

CHAPTER 4.00.6. FLUENCY IN SECOND-LANGUAGE AND IN MOTHER-TONGUE WRITING PROCESSES

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New technology has enabled a more precise analysis of writing processes when using chronometric studies, for instance, in analyzing on-line processes in writing. The limited capacity forces the writer to choose which processes s/he favours when producing a text rapidly under great pressure. The analysis of verbal fluency is closely related to the writer's textual organization at micro- and macrostructural levels. The writer tries to control the processes of conceptual, internal representations and ideas, and then convert them into language, which means manifold ideas being converted into linear text.

My research deals with the fluency of writing processes in Second Language compared with the fluency of writing processes in the mother tongue. The aim of my research was to investigate how fluency in writing activity is linked with pausal behaviour in the foreign and native language writer's processes of writing from the point of view of how it is manifest through their writing profile.

The corpus consisted of texts written in French by eleven Finnish university students of French (L2) and six native speakers of French (ERASMUS students) (L1) from different study fields. All Finnish students were female, their age varying between 20 and 23 (mean age = 21.6 years). Ten students studied French as their major subject, one had Swedish as a major and French as a minor subject. The French ERASMUS students, on the other hand, included four female and two male students between 20 and 24 years of age (mean age = 21.7 years). Their main subjects varied from political science to SLA studies, which means that their group was very heterogeneous. The Finnish students consisted mainly of third year students who participated in a course during which they were to write an academic dissertation of about 15 pages in French. The ERASMUS students were recruited from several departments in the university. All students participated in the test voluntarily, and furthermore, the Finnish students received feedback on their end product by native teachers. The number of participants reveals that our study was a case study, but on the other hand, the amount of data collected on pausal behaviour by means of the ScriptLog tool was so large that we could draw some generalizable conclusions regarding L2 and L1 pausal behaviour.

Both groups participated in a test that mainly consisted of two parts: a) an essay (between c. 150-200 words) written on ScriptLog, which is a tool for experimental research on the on-line process of writing, and b) an oral stimulated recall type verbal protocol where students verbalise in their mother tongue sequences of thought relevant to their task. In other words, each participant wrote one French essay (L2 or

L1) and in addition to this, five of the Finnish students wrote one essay in Finnish (L1). Moreover, these Finnish students and all the French students verbalized retrospectively on what they had done just before. In other words, the participants had as a stimulus their own writing appearing on the screen online just after finishing the writing activity. The duration of each verbalization was directly related to the duration of each writing session. The participants were left alone in the test place, and could manipulate the recorder buttons themselves. They were asked to say what they were doing during the writing session and to comment on any relevant items. They could themselves choose which part of the text they wished to comment on. In other words, what received their conscious attention in the writing process. Verbalizations were supposed to reveal some hidden cognitive processes during writing activity, even if not all processes are verbalisable, for instance automaticized processes, i.e., implicit knowledge and cognitive operations leading to another cannot be detected (Schooler and Fiore 1997).

They formed three different groups, namely 1) a group which wrote in L2 (= French), 2) a group which wrote in L2 (= French) and in L1 (= Finnish) who in addition verbalized these sessions, and 3) a group which wrote in L1 (= French) and verbalized the session. The writing sessions were carried out by means of the Scriptlog computer program (Strömqvist, S., & Karlsson, H. (2002). This means that all the writing processes were recorded so that afterwards we could analyse the pausal behaviour as well as the end product. The verbalization sessions were audiotaped and transcribed.

The results indicated statistical differences between the groups in pausal behavior, but there also was a lot of individual variation. I could moreover measure a personal pause length for every writer by means of the Hidden Markov Model (Uusipaikka 2006). The results give support to earlier research findings that L2 writers more often make longer pauses in every location throughout the process than writers in their L1. Nevertheless, there was also a difference between the mother tongues, Finnish and French: the Finns made longer pauses, but the French had more difficulties with lower-level cognitive activities (e.g. orthography) and therefore paused more often within a word. Finally, the different writing profiles did not predict the level of success in the final result (i.e. product). The results showed moreover that at the processing level writing approaches speaking, even if the result is quite different.

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