5-2010

Coping Strategies of L2 Writers During The Writing Process: Case Studies of Non-English Dominant Students in Mainstream English Composition Courses

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COPING STRATEGIES OF L2 WRITERS DURING THE WRITING PROCESS:

CASE STUDIES OF NON-ENGLISH DOMINANT STUDENTS

IN MAINSTREAM ENGLISH COMPOSITION COURSES

A Thesis

by

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Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Texas-Pan American
In partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

May 2010

Major Subject: English as a Second Language

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ABSTRACT

Jakulin Baruca, Petra., Coping Strategies of L2 Writers During the Writing Process: Case Studies of Non-English Dominant Students in Mainstream English Composition Courses. Master of Arts (MA), May, 2010, 97 pp., 5 tables, references, 50 titles, 2 appendices. This paper sheds light on the strategies L2 students use to overcome their difficulties with writing assignments in a mainstream composition class. The findings are based on the composite of data gathered by interviews with students, teachers, students' written reflections on their writing, and surveys. The first part of the findings presents the strategies L2 students employed and the in-depth analysis of each case study reveals students' rationale. It is concluded that L2 students are, in order to be successful, prepared to put a lot of effort in their writing assignments and that they develop a variety of strategies with which they take the responsibility for dealing with their differences.

DEDICATION

To my husband Arne, my family, and my friends who supported and encouraged me throughout this journey.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to thank the committee members for their help, guidance, and support. Many thanks to Dr. Pamela Anderson-Mejías, who kindly answered all my questions and provided insightful comments and to Dr. Deborah Cole, who helped and challenged me to make this thesis better. Many thanks also to Dr. Minhee Eom for her valuable feedback on my methodology part and to Dr. Yong Lang for his motivation and concern. I would especially like to thank my thesis chair, Dr. Bryan Meadows, who was always there to guide and encourage me, and to provide all the help that I needed.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The student body at U.S. universities is becoming more culturally, linguistically, and rhetorically diverse than ever. According to an Open Doors report (2009), published annually by the Institute of International Education (IIE) with support from the U.S. Department of State's Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs, the number of international undergraduate students in the U.S. has increased from 2007/08 to 2008/09 by 20.4% and from 2004/05 by 37%. This is the largest percentage increase in international student enrollment since 1980/81, and marks the third consecutive year of significant growth (with increases of 7% in 2007/08 and 3% in 2006/07).

University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA)

The following study about the strategies non-English dominant students develop while working on writing assignments for their English composition course was conducted at The University of Texas-Pan American (UTPA) which is located in the Lower Rio Grande Valley of Texas (LRGV) close to the Mexico border. Because of the unique demographic characteristics of this area, UTPA has a very specific student body.

The LRGV is a bilingual area where most permanent residents routinely use both Spanish and English for everyday communication. Both languages are used in the public school system, churches, and in the business domain (Mejías, Anderson-Mejías, & Carlson, 2003). According to the Census Bureau (2010) in the year 2000, more than 78% of the population (the number varies for each county) spoke a language other than English at home. In 2008 the majority (89%) of the population in the LRGV was Hispanic (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010).

UTPA is a large university with a rapidly growing international and multicultural population. In fact statistics from the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness on entering freshman and graduates for 2009 show that almost 7% of UTPA students were from areas other than LRGV, with 2.5% Mexicans and almost 1% of other foreign nationals (*Stats at a glance*, 2008). The proximity of the university with the Mexican-American border allows the Mexican students to travel back to their country during the weekends or even to commute between the countries on a daily bases, which is impossible for the other foreign students.

Non-English Dominant Students at UTPA

The overall residency distribution of UTPA students as presented by the Office of Institutional Research and Effectiveness described above leaves out the interesting picture of linguistic and cultural diversity of the UTPA students. Although the majority of the international students that are here on a student visa speak a language other than

English as their first language (L1), the English proficiency level of students coming from inside the U.S. border varies greatly.

