although, a writing instructor may point out that it is an error to have double negatives in English, it seems that it is a "regular rule of Chicano English syntax" (Fromkin & Rodman, p. 420). The main reason why a Latino may speak or write in English with double negatives is associated to the fact that in Spanish, a negative can precede a verb and appear after it as in the sentence "Yo no cambio a Cabo Rojo por nada."

On the other hand, P15, a female in the third year of study who learned English at home and reported that she speaks English with family and friends, mentioned in the focus group that she always thinks in Spanish, but prefers to write in English for academic tasks in English. However, she mentioned that sentence structure in English is very difficult and when she translates from Spanish into English, meaning changes. One

reason she stated for writing directly in English is that it is good to practice the language, while writing in Spanish does not help for English language development. P15 began generating ideas for the writing exercise for this study by listing reasons for moving out of P.R. She organized ideas in paragraph format and most of the writing was coherent, although her writing had some errors with the use of pronouns and prepositions. She seems to confuse pronunciation with spelling, as in the words “hear” instead of “here,” “leave” instead of “live,” and “costums” instead of “customs.”

P13, a male in the second year of study, prefers to think in English for academic tasks in English because he does not want to waste time translating; he also reported that he thinks in Spanish and mentally translates into English. He stated in the focus group that writing in Spanish for academic tasks in English is a disadvantage because it inhibits him from learning English. He developed content for the writing exercise of this study in paragraph format and rephrased some of the content while writing it as a rough draft. His writing skills in English are good as compared to those of other participants at the intermediate level; most of the errors in the rough draft were with verb tenses, subject-verb agreement, prepositions, and the use of modal auxiliaries.

P21, a female in the second year of study, reported in the focus group that she prefers to write directly in English to verify her English knowledge because writing in Spanish delays progress in English-language development. Usually, P21 thinks in Spanish to decide what to write about and mentally translates ideas into English, as she

reported in the focus group. She developed the writing exercise for this study by writing ideas in complete sentences and paragraphs. Then she organized ideas in the form of a rough draft that consisted of two paragraphs.

The writing of P21 was coherent and well organized. However, a few grammar errors and literal translations were evident in her writing. In the sentence “I learn about their customs and traditions, their poblacion, turist places, universities and style of live,” the word “poblacion” refers to “población” in Spanish, but in English the correct translation is “population.” Another literal translation is the phrase “style of live,” which translates in Spanish as “estilo de vida,” but the correct word in English is “lifestyle.”

While P21 was planning the content about the writing topic, she wrote “interesant” instead of “interesting” in the sentence, “That is a beautiful and interesant place.” Since the adjective “interesting” translates as “interesante” in Spanish, it is possible that P21 thought of “interesant” as the correct translation because she may know that there are cognate words in Spanish and English. Although P21 translated “interesting” literally from Spanish while planning the content, she spelled it correctly in the rough draft.

P18, a female, reported in the focus group that it is easier to write directly in English if the task is to be completed in English. She developed the writing exercise for this study in paragraph format with few misspellings. The rough draft was coherent, with few grammar errors in verb tenses and auxiliary verbs. However, her writing skills in English are good as compared to those of other participants in this research study. While planning the content for the writing topic, she wrote the noun “bosques” in Spanish, but

then erased it and wrote “forests” over it. As she reported in the focus group, when she does not know the right spelling for a word in English, she writes it in Spanish and then translates it.

Two participants who attended bilingual schools were P14 and P23. P14, a male in the second year of study, reported use of English with family and friends. P14 reported in the focus group that writing in Spanish for academic tasks to be completed in English is a disadvantage because word meaning and word order change in the translation. He also reported in the focus group that he relies on Spanish when words in English have more than one meaning, but he prefers to think and write in English. He began organizing ideas by listing some of the current political and economic problems of Puerto Rico. Then, he developed the content in paragraph format in the form of a rough draft.

The message that P14 wanted to convey in his writing was clear, but he had errors in verb tenses, in subject-verb agreement, and in word choice. For example, in the sentence, “I would move to California in U.S because Puerto Rico is suffering of many disease like economics who is the baddest virus to a country,” words such as “suffering,” “disease,” “baddest,” and “virus” seemed to be used out of context. In addition, “baddest” is incorrect. Perhaps P14 wanted to say “the worst.” Although P14 reported that he thinks in English for writing academic tasks to be submitted in English, he seems to be translating words from Spanish without considering the meaning and usage of vocabulary in context.

P23, a male in the third year of study, reported in the focus group that one of his difficulties when writing in English is conjugating verbs because he confuses them with

Spanish spelling. He also mentioned that he thinks in Spanish and mentally translates into English but if he has a spelling error, he leaves it as it is and then spells it correctly by using a dictionary. P23 reported in the focus group that writing in Spanish for English tasks is a waste of time and translation is too difficult. He developed the writing exercise for this study by listing various reasons for moving out of Puerto Rico. Then, he wrote a rough draft in paragraph format, with some errors in subject-verb agreement, use of contractions, spelling, and word forms.

P10 is a male and one of the few students who reported to be repeating the English course where I collected data for this research. P10 reported in the focus group that he thinks in Spanish to organize ideas, but writes in English because translation from Spanish is difficult. He began generating ideas about the writing topic in the form of sentences explaining reasons for moving out of Puerto Rico. He seems to confuse spelling with pronunciation of words such as “their” instead of “there,” “leave” instead of “live,” and “went” instead of “when.”

Literal translation was evident in P10’s writing. For example, in the sentence “I remember when my uncle for my birthday gave me a ticket for see the game in Boston and I never saw the stadium and I’ cry for happiness” it seems that P10 was translating word-for-word. The equivalent translation for the sentence in Spanish is, “Yo recuerdo cuando mi tío para mi cumpleaños me dió un ticket para ver el juego en Boston y yo nunca había visto el estadio y lloré de felicidad.” Although I translated the sentence to Spanish, I did not translate the word “ticket” because in Puerto Rico it is more common to say “ticket” than “boleto,” which is the correct translation in Spanish.

During the composing process of the writing exercise for this study, the participants at the beginning level listed ideas as a technique for planning content, while the participants at the intermediate level preferred writing sentences and paragraphs. However, some participants at the beginning level were able to generate ideas and organize content in paragraph format as well. In addition, some participants at the intermediate level used listing as a way to organize ideas for the writing exercise for this study.

Data from the writing samples of college-level participants provided very useful information for understanding the composing process of native Spanish speakers learning English as a second language in their country of origin, Puerto Rico. It was evident that for all the college-level participants, the first language was available while they completed the writing exercise in English for this study. Even when language switching was not present at the lexical level, thinking in the first language and mentally translating into English seemed to be a strategy used by the majority of the participants. However, the strategy of thinking in Spanish and trying to write directly in English did not seem to be of benefit in terms of quality of writing among the participants. This implies that the word-for-word translations, literal translations, and false cognates in the writing of many of the participants were problematic for understanding the message, which may be related to the fact that they were thinking in Spanish and not in English.

An explanation to this behavior of thinking in Spanish could be associated with the context in which these participants were learning English. Spanish is the language used for everyday communication in Puerto Rico, and consequently, it is the language

readily available whenever these people need to produce spoken or written language. The situation of Puerto Rican students learning English in Puerto Rico is a difficult one because the opportunities to speak English with a native English speaker in Puerto Rico are minimal. Despite the fact that students must learn the phonology, morphology, and syntax of the English language, they also need to learn the writing conventions of composing in English. This usually turns out to be a very complex situation for an ESL learner in Puerto Rico.

Moreover, if there is a lack of understanding by an individual of how the Spanish and English languages are similar or different, and a lack of practice of the English language in the social context, then, the ESL learner may rely on the L1 as an alternative to compensate for what is difficult in English. I must point out that learning English in Puerto Rico is different from learning English in an English-speaking country where the dominant language is English and is appropriately used within the social context. In Puerto Rico, students must learn English as a requirement of the public school system from Kindergarten through the twelfth grade, and as a requirement by most post-secondary institutions during the first two years of study, but the learning is mainly grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and in some cases conversational English. The learning occurs in a classroom setting and practice is limited to writing sentences, and paragraphs, academic reading, and speaking with the instructor. Thus, there is a lack of exposure to a real English-speaking environment, and although an individual knows how a sentence should be structured in English, the use of language in context and the input received from that natural setting is essential for faster L2 language development.

Participants at the intermediate level relied less often on Spanish at the lexical level than participants at the beginning level, as I expected. Moreover, participants at the intermediate level had better writing skills and seemed to be more proficient than participants at the beginning level, perhaps because some of them had the opportunity to speak English with family and friends. This implies that for a Puerto Rican learning English as a second language in Puerto Rico, even when the language used in the social context is Spanish, the learner's English language development improves because he or she is able to practice the language with family and friends outside a classroom context.

Relying on a first language for writing in English as a second language may be related to English language proficiency, but it might be influenced by factors such as individual differences, learning styles, and learning strategies, which may vary among the participants. In addition, for interpretation of findings it is important to consider that second-language development occurs at different rates and the social context in which language learning takes place is a factor that may influence language switching as well. Overall, language switching in some of the participants' writing may be due to common errors found in the writing of second language writers as pronunciation in the first language accounts for negative transfer of words that are misspelled in the L2 (Odlin, 1989).

As was common in the writing of participants at the beginning and intermediate level, literal translation is a type of error common in second language learners, specifically a production error identified as calques. According to Odlin (1989), "Calques

are errors that reflect very closely a native language structure,” as is the case with word-order errors when content is translated from Spanish into English (p. 37).

5.3 Focus Group Data

I transcribed the focus group data of college-level participants following the order of the guiding questions and the sequence of participants’ responses. Since the focus group was conducted in Spanish, I translated the participants’ comments that were quoted in this section; meaning was not changed. Results presented in this section also include data from written responses to four of the focus group (see Appendix J) guiding questions (#2, #4, #5, and #7) that participants answered before beginning with the focus group.

Questions #1 through #5 and #7 were selected as the most relevant questions for understanding the participants’ perceptions of Spanish use in English writing. Data from questions #6 and #8 were discussed with the writing sample data. I coded the responses to the selected questions by using the coding scheme described in Table 13, chapter 4, in order to find patterns among the responses.

All college-level participants had the opportunity of sharing their perceptions about the topics discussed during the focus group. However, due to time constraints, not all participants provided an oral response for each of the questions. I asked each one of the participants to answer the first question, but for the remaining questions, only those who volunteered provided answers. As a major objective in conducting the focus group, it was important to get different participants to express their opinions. I tried to control “dominant respondents” by asking other “passive group members” to comment on their

perceptions (Berg, 2001, p. 125), but even when I encouraged some participants to respond, they refused to participate. Focus group data are discussed by considering the language used by the participants for writing academic tasks in English, factors that may contribute to L1 use, benefits of language-switching, and constraints associated with language switching.

5.3.1 Language Use and Writing

All 23 participants reported Spanish as their native language. Since Spanish is the dominant language in Puerto Rico, the participants explained that Spanish was the language used by their family when they were raised. Spanish often was reported among the participants as the most comfortable language for writing. However, the majority of the participants reported that for planning content of academic tasks in English it is most convenient to write directly in English.

The most cited reasons for writing directly in English were that it is less time consuming and less difficult than writing in Spanish before translating the content into English. For example, P13 and P29 considered writing in Spanish a “waste of time,” which is a reason why they prefer to write directly in English. On the other hand, P24 explained that she always begins writing compositions in English “because if not I think very difficult words in Spanish and then I cannot translate them to English.” Similarly, P11 said, “If I think in English it is easier to write it directly, but if I write in Spanish it is more difficult to change it to English.”

For some participants, writing directly in English was also a way to assess their linguistic competence in English. For instance, as P21 said, “I like to take notes and do the tasks in English to verify my knowledge of English.” For P18, it was important to write directly in English right from the beginning of a task because “you change sentences according to your vocabulary in English.” As can be interpreted from the participants’ comments, deciding which language to use for writing academic tasks in English is associated with prior knowledge on a topic and with the convenience of writing directly in English because content may be easier to revise.

Although participants reported a preference for writing directly in English, they also explained the difficulties they encounter when writing in a second language. Among the challenges of writing in ESL, participants often reported that orthography, word order, vocabulary, verb tenses, organization of ideas, and translation of content from Spanish into English were the most difficult. P23 said, “... the most difficult thing for me is when I have to conjugate the verbs, I get confused with Spanish.” P28 said, “the most difficult thing for me is the word order because I may place the adjective before the verb.” Similarly, P15 explained,

The most difficult thing for me is the vocabulary. Sometimes I think the sentences are meaningful in Spanish, but when I translate them into English, they are meaningless. Perhaps a sentence may have a meaning in Spanish, but the use of vocabulary in context is different in English and changes the meaning of what I wanted to write.

According to the perceptions of college-level participants, it is evident that writing in English as a second language is a difficult task for native Spanish speakers. Besides the difficulty that participants reported to have when writing in English, they still prefer to generate text in English and not use Spanish, even if the content in English has errors.