As discussed above, LRGV is a bilingual area where the majority of the population speaks Spanish at home, but learns the English language apart from Spanish in public education. Moreover, some people grow up speaking both languages in their homes. As observed by Mejías et al. (2003) language cannot be linked to the ethnicity, as both Anglo-American populations and Mexican-American populations engage in various communicative situations in the Spanish language. Furthermore, due to the proximity of the university with Mexico, the mobility of the population and students between the two countries is high. Therefore, particularly in this area, the use of terms English as a Second Language (ESL) on the one hand which usually implies students' immigration to the U.S., and native English speaker (NES) on the other hand is inappropriate (Leung, Harris, and Rampton, 1997). Therefore, a more neutral term "non-English dominant" was decided upon for the studied population in this work.

Because of the lack of research focused on the non-English dominant population, the literature review presented in the following chapter will be based on the studies with ESL and L2 student writers. Therefore, when referring to the previous research, the originally used terms ESL (English as a Second Language), NES (Native English Speaker), NNES (Non-Native English Speaker) will be used.

First Year Writing Program at UTPA

UTPA offers two composition courses for incoming freshmen students: ENG 1301-Rhetoric & Composition I and ENG 1320/1301-Rhetoric & Composition I Writing

Studio. ENG 1301-Rhetoric & Composition I is equivalent to the typical freshman composition course found elsewhere and is designed to help students become more effective and confident writers as well as more active and engaged readers of complex texts. ENG 1320/1301-Rhetoric & Composition I Writing Studio, on the other hand, is designed for students who are categorized as developmental writers. According to the Institutional Developmental Education Plan of the Texas Success Initiative Program, students whose English ACT score is below 24 or SAT Verbal is lower than 550 and who have not yet attempted the TSI (Texas Success Initiative) Writing exam or those who did not pass THEA (Texas Higher Education Assessment) with the score of 240 are characterized as developmental writers and need to enroll in this course. The students attend the course for 6 hours a week, and it is taught by one instructor. At UTPA this developmental course is combined with a regular freshman composition course and is designed to address the diverse developmental writers' needs, questions, and interests. During the extra time, students engage in multiple conferences with their instructors and spend time getting additional peer feedback in small group workshops.

ENG 1320/1301-Rhetoric & Composition I Writing Studio

In this course, writing is taught by the process approach (Sommers, 1980; Pearl, 1979; Zamel, 1976, 1982, 1983). The emphasis is put on the awareness that good writing cannot be accomplished in one step, and that multiple attempts have to be made to produce an effective piece of text. The most common model of process writing is the one developed by Flower and Hayes (1981). Writing is seen as a non-linear, creative and exploratory process. The composing process consists of planning, writing and rewriting.

These stages, however, are not clearly separated, but are rather recursive, interactive, and most often simultaneous.

The teacher's role in this course is to guide students through the writing process, avoiding an emphasis on form, and helping them develop strategies to generate, draft, and refine their ideas. Students are encouraged to produce multiple drafts, enter into collaborative activities with other students giving and receive feedback, revise multiple times after peer and teacher feedback, and delay editing while focusing on surface level issues until the final stages of the writing process. Teachers also provide encouraging collaborative workshops and teacher-student conferences where students get additional suggestions on how to improve their drafts. Moreover, the teachers help their students to develop metacognitive awareness of their writing process, usually by asking them to write short papers in which they analyze and discuss the writing process they have undergone on the certain assignment.

The course follows the writing studies approach, which is topically oriented to reading and writing as scholarly inquiry and that encourages more realistic conceptions of writing to improve students' understanding of writing, rhetoric, language, and literacy (Downs and Wardle, 2007, p. 552). In this view, students are assigned four major projects throughout the semester which are topically oriented towards problems in reading, writing, and literacy. At the time of this study, the students were working on their first project in which they were asked to explore and analyze their reading, writing, and learning practices.

L1 versus L2 Writing

While for some of the students enrolled in the mentioned composition course the assignment is done in their L1, for the others working on the assigned project means using their L2.

Raimes (1985) and Silva (1992, 1993) among others proposed that the writing process of ESL students itself is different from that of the NES and that there are significant differences in both the content level of the text and the surface level. Raimes's (1985) ESL basic writers were not preoccupied as much with grammar problems and editing as basic L1 writers were but concentrated more on the challenge of finding the right words and sentences to express their intended meaning. Silva (1993) found that L2 writing was significantly different from L1 writing in both the composing process and in features of the written text (i.e. fluency, accuracy, quality, and structure).

Teachers in the composition course frequently observe that non-English dominant students use their L1s while working on the given assignments. In fact, the use of L1 has been a common topic of L2 writing research. It is generally accepted that direct translation from L1 to L2 does not have a positive effect on the writing process for L2 learners (Cohen, 2002). However, when the L1 was used in the beginning stages of the writing process with the intention to generate and brainstorm ideas and organize thoughts, it had a positive influence on the writings of less proficient writers.

Other Differences Between L1 and L2 Students

Non-English dominant writers are frequently misinterpreted as basic writers. However, it has been argued that ESL students are not like NS (Native Speaker) students

nor like basic NS writers either. Differences pointed out relate to their classroom behaviors, course expectations, comprehension of the target language, and communicative competence in the new culture (Leki, 1992).

While some believe that ESL writers are more similar to NS basic writers, Leki (1992) and Ferris and Hedgcock (2005) warn against this misconception. Differences exist in knowledge of the language and the writing systems, on the level of schematic and rhetorical knowledge, and in responses to composition instruction. For instance, ESL students may be more comfortable with formal academic language than NS are. They may have arrived in the U.S. already highly literate in their L1 and are able to transfer some of the writing strategies to the target language. They are also usually aware of linguistic errors they produce and are often highly motivated to improve their language.

Addressing the Needs of Non-English Dominant Writers

It is important for ESL students to be treated ethically, so that they enjoy the same benefits as their NS counterparts. Treating ESL students in an ethical manner includes proper understanding of their characteristics and needs and especially, being aware that their writing differs greatly from that of their NS peers. It also includes placement in a suitable learning context where instructors are knowledgeable about and have experience working with ESL writers (Silva, 1997).

Generally speaking, four different placement options, which are more or less designed to address the special needs of non-English dominant student writers, exist. These options are: mainstream classes, ESL writing classes, basic writing classes, and cross cultural writing classes. Silva (1994) fears that students who are placed in the

classes that do not serve their needs appropriately may be at a disadvantage over their NS peers and may not get all the needed extra time and treatment. Additionally, Silva points out that ESL students' linguistic, rhetorical, and cultural differences may not be addressed properly.

Raimes (1985) indicated that we cannot in any way believe that the same pedagogical approaches that work for NS writers would work for ESL writers as well. However, we should not assume that ESL writers need a lot of linguistic instruction in order to improve their writing. Instead, we should think about using a moderate amount of both.

Hinkel (2006) adopts the idea that "curriculum design in L2 writing instruction has to include grammar and vocabulary to enable L2 writers to communicate meaningfully and appropriately" (p. 124).

Friedrich (2006) proposes that instructors should conduct a needs assessment of their students to identify exactly what are their concerns and needs and tailor their courses around the identified needs.

On the other hand, Hyland (2003) sees the idea of teaching process writing as problematic and proposes a genre based approach. He argues that process approaches overemphasize individual cognition at the expense of language use by assuming that L1 writing is similar to L2 writing, overlooking L2 language difficulties, putting insufficient attention on product, and assuming all writing uses the same process.

Research Questions

At UTPA two options of freshmen composition classes are available to students, but neither of them is designed to specifically address the special needs of non-English dominant student writers. It is left to the instructors to recognize students' needs and address them in their best ways. On the other hand, non-English dominant students need to recognize their difficulties and develop strategies in order to work on the assignments given in the composition course and to compete with their English-dominant peers.