Errors were perceived by most of the college-level participants as part of the process of learning English and of language development. At the end of the focus group session, P28 encouraged all the participants to use English for their tasks. As he explained:

Well, I want to say that all of us that are here know a little bit of English, but we do not know that much. The best thing is to practice. It does not matter how many mistakes you make, even if everybody laughs at you. If you practice the language, you will improve.

Another similar comment came from P21:

I consider that if we want to learn English, I mean writing or speaking it, we should make an effort and try to do everything in English. If it is wrong, then we fix it. We learn from mistakes and that is a way for us to become more proficient in writing or speaking English.

5.3.2 Language Switching and English Composition

Switching languages while writing about a topic in English was not perceived as a useful strategy by the majority of the college-level participants because of the many

constraints it presents. However, some participants reported specific situations in which they would rely on their first language. The main reasons were lack of knowledge of vocabulary and not knowing the meaning or right spelling of a word in English (see participants' comments reported in Table 25).

Table 25

Language Switching and Linguistic Constraints on English Writing

Participants' Comments

(P30) "I always try to think in English but the language is a bit difficult. I always write in English and write in Spanish the words that I do not know so I can translate them later."

(P16) "I would use Spanish for a writing task in English because if I have a Spanish word written it is easier to know the meaning and translate it to English. I do it very frequently."

(P25) "Usually, I begin writing in English, but there are certain occasions when I start writing in Spanish because I want to use words that I do not know in English."

(P19) "I would use Spanish if I did not know how to write a word in English and what I do is that I write it in Spanish and ask someone to help with the translation. I do not do it very frequently, but sometimes."

(P29) "I use Spanish if I forget a word. If I know the meaning in English and know how to pronounce it, but do not know how to write it, then I look for it in the dictionary."

According to the participants' perceptions regarding the use of Spanish for academic tasks in English, linguistic constraints may contribute to L1 retrieval when

writing on a second language. Using a first language when writing in a second language is related to the linguistic competence of an individual, as was the case with the college-level participants. Another situation not cited very often for relying on the L1 was the purpose of a writing task, as P10 reported:

Well, if it is an essay or something extensive, I write in Spanish first because it is easier. If the writing is to be graded, then I use Spanish because I do not want to have a bad grade. I do it when I have to write a 300 or 400-word essay.

Although writing in Spanish while working on academic tasks in English was not common among the college-level participants, most of them reported thinking in Spanish and mentally translating ideas into English. Thinking in Spanish seemed useful to decide what to write about and to generate ideas about a topic. For example, P20 said, “Most of the time I think in Spanish to decide what to write and then translate ideas to English.” P24 stated, “Most of the time I think words in Spanish and mentally translate them to English. That way I know what words I know.” Most of the participants seem to develop content in English according to their knowledge of vocabulary and whenever there is difficulty with a word in English, they rely on Spanish. Since thinking in Spanish was often reported by the participants, it was also common among them to use a dictionary to find the meaning or correct spelling of a word in English.

While the majority of the participants reported thinking in Spanish when writing in English, few of them reported thinking in English for English writing. However, P11, P14, and P30 said that they try thinking in English because thinking in Spanish is

confusing. Participants such as P12 and P13 also try to think in English because they do not want to “waste time” writing words in Spanish and translating them by using a dictionary.

5.3.3 Constraints Associated with Language Switching

Writing content in Spanish for later translation was perceived as a constraint by most of the college-level participants because when content is translated into English, text ends up being incoherent and sentences ungrammatical. Moreover, writing in Spanish for English tasks is “double work” (P15) and translating content from Spanish is too difficult. As P23 explained, “If I begin writing in Spanish, then I have to translate it and it will be more difficult. Besides, I waste too much time writing to translate it and conjugate the verbs.”

Other constraints related to writing in Spanish were that the English language is not being practiced, as P22 said. Similarly, P29 mentioned that writing in Spanish delays progress, and for P27, “We do not develop our skills for learning English.” It was of great concern among the participants to develop and improve English language proficiency. They feared that if Spanish was used for writing, the practice of English skills was going to be affected. As P10 reported, “If you write in Spanish you are not making an effort to get the words in English so you can learn them at once; it delays a little bit.”

In addition, it was often reported by the college-level participants that one of the difficulties with English is that meaning of words depends in most cases on the context in which vocabulary is used; sometimes there is not an English word equivalent to a word in

Spanish. P24 reflected on the difficulties of translating words from Spanish into English since meaning may vary. She said, “When I write in Spanish, sometimes I think of complicated words that, when I translate them to English, do not have the same meaning and this changes what I wanted to say.” Similarly, as P18 said, sometimes there is no “correct translation or the appropriate word in English and you have to start planning another sentence.”

On the other hand, P28 provided an example of how he perceived differences of meanings between English and Spanish. He said, “In English, words have more meanings than they have in Spanish because ‘I Love You’ in English means ‘Te Quiero, Te Amo, y Te Adoro’ in Spanish and each one has a different meaning in Spanish.” P28’s example was probably referring to the fact that while there are different words in Spanish to express a feeling toward someone, in English, one word carries all the meanings. Since the college-level participants perceived differences in meaning to be problematic when text is translated from Spanish into English, this may be another reason why they preferred to write directly in English and not rely on Spanish.

Overall, in the focus group, participants reported that it is more convenient to write directly in English than to use Spanish for English writing because using Spanish first takes more time and meaning changes in translation. Most of the participants think in Spanish to decide what to write and to generate ideas, but text is developed in English. I expected the college-level participants to perceive first-language use in English writing as a useful strategy when writing. However, writing content in Spanish for later translation into English (referred to as content translation by the participants) was perceived as a

constraint because it is time-consuming and too difficult. Moreover, participants perceived that writing in Spanish delays progress in English language development, and for most of the participants, improving English proficiency was important.

In the next chapter, I will discuss the hypotheses that guided this study. I will also discuss major findings concerned with language switching at the lexical level and how these findings are related to previous research. I will also provide an overview of research methods used in conducting this research study, a summary of who were the research participants, and a brief explanation of the need for this research. In addition, I discuss the learning context in which the participants of this study were recruited as a possible variable related to the frequency of language switching.

Chapter 6: Discussion

This chapter discusses the hypotheses that guided this research study. It also discusses major findings in relation to previous research. The main objective of this dissertation was to explore the extent to which language switching occurs at the lexical level in the English writing of Latino participants and to better understand the participants' perceptions regarding first-language use in English writing. This task was undertaken by identifying the English language proficiency and generational status of the study's participants, as well as considering the participants' ethnic identity from different Latino subgroups.

As a way to guide the reader, I will give an overview of the research methods used in carrying out the study. I will provide a summary of the educational and linguistic background of the high-school and college-level participants and review the need for research exploring language switching in English writing of Latino students. In addition, I will address the importance of the learning context in which the participants of this study learned English as a second language and its possible relationship to the frequency of language switching.

6.1 Overview of Research Methods

In order to explore the frequency and patterns of language switching at the lexical level in English writing of Latino students, I collected three sets of data from eight high school participants in Fairbanks, Alaska, and a group of twenty-three college-level

participants in Mayagüez, Puerto Rico. For purposes of this research, a language switch is understood as the presence of any content word (i.e., nouns, verbs, adjectives, or adverbs) or any function word (i.e., conjunctions, prepositions, articles, or pronouns) written in Spanish in the participants' notes or rough draft while generating text for a writing task in English.

The three sets of data I obtained from the high school participants and college-level participants included (a) a questionnaire to gather information on the participants' linguistic and educational background, (b) a writing sample to identify frequency and patterns of language switching, and (c) a focus group to discuss the participants' perceptions of Spanish language use in English writing. For the high school participants, additional data accessed through the school district included scores on a High School Graduation Qualifying Exam, access to a Parent Language Questionnaire, the participants' academic transcript, and scores on an English language assessment.

In order to determine the English language proficiency of the high school participants, I relied in the procedure followed by the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD) in identifying the English proficiency level of non-English speakers. The generational status of the high school participants was determined by using information contained in the parent language questionnaire accessed through the FNSBSD and answers provided by the participants in the questionnaire designed for this study. For the college-level participants, the English proficiency level was determined according to the participants' self-evaluation of English language skills and based on their English course placement.

Procedures followed in data collection varied for the high school and college-level participants. Data for the eight high school participants were collected in two different dates in an ESL classroom after school. Procedures for data collection with the group of twenty-three college-level participants were completed on one day, during the scheduled hours for an English course at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez (UPR-M).

6.2 Participants of the Study

It was a main objective of this research study to recruit a sample of Latino students from an urban high school in Fairbanks, Alaska. However, due to constraints in the recruitment process, the sample size was smaller than expected. In addition, not all of the high school participants who volunteered for the study were native Spanish speakers. Some were native English speakers, as they were born and raised in the U.S. Therefore, conducting research with a group of Latinos recruited in Fairbanks, Alaska, did not provide language-switching data for analysis as I expected. However, data collected with high school students do provide valuable information for English Second Language programs regarding some of the characteristics of Latinos learning English in the U.S.

Because of the situation mentioned above, I also decided to recruit participants and collect additional data in a different setting such as Puerto Rico, where English is learned as a second language. The participants recruited in Puerto Rico were expected to be native Spanish speakers, which was an important criterion for measuring language switching in the composing process of a writing task to be completed in English. In the

following subsections, I briefly mention the most salient educational and linguistic characteristics for each group of participants, as these are related to major findings of this research study.

6.2.1 High-School Participants

Of the eight high school participants, seven were of Latino descent, while one was from Brazil. The high school participants were very diverse in terms of their cultural, educational, and linguistic background. The participants' ethnic identity as Latinos was related to the participants' place of birth or to the parents' country of origin. Among the eight participants, two were Mexicans, one was Mexican-American, one Puerto Rican, one Brazilian, one Hispanic (Cuban-American), one Puerto Rican-Panamanian, and one Panamanian.

English was the most comfortable language for the majority of the high school participants, while their use of the Spanish language varied. Some participants spoke Spanish among themselves while I was collecting data; others would speak Spanish at home with parents or in the Spanish class that they were taking as an elective at school. Based on the participants' English and knowledge of Spanish, only five of the participants could be considered ESL learners, while the remaining three were more proficient in English and their knowledge of the Spanish language was limited.

Of the eight high school participants, five were identified as being first-generation students (born outside the U.S.), while three were second-generation students (born in the U.S. with at least one parent was born outside the U.S.). Regarding the participants'

writing proficiency in English, most of them met grade-level expectations according to the assessment of the FNSBSD, indicating their composing competence in English for academic purposes was good.

6.2.2 College-Level Participants

Of twenty-three college-level participants, twenty-two were Puerto Ricans and one was Colombian. A majority of the participants were born and raised in Puerto Rico, and their English knowledge was acquired in formal courses at school, with a few of them having learned it at home or at work. Spanish was the dominant language for the college-level participants and the language they used when I collected data for this research study. The opportunities for practicing the English language in Puerto Rico for these college-level participants are minimal or limited to the classroom setting, except for those who reported speaking English with relatives in the U.S.

Most of the participants self-evaluated their English proficiency at a beginning or intermediate level. The major difficulties of college-level participants in the English language were in speaking and writing since they could understand and read English fairly well. However, the Spanish language skills for the college-level participants were good as most of their schooling experience had been in Spanish.

6.3 Need for Research

Literature reviewed (Friedlander, 1990; Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Lay, 1982; Martin-Betancourt, 1986; Qi, 1998; Wang, 2003; Wang & Wen, 2002; Woodall, 2000) suggests

that language switching occurs at the cognitive level during the composing process of L2 writing as measured through thinking-aloud protocols. Other researchers have found evidence for the significance of the L1 on the L2 composing processes by comparing L1 and L2 writing (Uzawa, 1996; Uzawa & Cumming, 1989) with focus on content translation (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992).

First-language use in L2 writing has been examined in relation to L2 proficiency and task difficulty (Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Woodall, 2000), topic knowledge (Friedlander, 1990; Lay 1982), writing mode (Wang & Wen, 2002; Manchón et al. 2000), and language group (Woodall, 2000). Moreover, the non-instructed use of a first language during the composing process of L2 writing has been seen to benefit an individual in generating ideas (Friedlander, 1990), thought development (Qi, 1998), and in deciding what to write (Cumming, 1989). To my knowledge, language-switching research has not been addressed at the lexical level, where frequency of first-language use is measured in the written text itself without considering think-aloud protocols. In addition, very few studies concerned with second-language writing research focus on the characteristics of the participants, as is the case in identifying Spanish speakers according to their ethnic origin.

In previous studies, some researchers refer to participants with a Spanish language background as “Spanish speakers” (Woodall, 2000), without considering their Latino ethnic subgroup. However, identifying a participant by ethnic origin, such as in a study conducted by Chelala (1981) of two Argentinean women, one with Puerto Rican college-level students (Martin-Betancourt, 1986), and a study conducted by Jones and Tetroe

(1987) of six Spanish speakers from Venezuela, is important because it situates research findings within the cultural and language-learning context of the writer.

Occasionally, some researchers provide details of the ethnic background or ESL context for the participants in their studies. Such was the case in a study conducted by Roca de Larios, Marín, and Murphy (2001) with Spanish speakers learning English in their country of origin, Spain. However, one must note that considering a participant's characteristics for research purposes depends on the particular goals of a research study. For instance, in a study conducted by Montaña-Harmon (1991), one of her objectives was to analyze discourse features of written Mexican Spanish by considering the ethnic origin of the participants.

In Montaña-Harmon's study, Latino students were represented by a sample of Mexican students in Mexico, native speakers of Mexican Spanish studying ESL in the U.S., Mexican-American/Chicano students who were predominantly English speakers in the U.S., and Anglo-American students who were native English speakers. Montaña-Harmon's study is one of the few concerned with differences in writing among Latinos in the U.S. as compared to those living and learning English in their country of origin. Since identification of Latino students by national origin and generational status has been critical in reviewing literature concerned with second-language writing research, my own research substantiates the importance of considering some of the educational, linguistic, and cultural characteristics that contribute to understanding the diversity of Latinos.

Although previous studies account for evidence of language switching in English second language writing, there are still unanswered questions about the relationship of a

participant's characteristics and L2 proficiency regarding language switching at the lexical level that need to be explored. Specifically, *To what extent does language switching occur at the lexical level for L2 writers? Does language-switching frequency at the lexical level vary in the English compositions of Latino participants from different subgroups and of differing generational status? How is L2 proficiency related to language-switching frequency at the lexical level? How is language switching viewed from a writer's (research participant's) perspective?*

Since no study has focused on exploring language switching at the lexical level in English compositions of Latino students of various ethnic subgroups, different generational status, and diverse English proficiency, further investigation in this area seems appropriate. Reflecting on the general questions previously stated helped me to develop the following research questions that guided this dissertation:

1. Does language-switching frequency at the lexical level vary in the English compositions of Latinos of different ethnic subgroups?
2. Is language-switching frequency at the lexical level related to the generational status of a Latino student in the U.S.?
3. Is language-switching frequency at the lexical level in English compositions of Latinos related to their English language proficiency?
4. How is first-language use in English writing perceived by Latino high school students in Alaska and college-level students in Puerto Rico?

6.4 Research Hypotheses

Each one of the research questions previously stated was transformed into a hypothesis. The hypotheses that guided this research study and that were measured through qualitative and quantitative research methods are discussed by considering the major findings from data of the high school and college-level participants, as it seems pertinent. I must clarify that data in this study are not intended to be comparative because the ESL contexts, grade levels, and measurement of English proficiency varied among the participants. For instance, the hypothesis in which I consider the generational status of the participants did not seem relevant for the college-level participants since the majority were born and raised in Puerto Rico, with the exception of one participant from Colombia.

6.4.1 Language Switching among Latinos by Subgroup

The first hypothesis that guided this study intended to broaden the scope of research on language switching in the composing processes of English second language writers representing various Latino ethnic subgroups. It was hypothesized that the frequency with which the Latino participants of various ethnic subgroups were going to switch to Spanish at the lexical level was going to vary among them. Data from this research study cannot support this hypothesis because of the sample size of high school participants. The frequency for language switching at the lexical level in the English composition varied for the participant from Brazil, the Colombian, and among the Puerto Ricans. However, since the Brazilian, the Colombian, and the Puerto Rican participants

were the ones who switched languages more often and they were at a very low proficiency level in English, it is possible that a lack of L2 proficiency is what contributed to their language switching and not the fact of being Puerto Rican, Brazilian, or Colombian. Nevertheless, I must point out that a particularity among the participants of these ethnic subgroups was that they all were proficient in their L1 (Spanish or Portuguese) and were still communicating in their L1 with people in their country of origin.

Specifically, the variations in language switching ranged from writing a whole draft in the first language to writing just words in Spanish for later translation using a dictionary. Language switching frequency was more evident in the writing of college-level participants from Puerto Rico, while the high school participants self-identified as Mexican, Chicano, Puerto Rican, Hispanic, and Panamanian did not rely on their first language for their English composition as expected.

Possible explanations for the variation in the frequency of language switching at the lexical level in the writing of the Brazilian and some of the Puerto Ricans may be related to their English proficiency level, which will be discussed later in this chapter. Although the participant from Brazil had been living in the U.S. for less than a year, he was a beginning English learner and seemed to be more proficient in his L1, Portuguese, than in English or Spanish. The participants from Puerto Rico and the Colombian were learning English in Puerto Rico, where Spanish is the dominant language and

opportunities for practicing English in a social context are minimal. Perhaps the context in which second language learning takes place is a factor associated with the frequency of language switching.

Being an ESL learner in a society where English is the dominant language may be useful for an individual's English language development. In some such cases, proficiency in the L2 is better than in the L1. Such was the case for a majority of the high school participants for whom relying on the first language meant writing in English and not in Spanish. On the other hand, learning English in a Spanish-speaking country, as was the case for the majority of the Puerto Ricans and the participant from Colombia, the exposure to the Spanish language is significant for it to be at immediate disposal when writing in English.

The main goal of considering this hypothesis was to find out whether participants representing a particular Latino ethnic subgroup relied more or less on Spanish than other Latino participants in this research study. The relationship between language-switching frequencies by Latino subgroup cannot be compared to previous research in language switching since no research has examined the non-instructed use of a first language at the lexical level among participants of Latino subgroups. However, I must note that in a study of behavior, language use, and strategies, Chelala (1981) identified words and phrases in Spanish in the writing of two Argentinean women. Other researchers have identified language switching patterns and frequency of Spanish use in the composing

processes of Spanish speakers (Woodall, 2002), Puerto Ricans (Martin-Betancourt, 1986), and Venezuelans (Jones & Tetroe, 1987) based on transcripts of think-aloud protocols.

This first hypothesis was exploratory and I expected to find more use of Spanish in the writing of participants from Mexico, which did not happen. According to Arias (1986), Spanish is one of the languages that a population persists in speaking longer as compared with other immigrant groups. Moreover, as Hidalgo (1986) pointed out, “loyalty to Spanish seems to be one of the means utilized by Mexicans to assert their ethnic identity” (p. 215). One possible explanation is that the Mexicans in this study wanted to improve their English language skills and preferred to write directly in English and not use Spanish, which suggests that motivation for the learning of English in the U.S. can be related to avoidance of L1 when writing.

In general, findings from this study as related to this first hypothesis suggest that although ethnic origin is a characteristic associated with an individual’s identity, there is no necessary relation in being from a particular culture and being proficient in the language spoken in that culture. In other words, being Mexican or Puerto Rican in the U.S. does not mean that an individual is fluent in Spanish. Perhaps the opposite is the case and the individual is fluent in English.

6.4.2 Language Switching and Generational Differences

It was hypothesized that language-switching frequency at the lexical level would be higher for first-generation immigrant students and lower for U.S.-born students. Data

from the high school participants is not substantial to support this hypothesis. The participant from Brazil, identified as a first-generation immigrant for this research study, was the one who relied in his first language most often. Perhaps the situation for the participant from Brazil was different from that of other participants since he had been in the U.S. for less than a year, his family was still living in Brazil, and he used to speak Portuguese very often with them. Although the participant from Brazil spoke Spanish with friends, his academic proficiency in Spanish did not permit for writing in Spanish.

The English proficiency of the high school participants identified as first-generation immigrants was higher than I expected. For second-generation students, Spanish language loss was evident since these participants were learning Spanish as an elective at school and their use of Spanish at home was limited. Therefore, they did not need to rely on their first language when developing a writing topic in English for this research study. None of the second-generation Latinos relied on Spanish while writing in English.

A major finding in this research study related to language switching frequency and generational status was that even for a first-generation Latino student in the U.S., the use of a first language seemed to be positively affected by the input of English language in the social context. Thus, a decrease in the L1 use by Latinos in the U.S. can only be encouraged by family, friends, school, or motivated by personal goals, as in the case of some second-generation Latinos who were taking Spanish as an elective in school. For further research, it is important to evaluate the student's academic proficiency and writing ability in that L1 prior to conducting research to examine language-switching

because if English is considered the most comfortable language for speaking by a student in the U.S., it may also be the most comfortable language for writing as well.

Although no previous research has focused on language switching in English writing of first-generation and second-generation Latinos at the high school level in the U.S., the assumption for this hypothesis came from the fact that there are differences regarding English language use between a first-generation Latino immigrant and a second-generation Latino. Thus, I expected the first-generation Latinos to rely more on their first language, as I assumed their Spanish proficiency was higher than that of second-generation Latinos. However, that was not the case for all first-generation participants who have improved and developed their English language skills since they moved to the U.S., and their Spanish language use has decreased.

I must note that the assumed relationship of first-language use by first-generation immigrants in the U.S. may be associated with years of living in the U.S. rather than being born in the U.S. or outside the U.S., which I overlooked or did not have a way to control for participants with fewer years of schooling in the U.S. It is noteworthy to mention that identifying an individual by generational status must take into consideration more than place of birth and years of schooling in the U.S., although these should not be excluded. Generational status is more complex than I thought, as it is related to being a voluntary or involuntary immigrant (Ogbu, 1987) and to the attitudes of an individual toward acculturation and assimilation, which eventually influences second-language learning.

6.4.3 Language Switching and English Language Proficiency

Second-language proficiency is a variable commonly studied in second-language writing research in which the relationship of a participant's L2 proficiency has been found to be a significant factor in the frequency of language switching measured with think-aloud protocols (Cumming, 1989; Jones & Tetroe, 1987; Wang, 2003; Wang & Wen, 2002; Woodall, 2000). The third hypothesis of this research study examined the relationship of L2 proficiency to the frequency of language switching at the lexical level among Latino students.

I hypothesized that language-switching frequency at the lexical level would be higher for participants at a beginning level of English proficiency and lower for participants at an intermediate or advanced level of English proficiency. Data from both the high school and college-level participants support this hypothesis. Major findings of this research study indicate that the least proficient English learners at the high school level relied more on the first language than those at a higher English proficiency level. The same was true for the college-level participants.

The college-level participants at a beginning level of English learning switched to their native language, Spanish, more often than the participants at the intermediate level did. It is noteworthy to mention that none of the participants at the college level were considered advanced English learners, which suggests that I also expected the participants at the intermediate level to rely on Spanish while writing in English, although less often than the participants at the beginning level. This assumption was also supported with the college level data where the English proficiency of the participants at the

intermediate level contributed to their use of Spanish but occurred less often. This relationship of language-switching frequency and English language proficiency supports the findings of Woodall (2000), as it is evident that low-proficient L2 writers use their L1 more often than intermediate-or advanced-proficiency L2 writers. In addition, the non-instructed use of the L1 identified by Woodall has been confirmed with data from this research study since the research participants relied on their L1 as part of their own decision-making strategies to develop a text in English. This means that the use of the first language in the L2 writing was a part of each learner's strategies as a way to overcome limitations while composing in English as a second language.

As a major finding in this study, language proficiency seemed to be a determining factor for language switching at the lexical level among the college-level participants. It was evident in the data for this research study that linguistic constraints accounted for their problems in English writing. This means that being proficient in the L2 is significant for an L2 learner in deciding which language to use for writing, and falling back to the L1 is an alternative.

Findings of language switching data in this research study suggest that linguistic competence in the L2 is one of the significant factors for relying in the L1. This finding agrees with findings of Jones and Tetroe (1987), who studied Spanish speakers from Venezuela learning English in the U.S.; they concluded that writers with "lack of proficiency," especially lack of "second-language vocabulary," relied on their native language while composing in English (p.55). However, I must point out that Jones and

Tetroe's study identified first-language use in transcripts of think-aloud protocols and not at the lexical level in written texts as the data of this study were analyzed.

Switching languages while writing did not seem to help at the sentence level in my study. Specifically, the college-level participants seemed to avoid complex sentences by writing simple sentences that were not difficult and that they could write by using their limited knowledge of English. In many cases, the college-level participants translated words from Spanish into English literally, perhaps because they knew that there were some cognate words in Spanish and English. Rather than the L1 working as a benefit in the writing of college-level participants, it worked as a constraint, as was evident in the word-for-word translations, false cognates, and literal translations from Spanish. These findings are supported by previous research (Chelala, 1981; Martin-Betancourt, 1986) in which Spanish use at the lexical level (identified in think-aloud protocols) constrained the text at the sentence level and was counterproductive. In some of the compositions of the college-level participants, the sentence structure reflected syntax of the Spanish language. This kind of first-language influence in the writing of second-language writers may produce common errors associated with the negative transfer of L1 to L2 (Odlin, 1989). However, it is noteworthy to mention that transfer was not a variable measured in this study, simply my interpretation of data at the sentence-level. I must point out that since "Transfer is not always native language influence" (Odlin, p. 27), this assumption is tentative.