Considering the needs and characteristics of non-English dominant student writers, the following two research questions were developed: (1) What strategies do non-English dominant students employ to address the difficulties they have with writing assignments in the composition courses? and (2) How do some successful students implement different strategies to address their difficulties when working on writing assignments for the mainstream composition course?

The goal of this qualitative study was to shed light on and produce a list of strategies that ESL students use when engaged in actual assignments for their English writing classes. Moreover, the students' rationale behind implementing each strategy and how they perceived the usefulness of each strategy they used was investigated. One of the advantages of this study is that the strategies were allowed to emerge from students' behavior (i.e., emic perspectives) without presupposing any categories of strategies beforehand. In this study the full picture of strategies used by these students could be developed. The profiles of the students featured in this study also help us to better understand the struggle these students go through during the writing process to produce the initial drafts of a given assignment for their class. These personal stories shed light on

an aspect of the writing process that I, as a composition instructor, was curious about and

which is also frequently invisible to most composition teachers.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

ESL writing is a complex field which developed out of two other disciplines. Silva and

Leki (2004) wrote that "L2 writing lies at the crossroads of composition studies and

applied linguistics" (p. 1). According to Silva (1990) the development of pedagogical

approaches occurred in four stages, which achieved their peaks and then faded away, but

never really disappeared. The four approaches are: controlled composition, current-

traditional rhetoric, the process approach, and English for specific purposes. According to

Reid (1993) composition evolved through approaches of controlled writing, "free" or

guided writing, language-based writing, pattern or product approach, and the process

movement. Matsuda (2003) talks about writing as a sentence-level structure, writing as a

discourse level structure, writing as a process, and last writing as language use in context.

The reminder of this section presents the characteristics and points out the issues of the

process approach to ESL writing, which is one of the most often used approaches in

composition classrooms today, including UTPA.

A Process Approach to Writing

The process approach has been one of the most influential approaches in writing

courses today, emphasizing the importance of the complexity of the writing process

rather than the form of the final product. It was developed as a response to completely

formal views of writing where practicing writing meant organizing ideas into well structured paragraphs which would fit the patterns of preexisting forms. Ferris and Hedgcock (2005, p. 6) define process-oriented writing as a process that focuses particularly on procedures for solving problems, discovering ideas, expressing them in writing, and revising emergent texts. They point out that the authentic characteristics of the process approach to teaching writing in both L1 and L2 were the organization of writing in various stages which include invention and pre-writing, drafting, abundant text level revisions, collaborative writing, and organized feedback sessions. The editing process, on the other hand, is necessarily postponed until the final stages of the composing cycle. The obvious advantages of a process approach are "providing novice writers with guidance through the writing process in a positive, encouraging, and collaborative workshop environment in order to help learners develop writing strategies that allow them to discover and express their intended meanings" (Silva and Leki, 2004, p. 5). The teacher's role in the writing process is to be non-directive and facilitating, assisting writers to express their own meanings through an encouraging and co-operative environment with minimal interference.

Issues in L2 Process Approach to Writing

      Feedback on Form versus Feedback on Content. While feedback on content and ideas is generally well accepted and believed to be beneficial for ESL students' writing, researchers do not agree whether feedback on surface level issues has a positive influence for L2 writing or not, especially during the initial stages of the writing process. Lately, most of the studies have presented a favorable view of error correction for L2

writing students. The majority of studies from the last decade (Bitchener 2008; Chandler 2003; Ferris and Roberts 2001; and others) show that form feedback is beneficial for students and that it helps students to improve their writing proficiency. However, some experiments that were carried out in the past found no significant evidence in favor of error correction (Kepner 1991; Polio, Fleck, & Leder, 1998, and others). Truscott (2007) argued that correction has most likely harmful effects on students' ability to write accurately and that if there are any positive effects they are so small that they should be neglected.

The Effectiveness of Peer Revision. The aim of the research about the effectiveness of peer revision was to understand if workshop pedagogies developed in a first-language writing context are as effective for ESL writers as they are for NES writers (Carson & Nelson, 1996; Connor and Asenavage, 1994; Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, & Huang, 1998; Nelson & Murphy, 1993; Zhang, 1995). Researchers tried to understand whether students value peer feedback and revise according to it or not.

The research study from Nelson and Murphy (1993) included four L2 students in an intermediate university ESL writing course. Their findings suggest that students made only some changes in their drafts based on responses by their peers during the peer revision. Certain conditions were shown to play a role in affecting students' decisions whether to use their peer comments or not when revising. When the interaction between the student writer and the other group members seemed cooperative, the writer was more likely to use the peers' feedback in revising. On the other hand, when the interaction was

described as defensive or when there was no interaction at all, the student writers were less likely to use the other group member's suggestions.

Zhang's research from 1995 investigated whether ESL students in one college and one state university in a western state in the U.S. prefer teacher feedback over peer feedback on the one hand and self-directed feedback over peer feedback on the other. The results of his study show that almost 94% of the surveyed students preferred teacher feedback over peer or self-directed feedback, regardless of gender, ethnicity, ESL proficiency, or length of stay in an English-speaking country. However, students did not indicate preferring peer feedback over self-directed feedback.

Jacobs, Curtis, Braine, and Huang (1998) adopted Zhang's study (1995), but adapted it to let the students choose whether they preferred to receive feedback from other students as one type of feedback on their writing and not *instead* of teacher's feedback as Zhang did. They asked students to explain their choice. The absolute majority (93%) of the surveyed students indicated that they prefer to receive peer feedback as one type of commentary on their writing. The fact that peers can provide more ideas and are able to spot problems that student writers cannot see by themselves were seen as the most common advantages. Students also noted that they can learn from other students' papers and that peers were more understanding and less threatening. They stated that peers provided encouragement and could sometimes provide more feedback than a teacher would. It needs to be pointed out that none of the students who welcomed peer feedback argued against teacher feedback. Students see that the teacher can provide a different kind of feedback than peers can. On the other hand, students who rejected peer feedback argued that each student has his/her own opinion and that not receiving

feedback from other students can prevent them from getting wrong information. Based on their findings Jacobs et al (1998) conclude: "We have suggested something of a middle path on the issue of types of feedback, in which teacher, peer, and self-directed feedback are judiciously combined" (p. 314).

L2 Student Writers

L2/ESL Writing

Among the first to introduce the notion of the writing as a process to the field of ESL writing was Zamel (1976), who emphasized that "the ESL student who is ready to compose, i.e., express his or her own thoughts, opinions or ideas is similar to the student in the regular English composition class" (p. 67). Zamel believed that the ESL teaching process of writing should resemble L1 composition where the primary consideration should be upon the expressive and creative process of writing, and on the individual's purpose and desire to write. All this should be happening in an encouraging environment with little interference and correction. As the extensive research in L1 writing has shown that "the study of grammar, whether formal or not, has been found to have little, no or even harmful influence upon the students' writing ability" (p. 72), Zamel argued that the focus on control and guidance should be minimized also in the ESL writing classrooms.

In her next studies, Zamel was able to confirm her idea that ESL writing is similar to L1 writing: "It is quite clear that ESL writers who are ready to compose and express their ideas use strategies similar to those used by native speakers of English" (1982, p. 203). Zamel came to this conclusion by analyzing the writing strategies of eight proficient ESL writers who were successfully completing the writing assignments of their

university-level content area courses. The interviews she conducted with her participants about their writing practices revealed that students highly valued the importance of in-class discussions about the topic they were going to write about and that most students had some sort of "internal dialogue with an invisible person" (p. 200) which helped them to determine what they should include in their writing. While they put down some notes about what they were going to include, a formal outline was not popular at that stage. Moreover, the students reported they had written down and then discarded whole ideas, started anew and then revised again before the final version was agreed upon and accepted. This was usually done in various stages and took some time before the ideas would "ripen" (p. 201). Mostly, these students reacted negatively to the idea of translation, but used their native language to write down ideas and words which did not come directly in the target language. Zamel's analysis of their written texts confirmed their reported experiences.