The participants in this research study that were proficient in their first language (as was the case for one high school participant and for all the college-level participants)

were more likely to rely on their first language when writing in English. It seems that proficiency in the first language, together with low proficiency in the second language, contributes to language switching. On the other hand, for a participant who was proficient enough in the second language and proficient in the L1, there was no need to rely on the first language, as was the case for a high school participant who self-identified as being Panamanian-Puerto Rican. Since this participant was bilingual (i.e., proficient in Spanish and English), she could develop her writing in English with few errors and did not need to rely in the L1 to generate text, although she reported in the focus group that she needs to think in both languages, Spanish and English, in order to convey the intended message when writing. Thus, the difference between a bilingual student and one with low proficiency in English is that the bilingual student may have a higher linguistic and composing competence in the L2.

If an L2 learner has difficulty with the second language orthography, sentence structure, pronunciation, spelling, vocabulary, or grammar errors, then this lack of linguistic competence will make the student fall back on the L1 to compensate for those deficiencies. As was the case for some of the participants in this research study, they compensate with their first language for what they do not know in English, their second language. However, while linguistic compensation seemed to facilitate the generation of ideas, it worked as a constraint in generating text for the college-level participants.

Findings of this research study support findings of a case study conducted by Martin-Betancourt (1986) with four college-level students at an intermediate level of English proficiency learning English as a second language in Puerto Rico. Martin-

Betancourt analyzed think-aloud protocols to better understand the composing processes of those learners, and one of her objectives was to explore the role of the first language in the second language composing process. She found in her study that Spanish was extensively used by the four Puerto Rican students, although the frequency varied among the students. Translating from Spanish into English seemed problematic at the lexical, morphological, and syntactic level in the writing of the Puerto Rican students. Martin-Betancourt found that while composing in English, the students relied on a dictionary or asked her for translation of words from Spanish.

When she analyzed the protocols to identify use of Spanish, some of the participants had words written in Spanish because they could not find an appropriate translation. The frequency with which the participants in Martin-Betancourt's study relied in Spanish while composing in English suggested that "It was as if the first language was standing by like an understudy, ready to step into the process whenever the second language weakened or dropped out" (p. 98). At the lexical level, participants also had words that they made up because they were not sure of a correct translation in English. In addition, as inferred by Martin-Betancourt in her study, "even when the writers spoke in English, the first language played a part in the encoding of thought in language" (p. 212). Such thinking in the L1 behavior was also reported by the college-level participants in my study and I could infer it was true from evidence of the Spanish language influence in their texts.

I must argue that the use of two languages by the Puerto Rican students in Martin-Betancourt's study is similar to the situation for the participants in my research study.

The point of comparison I draw here is because of the similarities between the learning context of the participants in Martin-Betancourt's study and in my study. Both were conducted with ESL learners from the University of Puerto Rico at Mayagüez, with the differences that Martin-Betancourt's study occurred two decades ago. She relied on think-aloud protocols for identifying L1 use, and the sample size in her study was smaller than in mine. However, although she mentioned in her study the importance of the learning context for the learning of English in Puerto Rico, an analysis of the social and academic context was not a part of her conclusions.

However, Martin-Betancourt clearly stated that exposure to English outside the academic context, such as watching television and movies in English, listening to music in English, and speaking English with relatives, along with motivations the students had for learning English, may have influenced the use of English in the composing process for some of the students. Data from my study also suggest that motivation for learning English in Puerto Rico and early exposure to English may have influenced more use of English and less reliance on Spanish. In relation to the role of L1 on the L2 composing process, Martin-Betancourt concluded that "Although no single variable may significantly influence language use in the composing process, combination of variables may do so" (p. 224). As Martin-Betancourt's assertion of variables implied, too many variables can be related to language-switching, which is an explanation of why many studies in this area turn out to be exploratory and very few can be compared.

Although many factors such as task difficulty, writing mode, and language group, among others, have been associated with language switching, I conclude that an

influential factor for language switching to occur at the lexical level is the L2 linguistic competence. Most previous research focused on language switching from a cognitive perspective and based findings on verbalization of thoughts while writing, which I believe reflect “thinking” in the L1, but is different from constructing and producing a word or a sentence in the first language.

Differing from other research, the analysis of language switching in this research study is qualitative in nature. That means that the research methods and procedures followed, including data analysis and interpretation, relied heavily on a qualitative rather than a quantitative approach. The quantitative data in this research study are limited to the frequency of language switching per participant. Thus, discussion of findings was based on my interpretation and subjectivity that is a part of any qualitative analysis. No statistical analysis was conducted because the frequency of language switching at the lexical level at different proficiency levels was lower than expected. Previous studies examining language switching or first-language influence on L2 writing have focused on quantitative analysis of data, providing significant numbers as evidence for supporting or rejecting a hypothesis. That was not the case for this research study since data in this study did not provide for such analysis.

This research study attempted to identify whether different levels of language proficiency accounted for variations in the frequency of language switching at the lexical level. The fact that the least proficient writers did rely on the L1 more often than intermediate or advanced writers (in the case of the high school participants) while writing in English suggests that L2 linguistic competence is a major constraint on an L2

writer for developing ideas in the composing process of the L2. Findings of this study suggest that language switching occurs at the lexical level among second-language learners and falling back to the first language seems to be a common practice in the composing process when an individual has low proficiency in the L2 but is academically proficient in the L1. This implies that ESL learners not only think in their L1, but their L1 influences their writing in various ways; specifically, it seems to interfere with sentence structure. This assertion supports Arapoff 's (1967) argument in which she states that first-language use by L2 writers ends up producing ungrammatical sentences and incoherent texts. Such was the case in this research study when participants did not exercise control of their use of the first language.

Related to language proficiency and language switching is the assertion that the college-level participants reported thinking in the L1 and to mentally translating from Spanish into English. To some extent, the sentence-level errors in the writing of most of the low proficiency writers and some of the intermediate writers at the college level may be related to the fact that they were thinking in the L1. This implies that even when the college-level participants were switching languages at the cognitive level, it did not aid in generating coherent text. On the contrary, the text of the college-level participants who mentioned in the focus group that they always had to think in Spanish to generate ideas were the ones with false cognates, literal translations, and word-for-word translations. Although studying mental translation was out of the scope in this study, thinking in the L1 seemed to be a strategy used by many of the college-level participants as a majority reported that they generated ideas in Spanish and mentally translated into English.

6.4.4 Language Switching from the Writer's Perspective

I hypothesized that Latino students at the high school and college level were going to perceive language switching as an effective strategy for second language writing regardless of their English proficiency level, subgroup, and generational status. This hypothesis was partially supported. Both groups of participants considered thinking in the first language as a useful strategy for generating ideas and deciding what to write, which supports Wang and Wen's (2002) findings of language-switching frequency to be associated with facilitating the generating of ideas. However, the strategic use of a first language at the lexical level during the composing process of English writing was perceived as a constraint. The use of a first language while writing was referred to as "content translation" by the participants, which they thought was counterproductive for English language development. The college-level participants perceived writing directly in English to be more convenient, less time consuming, and less difficult than writing in the first language for later translation.

Thinking in the first language and mentally translating ideas into English seemed to be useful for the high school and college-level participants, which supports the findings of Qi (1998), whose informant benefited from using the first language to generate ideas while writing in English as a foreign language. In this research study, a focus group was used as the research method for learning about the perceptions of the participants regarding first language use in English writing. Thus, the interpretations of first language as a benefit or constraint were based on the participants' comments in the focus group. In previous research, the benefits of L1 in L2 writing are assessed on the

cognitive level (thinking in the first language) rather than at the lexical level, with few studies concerned with the writer's perspective regarding language switching (Uzawa & Cumming, 1989).

It seemed that since most of the high school participants were proficient in English and their linguistic and composing competence in the L2 was good, their L1 would only be necessary for difficult tasks or when a writing topic is related to their country. These participants' comments support the findings of Friedlander (1990) in the relation of language switching and writing topic and those of Jones and Tetroe (1987) and Woodall (2000) in the relationship of language-switching, L2 proficiency, and task difficulty. It is relevant to mention that neither task difficulty nor topic knowledge were variables in this research study, but they seemed significant factors for the advanced learners at the high school level in deciding which language to use for academic tasks.

The main objective in studying this hypothesis was to find out whether first language use at the lexical level was perceived as an effective strategy by the participants. Findings of this research study indicate that writing in the L1 for later translation is perceived as a constraint by the college-level participants, but favored by the high school participants. However, none of the advanced English learners at the high school level (those who thought L1 used in writing might be an advantage) relied on Spanish while developing the writing topic for this research. There is always the possibility that in a focus group, participants may want to share the perceptions of other participants, although they were instructed to express their own thoughts even if they

differed from those of other participants, but I cannot discard the possibility of that being the case with some of the high school participants.

I must point out that some of the high school participants did not seem to be aware of their first language use when writing in English and contradicted their opinions regarding first language use for English writing. For the college-level participants, relying on Spanish was double work and content was difficult to translate, which implies that at some point in their English writing they have attempted to use their L1 in composing in English, but noticed that it did not work to their benefit. To summarize findings on the fourth hypothesis, the college-level participants perceived writing directly in English to be more convenient than relying on Spanish. Even when it seemed easier to write in their L1, they avoided it because meaning changes in translation.

Data from the focus group suggest that language switching is not perceived as a useful strategy that could be used to benefit English composition by an individual learning English in a non-English-speaking country. If the L2 learner is interested in improving English language skills, relying on Spanish is perceived as a limitation.

6.4.5 Language Switching and the Learning Context

The objective of this section is to briefly discuss the diversity of the English learning contexts of the participants recruited in this study and how the social and academic context expectations may aid or hinder the learning of English as a second language. A crucial factor to consider with regard to findings in this research is the learning context in which the participants of this study were recruited. Woodall (2000, p.

116) is one of the few who have found “a significant relationship between language-switching and language context,” in a research with L2 writers in the U.S., but since it was beyond the scope in his study, details for understanding such relationships were not provided.

I believe that the English proficiency of the participants in this research study was to some extent related to the learning context in which they were learning English. Thus, one of my arguments is that for the participants who were learning English in the U.S., English was learned in a natural context (i.e., English is the language of function in the community) and with continuous exposure to English, these learners “effortlessly gain near-native-like control” (Cohen, 1998, p. 186) of English language skills. Therefore, their first language (Spanish) was not necessary to function in the social or academic contexts in the U.S.

On the other hand, the case for the participants learning English in Puerto Rico was different because the English language is not necessary for communication in the social context of Puerto Rico. The English proficiency of the participants learning English in Puerto Rico was at a very low level, even for the participants classified as intermediate English learners for this study. My point is that since the language of function and meaning in Puerto Rico is Spanish, these participants may have been more receptive to using the language representative of their cultural identity while writing because it is the language that is meaningful for them within their social context.

From the perspective of second language acquisition studies, researchers studying factors related to the acquisition of English as a second language point out that a

“naturalistic context” in which learning occurs as an “active process of construction . . . driven by the need and desire to communicate” is important for second language acquisition (Cummins, 1994, p. 36). Moreover, the “cognitive and linguistic demands” from the “social and educational environment” in which these second language learners are expected to function are related to an individual’s conversational and academic English language skills (Cummins, p.40). Certainly, for the case of the high school participants, English proficiency seemed to be related to the fact that they have been living in an English-speaking country for many years. For these participants, the learning of English seemed to have occurred in a meaningful way. Despite being able to learn the conversational skills acquired outside a classroom, these learners had the advantage of learning academic English with native English speakers. Other factors that may influence the rate of English language development among the high school participants is peer pressure, as some of them mentioned their frequent use of English with friends. This peer pressure is also related to the fact that the first language for the high school participants has been gradually lost.

I conclude that for the high school participants, the learning context is a determinant factor that may be related to the language they use for academic tasks. As was the case in the writing exercise for this study, with the exception of the participant from Brazil, the participants at the intermediate level did not rely on their Spanish language skills to develop the writing exercise in English because it did not seem relevant to them in the social and academic context within which they have to function. In addition, the length of time they have spent in the U.S. seemed to have affected their

frequent use of Spanish. Even if they were able to speak Spanish, it may be meaningful for them to use it in some circumstances such as with friends or relatives, but not in an academic context. I believe these are plausible explanations for why language switching was less likely to occur in the writing of the high school participants. It also is a reason why I consider the learning context to be a significant factor that may be related to the frequency of language switching for the Latino participants learning English in the U.S.

On the other hand, in the case of the college-level participants who were learning English as a second language in Puerto Rico, the situation was different. According to data from the college-level participants in this study, it seemed that living in a place where Spanish is the vernacular language and the language representative of cultural identity, the need for using a second language such as English is of less concern. Even when the college-level participants in this research could speak and understand English, its use is not essential for negotiation of meaning in the social context, and consequently will be used less often than Spanish. This means that for academic tasks to be completed in English, the college-level participants may rely on their most proficient language, Spanish. As Huckin (1992) states “. . . individuals do not write in a vacuum. They belong to discourse communities, they have socially influenced purposes and goals . . . they live and perform in some multi-variegated, sociocultural *context*” (p. 85). This implies that even when an individual needs to complete a task in English as a second language, as in the case of the college-level participants, the sociocultural context with which they identify can exert some influence in the writing.

I must make the observation that during the focus group discussion, I noticed that most of the college-level participants were very proud of reporting Spanish to be their native language. What seemed significant for them was the fact that Spanish was the language they were raised with and representative of their Puerto Rican identity. Perhaps this relation of “language, identity, and context” (Mitchell & Myles, 1998, p. 169), perceived through the college-level participants’ comments in the focus group, is related to their interest, attitude, and motivation for learning English in Puerto Rico. Therefore, motivation is a factor that needs to be considered for understanding the relationship that may exist with language, identity, and context among the Puerto Rican participants.

With respect to language switching and the perceived motivation⁹ for learning English among the participants in Puerto Rico, data suggest that the participants who were motivated to live in the U.S. (as expressed in the writing exercise for this study) switched languages less often than those who stated preference for living in Puerto Rico. To be specific, a majority (73%) of the participants who were classified as intermediate English learners seemed to have a strong desire to move to the U.S. This implies that, for these participants, the need to learn English is significant, and they will try to become better English language learners. Consequently, they may avoid the use of Spanish in tasks to be completed in English in an academic context because use of Spanish may interfere with their ability to master English.

Contrary to the case of the college-level participants at the intermediate level, a majority (83%) of the least proficient participants (classified as beginner English learners

⁹ Motivation in this study refers to “A social psychological factor frequently used to account for differential success in learning a second language” (Gass & Selinker, 1994, p. 250).

for this study) expressed interest in living in Puerto Rico. The least proficient participants seemed to be very tied to their culture, traditions, and family, according to their own compositions. Language-switching occurred more often in the writing of the least proficient participants, which can be interpreted as resistance to learning English or lack of motivation since they did not seem to have any particular interest in the language beyond that of its being a requirement for college graduation. Therefore, for these participants, it may be the case that using Spanish while developing a writing exercise in English was not going to affect their professional goals, contrary to the perceptions of the participants at the intermediate level.

Although there was a variation in the frequency of language switching among the college-level participants, their first language- -Spanish- -seemed to have influenced their behavior of thinking in Spanish when completing a task in English. I believe that the social and academic context in which the Puerto Rican participants were learning English as a second language does not provide for the opportunity to practice the language and limits the progress of the English language learner. Thus, the Puerto Ricans in this study live surrounded by Spanish-speaking people. With Spanish used in the media, and Spanish being the language representative of their identity, it is more likely for them to think in Spanish and write in Spanish, than in English.

It is noteworthy to mention that in the case of the Puerto Rican students, motivation for learning English may be related to the general view of Puerto Rican society toward the learning of English and how it is transmitted to the community over the years. To be specific, the learning of English in Puerto Rico has been perceived by

many as a threat to their cultural identity, which dates back to the 1900's, when political leaders formed movements against the teaching of English in Puerto Rico (Algren, 1987). On many occasions, Puerto Ricans have expressed their interest or disinterest in learning English, depending on their political affiliations (Vicente, 2000). However, the relationship of motivation, identity, social context, and learning English as a second language in Puerto Rico is out of the scope in this study and an area for exploration in future research.

Overall, data from this study provide background for studying language switching in diverse ESL contexts by considering the social and academic context of the participants under study. Atkinson (2003) provides a perspective for researching second-language writing within all aspects of the learning and academic contexts, including the writing purpose, audience, and the teacher's role in the social context in which he or she is teaching. As Leki (2000) pointed out, with the diversity of L2 learners in North America, "the learners themselves and their specific learning environment become much more at issue" (p. 102).

6.5 Concluding Remarks

Many research studies on second language writing are exploratory and relating findings of this research study to those of previous research depends on the objectives, variables, and research methods of the studies. It was my objective to describe language switching at the lexical level, as identified with words written in Spanish by the Latino participants while they were completing a writing exercise in English. In contrast, most

of the research concerned with the role of L1 on L2 writing has focused on the cognitive processes of L2 writing, and L1 use has been measured through think-aloud protocols, which differs from the research methods employed in this study. Moreover, considering that previous studies in second language writing do not address generational differences of Latino ESL writers with differing English proficiency levels learning English in diverse ESL contexts, additional research is needed to confirm or contradict findings of this study.

As mentioned earlier, a difference between this dissertation and previous research on the role of L1 in L2 writing is the methodology and variables considered for study. Since this dissertation reflects an interdisciplinary approach, I decided to include a focus group, a research method commonly used in education, but not in second language writing. In addition, this is one of the few research studies exploring language switching that did not consider think-aloud protocols for studying the L1 (Spanish) influence on the composing process of a writing task to be completed in the L2 (English). I must clarify that I did not consider thinking-aloud as a research method for this study because the focus in my research study was toward language switching at the lexical level, and not on verbalized thoughts when writing in the L2. Another objection against the think-aloud method is that I do not believe it is appropriate for researching the composing process of ESL writers. Asking a low proficient ESL writer to verbalize thoughts while writing in a language that is difficult at the morphological, phonological, syntactical, and semantic level may be confusing for the writer and to some extent may influence the outcome of the study.

It is relevant to note that when I originally designed this study, I thought I was going to be able to measure the frequency of first-language use in the English writing of Latinos in the U.S. (high school participants). However, I noticed that I missed the fact that “second language acquisition occurs most easily and rapidly in the target language environment and culture” (Cohen, 1998, p. 186); and for the high school participants, the language input received in the social context was a factor I needed to consider when designing the study.

In addition, when I recruited the high school participants, I focused more on their ethnic origin (as being of a particular Latino ethnic subgroup) and on their generational status as factors that might be related to their frequency of first-language use when writing in English. However, the findings of this research study suggest that although ethnic origin and generational status are important characteristics in identifying an ESL learner, being a first-generation Puerto Rican, a first-generation Mexican, or second-generation Panamanian did not mean that the participant is a fluent Spanish speaker or bilingual (i.e., fluent in Spanish and English as in the case for P4 in this research study). Perhaps the opposite is true, and the student is a monolingual English speaker.

It was evident for some of the high school participants that their knowledge of their L1, Spanish, has deteriorated with the learning and exposure of English. When I discovered that the situation for these participants was the opposite from what I expected, measuring language switching with them seemed irrelevant to some extent. An

explanation was clear: the learning context in which these participants were acquiring English helped with their English language development, and dealing with English-speaking people on a daily basis would marginalize their need to use the Spanish language. Moreover, the age at which these participants began learning English seemed to be crucial to their English language development because a majority have been educated in English in the U.S. since Kindergarten.

After I analyzed data for the high school participants, I realized that one of the most significant criteria for studying language switching was that the participant needed to be proficient in the L1 and that the participant had to be learning English as a second language. When I decided to collect data in Puerto Rico, I knew that English in Puerto Rico is learned as a second language, and I could tell with certainty that the majority of the students in Puerto Rico were native Spanish speakers and ESL learners.

After I collected data in Puerto Rico, it turned out that the situation for Puerto Ricans was what I expected regarding the participants meeting the criteria necessary for researching language switching. However, the situation for the Puerto Ricans was the opposite of that from the Latinos in the U.S. (high school participants) because the Puerto Ricans were fluent in Spanish, but their English proficiency was at a very low level. Perhaps a plausible explanation is that English in Puerto Rico is limited to the academic context and is not necessary for communication within the social context. Thus, I consider that the learning context is a variable that needs to be taken into consideration for researching language switching in diverse ESL contexts and perhaps it needs to be controlled as much as possible to avoid influencing the outcome of the study.

The findings of this study cannot be generalized to the Latino population in the U.S. or to all Puerto Ricans learning English in Puerto Rico because of the sample size. In addition, it will not be accurate to consider the high school participants as a homogeneous group because Latinos in the U.S. are very diverse in many respects, as was the case in this research study. For instance, the Latinos in this study represented different ethnic subgroups and cultures, with further educational and linguistic differences. In addition, the socio-economic status of the participants may have been diverse, as in the case of P2 and P3, who had to pay tuition in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District while participating in an exchange program. Moreover, the socio-economic status of the parents of P2 and P3 seemed to be high in their country of origin (Brazil and Mexico) since not everyone can afford to provide such educational opportunities for their children.

Generalizing findings of this study does not seem appropriate because of differences in the learning contexts, differences in learners' goals in studying English as a second language, and because of the many factors that may have aided or impeded successful second language acquisition among the participants. Variables such as age differences, individual differences, age of second language acquisition, gender, and attitudes toward the learning of English, including motivation for learning English in Puerto Rico, were not considered for this research study; as with any extraneous variable, these may have exerted some influence on the outcome of the study.

In the final chapter of this dissertation, I discuss the pedagogical implications of this research study as related to assessment of English second language learners in the U.S. and for the teaching of writing of English as a second language in Puerto Rico. I also provide some recommendations for further research, and address major limitations of the study.

Chapter 7: Conclusion

I conclude this dissertation by reflecting on the implications of the findings for teaching second language writing to Latino students learning English in the U.S and for Puerto Ricans learning English in Puerto Rico. I also suggest areas for further research that can be explored in relation to language switching in English Second Language writing. I also address the limitations of this research study.

It is noteworthy to mention that due to the variation in the frequency of language switching in the writing for the high school and college-level participants, this chapter focuses more on the implications for the teaching of writing in English in Puerto Rico than in the U.S. However, I do not intend to place less value on the data collected with the high school participants (referred to as Latinos in the U.S. in this research study). My point here is that since language switching did not occur at the lexical level as I expected among the high school participants, the implications for teaching English to these students are different.

Moreover, the implications for teaching Latinos in the U.S. are more concerned with the criteria that seem to be relevant for ESL programs when doing needs assessment of school-age Latinos. Specifically, when evaluating the English language proficiency of non-English speakers, as is the case for many Latinos, the ESL program managers need to consider criteria such as previous school experience (in the L1 or in English) in the

student's country of origin, previous school experiences in the U.S., L1 literacy, cultural background, and the parents' goal toward bilingualism, among other characteristics that seem pertinent.

7.1 Pedagogical Implications

Teaching English composition to Latino students in the U.S. may take a different approach than the one needed for the teaching of English composition to Latinos in Puerto Rico, where the dominant language is Spanish. Even when Latino students in the U.S. have low proficiency in English, their second language development is expected to improve at a faster rate than that of those learning English in a country where Spanish is the dominant language. Thus, first-language influence and language switching in the writing of students in the U.S. will be less dominant. In addition, the types of errors most common may be mechanical and occasionally at the morphological, lexical, or syntactic level, as was the case for the high school participants in this research study.

In teaching English composition to Latino students who are immersed in a society where English is spoken all around the community, the main objective may be on composing competence rather than linguistic competence, which they will acquire with exposure to the language. Considering the length of time that the high school participants in this study have attended school in the U.S., their development of English language seemed to happen relatively quickly. Even when the high school participants were able to speak and understand their first language, they preferred to speak English because English is spoken all around them. Consequently, the social context is significant in

promoting and reinforcing the language used by the community (in this case the use of English in the U.S.), which eventually aids in language acquisition.

Although language switching did not occur as I expected in the writing of Latinos learning English in the U.S. (the high school participants), their demographic characteristics seemed to be important for understanding the diversity of Latinos in the U.S. This means that it will not be accurate to report data by simply grouping the research participants as Latinos. It must be taken into consideration that Latinos are diverse in many aspects. For instance, ESL instructors need to learn where the students come from, why they live in the U.S., and what motivates them to migrate¹⁰ within the U.S. or to emigrate/immigrate¹¹ from their country of origin provides a sense of direction for teaching these second language learners.

After analyzing data for the high school Latinos learning English in the U.S., I noticed that the second-generation Latinos were monolingual speakers of English, and not bilingual, as I had expected. I realized that, besides knowing the level of English proficiency for the high school participants, it was also relevant to know about the students' L1 literacy in order to measure language switching. However, this kind of data is rarely recorded in a school district.

I believe that learning about a student's L1 literacy may be an important factor to be measured by ESL programs evaluating non-English speakers because L1 literacy can make a difference in the rate at which a second language is learned. Moreover, educating

¹⁰ "...migration refers to the movement of people across a boundary such as a national, state, or country border for the purpose of establishing a new permanent residence" (Williams, 2004, p.4).

¹¹ Immigration refers to "movement across international boundaries" (Williams, p. 4).

parents about the importance of first language maintenance (which will help to avoid L1 loss) with school-age children will aid in the English language development of those children (Bérubé, 2000). For instance, if a student's writing and rhetorical organization ability in the L1 is good, then it is expected for this learner to acquire writing ability in the L2 at a faster pace.

The school district needs to encourage parents of non-English speakers for “. . . early childhood bilingualism” in a way that “. . . second language acquisition does not occur at the expense of losing the native language along the way” (Bérubé, 2000, p. 128), as in the case of some high school participants in this research. However, one must note that school policies vary for each state, and even when parents of non-English speakers in the U.S. have an interest in raising bilingual children, the resources in the school system to promote bilingualism may be limited or inexistent.