In her next study, Zamel (1983) interviewed and observed the composition processes of six advanced ESL students, enrolled in her intermediate composition class after already completing two semesters of freshman composition courses. Zamel was able to support the idea that writing is certainly not a linear process, as the brainstorming, note-making, thinking, and revising showed up throughout the whole writing process. Rereading and analyzing the produced parts of the texts was common throughout the writing process, which, according to Zamel, clearly showed that writers were constructing new ideas while assessing them at the same time. Zamel also noted that students wrote several drafts before the final version was produced and that most of them devoted the majority of their time to the creation of the first draft. As she pointed out,

linguistic problems concerned these writers the least and they all developed strategies that allowed them to postpone lexical and syntactic concerns for later stages. They proofread and edited their writing once their ideas were expressed clearly and accurately, but even if they were quite proficient in these skills their papers still contained some surface level issues.

If Zamel was able to argue that her advanced ESL writers behaved and composed in a similar way to NS writers, Raimes (1985) was able to challenge this understanding by showing that the composing process of basic ESL writers, enrolled in the developmental ESL composition course, is certainly not like that of basic NS writers. Raimes analyzed the writing processes of unskilled ESL students in her developmental writing course. Raimes's study revealed that her ESL writers spent almost no time on the pre-writing activities, frequently reread what they had just written down, although only a few sentences of the written text at a time, and reread the entire text less often than expected. One of the very common activities was rehearsing, which included voicing ideas on content and trying out possible ideas. Students rehearsed for various purposes; i.e., to search for grammatically acceptable forms or to talk out ideas, and try things out. The more proficient students were more fluent in producing sentences without pausing in between and this behavior was extended to the production of more consecutive sentences. Raimes also found that her students did not revise much, and that there was only one attempt from one student to start again, but his new beginning was similar to the old one. Raimes understood that her L2 basic writers also discovered meaning as they wrote in a similar way to Zamel's skilled L2 writers. However, her writers were not preoccupied as much with grammar problems and editing as Perl's (1979) basic L1 writers were, but

concentrated more on the challenge of finding the right words and sentences to express their meaning. Raimes concluded that we cannot in anyway believe that the same pedagogical approaches that work for NS writers would work for ESL writers as well. On the other hand, it would be wrong to assume that ESL writers need a lot of language instruction in order to improve their writing. Instead, we should think about using a moderate amount of both.

Silva (1992) argued that many other differences between ESL and NS writing, which were not pointed out so far in the literature, exist too. Silva surveyed 13 ESL graduate students about their perceptions of the similarities and differences between composing in their native language and in English. He found that students see writing in a target language quite different from writing in L1, and that students pointed out differences in each of the provided categories (process, rhetoric, and language). However, these students see writing most different due to differences in language, and report difficulties with word order, understanding of phrasal verbs, or grammatical problems overall. Moreover, students report having difficulties in finding the right words and having to give up some good ideas for which they were not able to find the right expressions. On the other hand, students see planning in L2 as more time consuming, as they may spend more time on understanding the assignment. Thinking primarily in the native language and looking for the appropriate expressions in the English language makes the planning and writing process more time consuming: "L2 linguistic limitations (especially the vocabulary and grammar) and/or L1 interference make L2 writing more form focused and time consuming and less fluent and make the texts produced less sophisticated (simpler words, shorter sentences) and less expressive of the writer's

thoughts and intentions" (p. 33). Reviewing was also considered as different and more tedious; students reported spending more time revising grammar and vocabulary. On the other hand, these students seemed to be somehow less alert about the rhetorical differences between writing in the two different languages than they were about the process and language differences.