In Fairbanks, Alaska, the school district provides support services such as tutoring or interpreters to non-English speakers, but once the learner becomes proficient in English, the student exits the ESL program, and the support services are no longer necessary. Once this happens, this means that the school district has accomplished its goal of having non-English speakers become academically proficient in English. However, little emphasis is given to the first language maintenance of the non-English speaker. This may be due in part to the school district's priority of meeting the accountability requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act in which race (e.g., Hispanic) and being Limited English Proficient are two of the criteria for which schools are evaluated in meeting adequate yearly progress.

Reconsidering language switching as an important variable for understanding the writing of English Second Language learners as in the case for the participants in Puerto Rico, I realized that the implications of language switching are relevant to both the writing instructor and the ESL learner. The ESL learner needs to find out how to use the L1 to his or her benefit instead of as a constraint that ends up affecting the quality of text. For the writing instructor, language switching is an issue and a reality that needs to be taken into consideration during the assessment, evaluation, and teaching of writing in English as a second language.

Teachers of English Second Language writers at a beginning level should give special attention to the influence of their first language in the writing of these learners. One-on-one conferences and frequent feedback to L2 learners at the beginning level are necessary to help the student overcome the difficulties of writing in a second language, enabling them to feel confident about errors that are natural when learning a second language, and helping them to learn to identify when word-for-word translation as well as false cognates affect sentence structure.

According to data obtained from the high school and college-level participants, they are familiar with two possible language-switching behaviors: (a) thinking in Spanish and mentally translating into English, which they referred to as mental translation, and (b) writing in Spanish for later translation into English by looking at the Spanish version on the side, which they referred to as content translation. Although I did not measure language switching in the cognitive process of composing in English among the participants in this research study, it was evident that for the college-level participants,

mental translation from Spanish was one way of generating text in English. However, this mental translation strategy did not seem to help. Instead, it interfered with English writing at the sentence level. Specifically, word-for-word translation from Spanish into English, and in some cases, false cognates or transliterations, seemed to be influenced by an uncontrolled use of Spanish. Thus, the teaching of sentence word order, use of vocabulary in context, and word form must be a part of any writing course, since these elements turned out provide of great difficulty for Puerto Rican students when writing in English.

The previous suggestion is not limited to Puerto Rican students, but to all ESL learners at a beginning stage of second-language acquisition. The reason why I focus in the case for the students in Puerto Rico is that these participants had difficulty with English grammar and vocabulary that to some extent limited their coherent expression of ideas in writing. This implies that it is necessary to provide ESL learners with meaningful practice of writing in the second language, although it is a challenge when the language used in the social context is Spanish, or some other language besides English.

It is also important for a writing instructor of English in Puerto Rico to be aware of differences between the Spanish and English languages, which make up one of many factors known to influence errors at the morphological, lexical, and syntactic level in the writing of ESL learners. However, caution must be exercised in over-generalizing the types of ESL errors that appear to be common among Puerto Ricans. In the research for this study, participants varied in their L2 proficiency and “different students may make distinct types of errors” (Ferris, 2002, p. 53).

Another point I must consider regarding the teaching of English composition in Puerto Rico is the social context in which the participants learned English and the opportunities for practicing the language within the community. Even when I expected language switching to be evident in the writing of the college-level participants with an intermediate English proficiency level, I did not expect the sentences in their writing to be translated word-for-word, including false cognates and transliterations. However, I believe this type of error reflects a participant's linguistic knowledge in the second language, which may have been influenced by Spanish, the language used in the social context.

The exposure to Spanish language on a daily basis contributes to its being readily available for speaking and perhaps for thinking, leading an individual to rely on it first because it is easier and faster than operating in the second language. Thus, considering that the practice of English language skills in Puerto Rico is limited in most cases to the classroom setting and occasionally to the workplace, a student learning English in Puerto Rico needs practice in English writing such as journal entries that are not always to be graded. This kind of writing can be used to encourage the student to focus on content development, with less emphasis on grammar correction, which may be beneficial for development of writing skills in the second language.

In addition, I recommend writing instructors of ESL in Puerto Rico to challenge students with writing tasks in different writing modes and levels of task difficulty since these are factors known to affect language switching. Although these factors were out of the scope of this research study, some participants perceived first language use to be

dependent on task difficulty. The objective of this kind of writing task is to provide the students with various writing opportunities in which they can identify how their first language is available in different writing situations. I believe that once students learn to recognize the most common errors in their writing associated with thinking or writing in the first language, they can begin to avoid them. When a student's English composition has false cognates and transliterations from Spanish, it is time for the instructor to approach those errors with mini-grammar lessons incorporated into the writing class.

Identifying strategies that may prove useful to second language learners can help in second language development as well as in their second language writing competence. However, as with any learning style, learning strategies may not be useful for all students, and students are not always conscious about using them (Cohen, 1998). Thus, teaching students to recognize what facilitates their development of a topic in English as a second language and learning how to avoid those techniques that work as a constraint should be part of the process in teaching writing as a second language. For instance, I must point out that although mental translation seemed to be a strategy used by the college-level participants of this research study, whether they were conscious of its use and benefits is uncertain and a concern that can be address in future research.

One must note that the college-level participants in this research study were from a realistic classroom setting, specifically from an academic English class during a summer session at a university in Puerto Rico. That means that this is the type of students an instructor from a basic English course may get in a summer session where the English proficiency of the students differs greatly and some of the students may be repeating the

course. The only thing common for all the students enrolled in that course was perhaps the fact that the course was a requirement for graduation, and that a majority of the students were enrolled in a remedial English course when they were freshman at UPR-M. I suggest that for the teaching of English courses, it is always relevant for a teacher to learn about a student's language background, major, years of study, expectations from the course, and major concerns of the student regarding English learning. Compiling characteristics of a student that are relevant to the course can assist in understanding a student and providing effective teaching methods.

7.2 Recommendations for Future Research

In the field of second language writing, research concerned with the role of first language influence on L2 writing still is ongoing, and findings such as those from this research study support the goals of other researchers in the area. However, as in most research, I end up with more questions than answers. These questions may be explored by other researchers interested in language switching among ESL writers.

Most previous research concerned with language switching has focused on the cognitive processes of composing in a second language and the role of a learner's first language in such a process. Additional research is needed for understanding how language switching varies according to individuals' attitude toward the second language and their level of anxiety, as these may influence second language development (Richard-Amato, 1996). As I noticed in the data from the college-level participants, frustration over lack of English knowledge among some of them seemed to inhibit their

development and practice of good English language skills, which eventually may contribute to relying on the first language.

In the writing of the college-level participants, the frequency of errors at the sentence level was problematic and in many occasions obscured meaning of the text. From a researcher's perspective, I can identify those sentence-level errors as being common among ESL writers, but from a teacher's perspective, I will need to find the best way to assess them in a student's writing. Thus, I found myself thinking about the debate between Truscott (1996, 1999) and Ferris (1999) regarding approaches to responding to students' writing.

I may feel hesitant about evaluating the writing of an ESL learner by simply indicating what type of error is present, wondering at the same time what is the best approach when sentence-level errors can be associated with an individual's interlanguage system of English learning. This means that the errors in the writing of the college-level participants may "represent an interlanguage stage in the development of writing skill and are indicative of progress rather than failure" (Horning, 1987, p. 32). Considering that in learning a second language "learners pass through a stage of language ability in which systematic error of various kinds occur" (Horning, p. 31), further research is needed to explore error analysis in relation to language switching at the lexical level from an interlanguage perspective. For such study, Yates and Kenkel (2002) provide background for research on sentence-level errors in writing from an interlanguage perspective.

Another observation from the data obtained in this research study is related to the motivation for learning English and its relationship to language switching. I noticed in

some of the participants' writings that those who favored moving outside of Puerto Rico (as addressed in the writing exercise for this study) wrote directly in English so they could practice the language and improve their English language skills. Some studies concerned with the importance of motivation for learning English as a second language in Puerto Rico among college level participants (Jiménez-Lugo, 2000; Vicente, 2000) may provide the background for a study focusing on different types of motivation (e.g., instrumental, integrative, intrinsic) and their relationship to language switching.

I also must point out that among the high school participants there was some interest in improving English language skills on the part of the participant from Mexico (P3) and the one from Brazil (P2). Although it was not clear whether two (P2 and P3) of the high school participants were participating in the exchange program in the U.S. with the objective of becoming better English learners, it was assumed that motivation for learning the English language may have brought them to the U.S. For instance, P3, from Mexico, mentioned that being English proficient in Mexico brings good job opportunities, perhaps because Mexico is a tourist destination. This implies that motivation for learning English as a second language is not limited to individuals in a non-English-speaking context, but to those who for various reasons live in an English-speaking country such as in the U.S. An important consideration when teaching ESL learners in the U.S. is that although the input received in the social context aids in second-language acquisition, the learner's motivation accounts for faster English language development.

Most of the research investigating first language use in the composing process of English writing considers ESL or EFL learners in the U.S. or from international settings such as China and Japan. Very few studies are concerned with language switching in the writing of learners from places such as Central America, South America, and the Caribbean. There is a need for research to examine language switching in the writing of other Latino students learning English in their country of origin (Central America, South America, and the Caribbean) where the English language is less dominant than in Puerto Rico, as in the case for learners in the Dominican Republic, where English is rarely used and is mostly associated with business. Such language switching study can also be approached considering that there are differences in the Latino dialects spoken by Peruvians, Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Ecuadorians, Mexicans, Mexican Americans, Chicanos, and all others from Central America, South America, and the Caribbean (Fromkin & Rodman, (1998). It will be interesting to study how word choice in language switching for learners of Latino countries varies when using Spanish for a task to be completed in English. I must explain that my point here is that, for example, a word used to refer to a jacket or shirt in Puerto Rico differs from that used by Mexicans when referring to the same object.

Based on information provided by some of the participants in the focus group conducted for this research study, I noticed that they were not always aware of whether they switched languages while writing. Some of the research participants mentioned that they did not rely on their first language while writing, though they actually did it in the notes or rough draft developed for this research study. Further studies in language

switching should consider exploring the conscious use of L1, specifically comparing what a student says he or she does when writing versus what he or she actually does. This kind of data will provide assistance in teaching students to identify whether what they do while developing a writing topic works as an aid or is a hindrance to producing effective text in a second language. Once students become conscious of which strategies work for them when writing in a second language, they can learn to recognize and manipulate them for their benefit.

Although I did not consider gender as a variable in this research study, I noticed that there was a difference in the frequency of language switching among female and male participants at the college level. The females at the college level relied more often on Spanish than the males; most of the females were also at a lower English proficiency level, while the majority of the males were at an intermediate English proficiency level. This gender difference has not been addressed in relation to language switching. One of the few articles concerned with gender in second language writing (Kubota 2003) seems to be relevant to address language switching from that perspective.

Various factors such as task difficulty, L1 writing ability, language proficiency, language group, and writing modes, among others, are associated with the frequency and duration of language switching in L2 writing. However, the importance of the writing task versus the time allocated for planning content and organizing ideas in paragraph format as a first draft need further consideration in studies of L2 writing.

I noticed that for some of the participants in this research study, time was a very important factor in deciding which language to use in the writing task. For some

participants, having enough time (which they did not define, but I believe they were referring to the time given at school for completing a task, which is sometimes about a week) was important in deciding whether to write content in the first language for later translation. Other participants considered the writing task for this research to be very important, as in the case of the college-level participants for whom the writing had a dual purpose, pedagogical and for research. Some participants indicated in the focus group that since the task was important, they tried to write in English, but the question would be to define what is considered to be an important task for students. Do they mean “important” because it is an essay to be graded?

Some participants in this research study suggested that they decide which language to use for a writing task depending on the language in which the task is written. One recommendation in identifying possible writing tasks to complete for research purposes is the language used in the instructions for the task. A study conducted by Wang and Wen (2002) may work as the background for such type of research since the language used in one of the writing tasks in their research seemed to influence the outcome of their study.

Although second-language proficiency has been a significant factor related to the frequency of language switching, there is a need for research studying the effect of English language development on language switching at the lexical level for Latino participants since most of the research focuses on English proficiency at a specific time, but there is very little focus on language development. This further study should consider a pre-test and a post-test of second-language writing, as well as development of second-

language skills perhaps in a semester based study, or an even longer period of time. Such study will provide useful data with respect to a decrease in language switching when language development improves. Moreover, such a study will be valuable in understanding how the frequency of language switching may be affected when an individual's composing competence improves.

7.3 Limitations of the Study

Due to the voluntary nature of the study and to the slow process of approval for recruitment of high school participants, the sample size turned out to be smaller than I expected. A total of 40 students of Latino descent were contacted for participation in this research study, but only eight participants were recruited. Moreover, although most of the participants at the high-school level were Latino, not all were learning English as a second language. This means that some of the high school participants considered English to be their first language, and they were learning Spanish as an elective in school. Moreover, the small sample size did not provide for representation of Latinos who were recent immigrants moving to Alaska directly from their country of origin.

The main objective of the English Language Learner Program of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District is to provide a needs assessment to identify non-English speakers. However, available information regarding students' demographics, ethnicity, fluency in a first language, and educational background is either limited or not recorded. This lack of information prior to conducting research involving students from the public schools in Fairbanks affects the recruitment process of research participants.

Because the English Language Learning program in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District focuses on the achievement of English language proficiency, a student's first language proficiency is not assessed through language proficiency tests. This means that when the high school participants in this study were recruited, I did not have enough data to determine their level of proficiency in Spanish. Access to the Parent Language Questionnaire provided information about the language spoken by the participant with family and friends, but not about their reading, listening, or writing abilities in Spanish. Therefore, a limitation of this study was the need to measure the participants' Spanish language proficiency or their academic writing ability in Spanish language prior to collecting any data. This would have provided a more balanced group of participants for whom English was a second language and Spanish the first language.

I must point out that the recruitment process was limiting in itself because of the parental consent necessary for minors and due to the systematic procedure for approval process with human subjects in research. Now I understand why most of the research concerned with the composing process of L2 writers and language switching involve adults or college level participants, and very few include school age participants. As Matsuda and De Pew (2002) stated:

In recent years, the advent of the use of human subjects in research protocols, though ethically sensible and important, may also have discouraged some researchers from working with minors, which requires parental consent and a more stringent review process. (pp. 262-63)

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Appendix A
Questionnaire - High School

Participant Code: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for helping with this research. Please provide the following information to give me a better understanding of your educational and language background. You may need assistance from your parents or guardians in answering some of the questions. The information you will provide is for the research study “The Composing Process of English Second Language Learners” and is strictly confidential. If this questionnaire is completed, consent for use of the information in written reports and oral presentations is granted.

START HERE:

1. Which language do you consider to be your first language?

- Spanish
- English
- Other Please specify: _____

2. Select one of the following groups that you identify yourself with:

- Hispanic Chicano/Chicana
- Latino/Latina Puerto Rican
- Mexican Mexican American
- Cuban Hispanic American
- Other Please specify: _____

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If you are from Central America or South America, please specify the country of origin:

Country of origin: _____

3. Have you ever studied Spanish in a country where only Spanish is spoken?

Yes

No

If yes, for how long? Indicate where and the number of years/months:

Where: _____ Years _____ Months

How old were you when you were there? _____

4. Have you ever traveled to places where Spanish is spoken?

Yes

No

If yes, tell me where and how long you were there:

Where: _____

How long: _____ Years _____ Months _____ Weeks _____ Days

5. Your knowledge of Spanish has been learned:

In formal courses

At home

Other Please specify: _____

6. Indicate what language you use the most when you are talking with your

	Spanish	English
Mother or Guardian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Father or Guardian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brother(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sister(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. How long have you attended school in the United States?

- 1 yr.
- 2 yrs.
- 3 yrs.
- Other Please specify: _____

8. Overall, indicate your English proficiency level.

- Beginner
- Intermediate
- Advanced

9. Indicate how you consider yourself to be in the following skills:

Excellent Very Good Good Limited Extremely Limited

English Language

Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Spanish Language

Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

10. What is your professional area of interest for pursuing a college education?

- Health-related programs (For example, Medicine, Pharmacy, Dental, Nurse)
- Business Administration (For example, Marketing, Tourism, Accounting, Computer)
- Education (Elementary, Secondary, Languages)
 - Teaching Spanish
 - Teaching English
- Law related studies
- Natural Sciences (Biology, Chemistry, Physics)

- Engineering (Electrical, Civil, Chemical, Mechanical)
- Communication and/or Journalism
- Other Please specify: _____

11. Which of the following will be a barrier for continuing your college education?

- Lack of family support
- Lack of financial support
- Committed to a full time job
- Other Please specify: _____

12. Indicate whether your parents, guardians or siblings speak Spanish at home.

- Father or Guardian: Yes No
- Mother or Guardian: Yes No
- Brother(s): Yes No
- Sister(s): Yes No

13. Is there any rule for speaking only Spanish in your house?

- Yes
- No
- Sometimes Please specify in what

situation: _____

14. Select the reason(s) why your parents or guardians live in Alaska:

- Military service
- Work with the oil industry
- State employee

- Self-employed
- Federal employee
- Job related to health services
- Job related to education or teaching services
- Job related to construction services
- Transfer by an employer
- Not job related
- Other Please specify: _____
- I do not know the reason

If there is anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences learning Spanish or English or about this questionnaire, please write it in the box below. Attach another sheet if you need additional space.

Thanks for your valuable information.

Some of these questions are adapted from Woodall (2000), Dillman (2000), and the Parent Language Questionnaire of the English Language Program of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District.

Appendix B

Focus Group Protocol - High School

Thank you for participating in this research study and for taking your time to join the group discussion. This session will last approximately 45 minutes and there will be no formal breaks. My name is Edna Jiménez and I am a doctoral graduate student with the Department of English at the University of Alaska Fairbanks. This research project deals with the writing skills in English of Latino students at the high school level in Fairbanks.

You were contacted for participation in this study because at the time of school enrollment your parents indicated that your family is of Hispanic descent. Like you, I also have a Hispanic background. I come from Puerto Rico. One of the objectives of the study is to have an informal discussion with you as participants. As you will notice, all of you have much in common and I would be very pleased to hear about your experiences in the writing sample you just completed.

There is no right or wrong response to the questions I will be asking you in this session. Your views may differ from those of the other participants in the group. I encourage you to feel free to express your own thoughts.

There are some rules that we want to observe during this session. This discussion is strictly confidential and no one should use identifying (name, last names) information. The conversation will be tape recorded with the purpose of transcribing and analyzing it,

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Date approved: 04-11-06

and I do not want to miss any of your answers. Refreshments are provided. Please help yourself and enjoy. Once the discussion begins, if you need to leave the room, please do so quietly.

The approach that we will take is that I will ask a question related to writing skills and to the writing sample you completed. Please respond one at a time, so everyone can have a turn. Please, when you begin to talk, identify yourself with the assigned participant code.

1. a. What language do you consider your native language? b. In what language do you feel most comfortable writing?
2. a. What is your perception of the instructions employed in the writing sample you just completed?
b. Do you think the instructions influenced the way you developed your writing? Please specify.
3. What do you think about the writing sample you just completed for this study if you compare it to the academic English writing tasks at your school? Explain in what ways it may be similar or different.
4. If at any time you wrote in Spanish while planning, developing and/or expressing your ideas in the task you just completed, do you think you could have written the same in English without the need for relying on Spanish? Explain.

5.
 - a. When you are asked to write about a topic in English, in what language do you begin writing notes and planning the content?
 - b. How frequently do you write in Spanish for English academic tasks?
6. For what reason(s) would you use Spanish in an English writing task?
7.
 - a. What do you consider to be an advantage of writing in Spanish in the planning stage of the writing process of an English writing task?
 - b. What will be a disadvantage of writing in Spanish while developing a topic in English?
 - c. Do you believe that writing directly in English will help you develop English proficiency?
8. When developing a writing topic in English, do you use a specific writing technique that speeds up or facilitates your writing?
9. When writing in English, do you first think in Spanish to decide what to write and then mentally translate your ideas to English? Or do you write in Spanish and then translate the content to English?
10.
 - a. How would you compare writing an essay in Spanish to writing an essay in English?
 - b. Which one is easier or more difficult for you?

Several probes may be used to encourage a more complete response. They include,

“WOULD YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN FURTHER?”

“WOULD YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT YOU MEAN?”

“WOULD YOU SAY MORE ABOUT THAT?”

“IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE?”

“PLEASE DESCRIBE WHAT YOU MEAN.”

“I DON’T UNDERSTAND.”

Some of the questions have been adapted from Cohen & Brooks-Carson (2001) and Woodall (2000). The protocol and probes are adopted from Reyes (1991).

Appendix C

Parental Consent and Student Assent Form

Participation in this research study is **voluntary**. It does not represent any risk to your son or daughter, and he or she can **withdraw** from participating at any time without any penalty. All identifying information (name, address, age) is **strictly confidential**. **A participant code will be assigned to each student. If you have questions now contact:**

Researcher: Edna Jiménez (907) 457-3750 ftej@uaf.edu

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Derick Burleson (907) 474-5230 ffdwb@uaf.edu

If you have questions later or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the Research Coordinator in the UAF Office of Research Integrity at (907) 474-7800 (in the Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (outside the Fairbanks area) or fyirb@uaf.edu by email.

Signing this form indicates that you have read it and authorize your son or daughter to participate in this research study as described in the participation letter.

Statement of Parental Consent for Participation

Parent or Guardian's Name	Signature	Date

IRB# 06-19

Date Approved: 04-11-06

Please indicate the records you will give me permission to access through the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District (FNSBSD):

- Academic transcript
- Test scores on the writing assessment of the High School Graduation Qualifying Exam
- Test scores on the English Language Proficiency Assessment (Speaking, Writing, Listening, and Reading)
- Parent Language Questionnaire administered by the English Language Learning Program

Statement of Student Assent for Participation

Name of Student	Signature of Student	Date
-----------------	----------------------	------

Please indicate whether you would like to receive a copy of the results of this study.

- Yes No

The procedures to be followed in this study have been reviewed and approved by personnel of the Program Planning and Evaluation Department of the FNSBSD and the Institutional Review Board at UAF.

Appendix D
Participation Letter

April 12, 2006

Dear Parent or Guardian:

I am a graduate student doing a doctoral research study as an academic requirement to complete a degree at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). The purpose of the study is to learn about the writing process in English among Latino students at the high school level in Fairbanks. For the study, I would like your authorization to contact your son or daughter at the high school he or she attends. The reason why your son or daughter is being asked to take part in this research study is because he or she is listed among the few Latino students at the high school level in the public schools of Fairbanks.

The participation of your son or daughter in this study will help educators in Alaska and in other states to meet the educational needs of Latino students. In addition, this study will expand our knowledge about the importance of culture and Spanish language maintenance for Latinos and the role that English as a second language has for the family. This information will be useful in improving the quality of the educational services provided to students in the public schools of Fairbanks who speak more than one language.

IRB# 06-19

Date Approved: 04-11-06

Participation in this study requires time from your son or daughter and following a procedure. Specifically your son or daughter:

- Will answer a questionnaire about education and language experience related to the student and the family that will be mailed to your house; completing the questionnaire should take approximately 10 minutes.
- For completing the rest of the procedure, we will meet in a school classroom one day right after school. I will discuss the specific day and time for the meeting with the school principal and your son or daughter.

During the school meeting:

- I will ask your son or daughter to provide a writing sample in English about a place he or she would like to live in; it will take approximately 25 minutes.
- Then, your son or daughter will have a 5-minute break.
- After that, we will have a group discussion with other participants to talk about writing skills and the writing sample your son or daughter just completed. The discussion will last about 45 minutes; **the discussion will be tape-recorded.**
- A healthy snack will be provided to the participants in the group discussion.

Once your son or daughter answers and returns the questionnaire, completes the writing sample, and participates in the group discussion, he or she will receive \$10 cash as a way of saying thanks for participating. The participation of your son or daughter in this study ends when the procedures described above are completed, unless your son or daughter has decided to withdraw from participating. A summary of the results of this

study will be presented in written reports, oral presentations, or publications in which your son or daughter and family name will remain anonymous. In addition to the information collected in the previously mentioned activities, I ask for your authorization to access some of the academic records of your son or daughter. These are detailed in the **Parental Consent and Student Assent Form**.

If you agree and authorize your son or daughter to participate in this research study, please sign and have your son or daughter sign the **Parental Consent and Student Assent Form** and return it in the pre-stamped envelope. In order for me to contact your son or daughter and begin the procedures described above, please fill out and return the **Student Contact Information Form**. Even if you do not want to be part of the study, please fill out and return the form titled **Student Contact Information**.

Thank you for your time,

Edna Jiménez, Graduate Student

Department of English, UAF

Appendix E
Student Contact Information Form

IRB# 06-19Date approved: 04-11-06

Please fill out this form and return it in the pre-stamped envelope. THANK YOU!

Student Name: _____	Grade: _____
Mailing Address: _____	Student e-mail: _____
_____	_____
Phone : _____	_____
Please let me know what day(s) and time(s) would be good to call you.	
Day(s): _____	
Time(s): _____	
Indicate your interest of being part of this study:	
<input type="checkbox"/> YES , I want to be part of this study.	
<input type="checkbox"/> NO , I do not want to be part of this study.	
If you have any questions about the project, please contact:	
Researcher: Edna Jiménez	(907) 457-3750 ftej@uaf.edu
Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Derick Bursleson	(907) 474-5230 ffdwb@uaf.edu

Appendix F

IRB Approval Letter



(907) 474-7800
 (907) 474-5444 fax
 fyirb@uaf.edu
 www.uaf.edu/irb

Institutional Review Board

909 N Koyukuk Dr. Suite 212, P.O. Box 757270, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7270

April 11, 2006

To: Derick Burleson, PhD
 Principal Investigator

From: Kelly Hochstetler, QIP Manager
 Office of Research Integrity

Re: IRB Protocol Application

Thank you for submitting the IRB protocol application identified below. This protocol was determined to qualify for expedited review. Therefore the review of your protocol application was done by representative members of the IRB. On behalf of the IRB, I am pleased to inform you that your protocol has been approved.

Protocol #: 06-19

Title: *The Composing Process of English Second Language Learners*

Level: Expedited

Received: March 21, 2006
 April 11, 2006 (revised supporting documents)

Approved: April 11, 2006

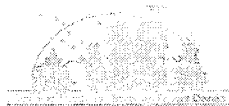
Renewal: Continuing Review must be completed by April 11, 2007.
Note: We recommend you submit all continuing review documents approximately one month prior to the due date to prevent delays in your research.

Any modification or change to this protocol must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Modification Request Forms are available on the IRB website (<http://www.uaf.edu/irb/Forms.htm>). Please contact the Office of Research Integrity if you have any questions regarding IRB policies or procedures.



Appendix G

FNSBSD Approval Letter



FAIRBANKS NORTH STAR BOROUGH SCHOOL
DISTRICT
520 FIFTH AVENUE

FAIRBANKS, ALASKA 99701-4756 (907)452-2000



April 11, 2006

Ms. Edna Jimenez-Lugo
1298 Prospect Drive
Fairbanks, AK 99709-3142

Dear Ms. Jimenez-Lugo:

This letter is written to officially inform you that your application to conduct research in the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District has been reviewed and approved.

This approval assumes that you will follow all regulations governing research projects as set forth in the administrative regulation that you received with your application. When your project is complete, please send a copy of the results to the Program Planning and Evaluation Department. If you have any questions, please call me at 452-2000 ext. 367. I wish you good luck with your research and will be very interested in the outcome.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Nicholas Stayrook".

Dr. Nicholas Stayrook
Chief Information Services Officer
Program Planning & Evaluation

NS/pdd

cc: M. Gatto, Principal, Lathrop High School

Appendix H
Informed Consent Form – College Level

IRB# 06-19

Date Approved: 06-01-06

Description of the Study:

I am a graduate student doing a doctoral research study as an academic requirement to complete a degree at the University of Alaska Fairbanks (UAF). The purpose of this study is to learn about the writing process of English second language learners at the College level.

You are being asked to take part in this study because you may be of Hispanic/Puerto Rican descent and you are enrolled in a Basic English course (INGL 3102) at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus. Please read this form and ask any questions you may have before you agree to be in the study. If you decide to take part, while you are attending the basic English course mentioned above, you will be asked to provide contact information, to fill out a short questionnaire about language and educational background, will provide a 25-minute writing sample, and will participate in a 45-minute group discussion about writing skills (which will be audio-recorded).

Confidentiality:

All identifying information (name, address) and any information obtained about you from the research, including answers to questionnaires, will be strictly confidential. In addition, any information with your name attached will not be shared with anyone

outside the research team or your instructor. To assure confidentiality, a code will be assigned to each participant so no one can trace your answers to your name. The data derived from this study will be used in reports, presentations, and publications but you will not be individually identified.

Voluntary Nature of the Study:

Participation in this research study is voluntary. It does not represent any risk to you and you can withdraw from participating at any time without any penalty.

Contacts and Questions:

If you have questions now, feel free to ask me. If you have questions later or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact:

Researcher: Edna Jiménez (907) 457-3750 ftej@uaf.edu

Faculty Sponsor: Dr. Derick Burleson (907) 474-5230 ffdwb@uaf.edu

The Research Coordinator in the UAF Office of Research Integrity is (907) 474-7800 (in the Fairbanks area) or 1-866-876-7800 (outside the Fairbanks area) or fyirb@uaf.edu by email.

Statement of Consent:

Signing this form indicates that you understand the procedures described above and that you are at least eighteen (18) years old. You certify that your questions have been

Appendix I

Questionnaire - College Level

Participant Code: _____

Date: _____

Thank you for helping with this research. Please provide the following information to give me a better understanding of your educational and language background.

The information you will provide is for the research study “The Composing Process of English Second Language Learners” and is strictly confidential. If this questionnaire is completed, consent for use of the information in written reports and oral presentations is granted.

START HERE:

1. Which language do you consider to be your first language?

- Spanish
- English
- Other Please specify: _____

2. Select one of the following groups that you identify yourself with:

- Hispanic
- Chicano/Chicana
- Latino/Latina
- Puerto Rican
- Mexican
- Mexican American
- Cuban
- Hispanic American
- Other Please specify: _____

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If you are from Central America or South America, please specify the country of origin:

Country of origin: _____

3. Have you ever studied English in a country where only English is spoken?

Yes

No

If yes, for how long? Indicate where and the number of years/months:

Where: _____ Years _____ Months

How old were you when you were there? _____

4. Have you ever traveled to places where English is spoken?

Yes

No

If yes, tell me where and how long you were there:

Where: _____

How long: _____ Years _____ Months _____ Weeks _____ Days

5. Your knowledge of English has been learned:

In formal courses

At home

Other Please specify: _____

6. Indicate what language you use the most when you are talking with your

	Spanish	English
Mother or Guardian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Father or Guardian	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Brother(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sister(s)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Friends	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Children	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Roommates	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

7. Have you attended school in the United States or outside Puerto Rico?

- Yes If yes, for how long? _____ Where? _____
- No

8. Did you attend high school in Puerto Rico?

- Yes
- No

If yes, indicate what kind of school:

- Public school
- Private school → Specify: Bilingual, Spanish only, English only
- Other Please specify: _____

9. Overall, indicate your English proficiency level.

- Beginner
- Intermediate
- Advanced

10. Indicate how you consider yourself to be in the following skills:

Excellent Very Good Good Limited Extremely Limited

English Language

Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Spanish Language

Writing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Speaking	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Understanding	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Reading	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

11. Which of the following will be a barrier for continuing your college education?

- Lack of family support
- Lack of financial support
- Committed to a full time job
- Other Please specify: _____

12. Indicate what is the main source of support for your college tuition.

- scholarships (for example, Pell Grant)
- assistantship
- student loan
- self-supported

- family-supported
- Other Please specify _____

13. Indicate your Grade Point Average

- 4.00 - 3.50 A
- 3.49 - 3.00 B
- 2.99 - 2.50 C
- 2.49 - 2.00 D
- 1.99 - 0 F

14. Indicate your grade in the previous English course (INGL 3101).

- A
- B
- C
- D
- F

15. Is this the first time that you take INGL 3102?

- Yes
- No

16. Did you take a pre-basic English course (INGL 066)?

- Yes
- No

If there is anything else you would like to tell me about your experiences learning Spanish or English or about this questionnaire, please write it in the box below. Attach another sheet if you need additional space.

Thanks for your valuable information.

Some of these questions are adapted from Woodall (2000), Dillman (2000), and the Parent Language Questionnaire of the English Language Program of the Fairbanks North Star Borough School District.

Appendix J

Focus Group Protocol - College Level

One of the objectives of the study is to have an informal discussion with you as participants. This session will be part of the English class and will last approximately 45 minutes. This research project deals with the writing process of English second language learners at the College level. As you will notice, all of you have much in common and I would be very pleased to hear about your experiences in the writing sample you just completed. Like you, I also have a Hispanic background. I am from Puerto Rico.

There is no right or wrong response to the questions I will be asking you in this session. Your views may differ from those of the other participants in the group. I encourage you to feel free to express your own thoughts.

There are some rules that we want to observe during this session. This discussion is strictly confidential and no one should use identifying information (name, last names). The discussion will be audio-recorded with the purpose of transcribing and analyzing it, and I do not want to miss any of your answers. Once the discussion begins, if you need to leave the room, please do so quietly.

The approach that we will take is that I will ask a question related to writing skills and to the writing sample you completed. Please respond one at a time, so everyone can have a turn. Please, when you begin to talk, identify yourself with the assigned participant code.

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Date Approved: 06-01-06

1. a. What language do you consider your native language? b. In what language do you feel most comfortable writing?
2. When you are asked to write about a topic in English, in what language do you begin writing notes and planning the content?
3. If at any time you wrote in Spanish while planning, developing and/or expressing your ideas in the task you just completed, do you think you could have written the same in English without the need for relying on Spanish? Explain.
4. For what reason(s) would you use Spanish in an English writing task? b. How frequently do you write in Spanish for English academic tasks?
5. a. What do you consider to be an advantage and/or a disadvantage of writing in Spanish in the planning stage of the writing process of an English writing task?
b. Do you believe that writing directly in English will help you develop English proficiency?
6. When developing a writing topic in English, do you use a specific writing technique that speeds up or facilitates your writing?
7. When writing in English, do you first think in Spanish to decide what to write and then mentally translate your ideas to English? Or do you write in Spanish and then translate the content to English?
8. a. How would you compare writing an essay in Spanish to writing an essay in English?
b. Which one is easier or more difficult for you?

Several probes may be used to encourage a more complete response. They include,

“WOULD YOU PLEASE EXPLAIN FURTHER?”

“WOULD YOU GIVE ME AN EXAMPLE OF WHAT YOU MEAN?”

“WOULD YOU SAY MORE ABOUT THAT?”

“IS THERE ANYTHING ELSE?”

“PLEASE DESCRIBE WHAT YOU MEAN.”

“I DON’T UNDERSTAND.”

Some of the questions have been adapted from Cohen & Brooks-Carson (2001) and Woodall (2000). The protocol and probes are adopted from Reyes (1991).

Appendix K

UPR- Approval Letter

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH
Faculty of Arts and Sciences
University of Puerto Rico
Mayagüez Campus
PO Box 9265
Mayagüez, Puerto Rico 00681-9265
(787) 265-3847 - Ext. 3064



DEPARTAMENTO DE INGLES
Facultad de Artes y Ciencias
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May 22, 2006

Ms. Edna Jimenez-Lugo
1298 Prospect Drive
Fairbanks, AK 99709-3142

Dear Ms. Jimenez-Lugo:

We are pleased to inform you that your request to conduct research in the summer session course English 3102 at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez has been reviewed and approved.

Permission to conduct this research is contingent upon approval of your research by your own institution's human subjects review office and with the assumption that your research will solicit the voluntary and confidential participation of students in English 3102. Please bring a copy of the human subjects approval of your research from the University of Alaska.

Sincerely

Dr. Billy Woodall
Associate Professor
English Department
University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez

Dr. Beth Virtanen
Interim Director
English Department
University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez

Appendix L

IRB Modifications Approval



Institutional Review Board

909 N Koyukuk Dr. Suite 212, P.O. Box 757270, Fairbanks, Alaska 99775-7270

(907) 474-7800
 (907) 474-5444 fax
 fyirb@uaf.edu
 www.uaf.edu/irb

June 1, 2006

To: Derick Burleson, PhD
 Principal Investigator

From: Bridget Stockdale, Research Integrity Administrator
 Office of Research Integrity

Re: IRB Modification Request

Thank you for submitting the modification request for the protocol identified below. It has been reviewed and approved by members of the IRB. On behalf of the IRB, I am pleased to inform you that your request has been granted.

Protocol #: 06-19

Title: *The Composing Process of English Second Language Learners*

Modification: The consent form has been modified to fit a Puerto Rican college level audience. This time parental consent is not necessary and the participation letter has been eliminated. I will explain the purpose of the research to the students attending an English course (INGL 3102) at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus and will ask volunteers to participate in the study.

The topic of the writing sample has been modified. Specifically the word Alaska is substituted for the words Puerto Rico and as part of the instructions, the writing sample will serve for pedagogical and research purposes. In addition, the students' name in the writing sample will be required this time.

The focus group will be conducted in a classroom setting, as part of the English course (INGL 3102), and will be audio-recorded. Because of the college level audience, some questions were rephrased and placed in a different order. Two of the questions were eliminated (questions #2 and #3 from the previous focus group are not included for the group discussion this time).



The questionnaire has been modified to balance the kind of information necessary to meet the objectives of the research. Questions #10, #12, #13, and #14 from the previous questionnaire were eliminated because they do not apply to the Puerto Rican college level audience. Instead, questions #8, #12, #13, #14, #15, and #16 in the modified version of the questionnaire are designed to reflect the context of the English language learners at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus. In questions #3, #4 and #5 the word Spanish is substituted for the word English. In Question #6, the word "roommates" has been added. Question #7 has been rephrased.

Modifications to the instruments have been done for both English and Spanish versions. Regarding the procedure to conduct research, approximately 22 students may volunteer for the study including males and females of Hispanic background. Data will be collected in a classroom (during class time) of the Department of English at the University of Puerto Rico, Mayagüez Campus during the summer session in June 2006. Translation services will be provided to the students if necessary. There is no compensation for participation and it will require time from the student in providing a 25-minute writing sample and participating in a 45-minute group discussion. All collected data will be strictly confidential and identified with a code. Storage and retention of data is as described in the previous Human Subjects Protocol.

Level: Expedited
Received: May 22, 2006
Approved: June 1, 2006

Any modification or change to this protocol must be approved by the IRB prior to implementation. Modification Request Forms are available on the IRB website (<http://www.uaf.edu/irb/Forms.htm>). Please contact the Office of Research Integrity if you have any questions regarding IRB policies or procedures.