In a later study Silva (1993) took a different approach to analyzing the differences between the L1 and L2 composing processes by examining the reports of 72 empirical studies that made a direct comparison between ESL and NES or L1 and L2 writing. The studies that focused on the composing process of L2 students reveal that ESL composing process patterns are similar, however, the process is less effective and more difficult. L2 students did less planning, but devoted more attention to generating material. This process was more difficult and time consuming than writing in L1 and the generated material was less useful than that produced in L1. L2 students were also seen to spend more time on writing than L1 students, and their writing was less fluent and less productive. Their writing process was more often interrupted by consulting an outline, a prompt, or a dictionary, as these students show more concern and difficulty with vocabulary. Apart from spending more time on writing, their written texts are qualitatively weaker and quantitatively shorter than those produced by L1 writers. The previous research also shows that overall, ESL students do less reviewing and reread less, and do not reflect on their work as much as L1 writers do. They revise more, but this work is more tedious and they show more preoccupation with it. They do less revision by ear and need to consult a dictionary more often. While revising, they focus more on grammar, but less on mechanics, particularly spelling.

That L2 writing is less efficient and more laborious than L1 writing is reflected on the surface level of the produced texts. Silva (1993) reports that L2 writers are less fluent and less accurate, producing shorter texts and making more errors overall than L1 writers do. Their writing is also weaker in quality, usually receiving lower holistic scores. L2 students were also seen to rely on different patterns of exposition, narration, and argumentation. In terms of morphosyntactic and stylistic features "L2 writing was found to be less complex...., less mature..... and stylistically appropriate..., and less consistent and academic with regard to language, style, and tone" (p. 666). It was found that their sentences included more, but shorter T-units. Also, L2 students used more coordination, less subordination, less noun modification, and less passivization. A look at lexicosemantic features revealed a difference in the use of cohesive devices, with a higher use of conjunctive and lower use of lexical ties. Moreover, L2 students exhibited the use of weaker lexical repertoire, with more frequent use of shorter and vaguer words, and less sophisticated expressions.

By analyzing the discourse features of compositions written in Spanish by secondary school students in Mexico and comparing them to those written in English by Anglo-American students in the United States, Montano-Harmon (1991) argued that "a carry-over of a discourse pattern from one language to another may be a factor in the inability of some students to comprehend texts or to write acceptable expository essays in standard English or in standard Spanish" (p. 424). Montano-Harmon argued that students need the knowledge of the discourse features of the target language to be able to meet the expectations of their readers. She concludes that if the objective in language classes is

communicative competence then the discourse features of the target language must be taught.

Strategies. It is generally accepted that L2 writing is not similar to L1 writing and that various differences exist on the process, rhetoric, and language level. Moreover, as it has been established that L2 writers may encounter more difficulties when working on assignments than L1 writers do, researchers have tried to understand what kind of strategies L2 writers develop or transfer from their L1 in response to the demands of their writing assignments. In search of a catalogue of strategies ESL students employ in their writing tasks, Leki (1995) examined what kind of strategies ESL students brought with them to their first academic experience in the U.S. and what strategies they developed in response to the writing demands they encountered in their regular courses across the curriculum. Based on the interviews Leki conducted with 5 ESL students, she was able to identify 10 types of strategies. Clarifying strategies were used to make sure that the assignments were understood well. Focusing strategies were used to focus one's attention on the writing task at hand. Relying on past writing experiences, just as whatever they knew had worked in the past, was a strategy that students used when they implemented in their writing assignments. Taking advantage of first language and/or culture was used to compensate for linguistic and educational disadvantages. Using current experience or feedback was a strategy where students were able to successfully implement in their assignments utilizing knowledge learned from other assignments in that semester. Another strategy was looking for models, where students sought examples that were worth imitating. Using current or past ESL writing training was a strategy implemented

by only one student who made a direct reference to something he had learned in his previous ESL training. The other two strategies identified by Leki refer to accommodating or resisting teachers' demands. Students were either trying to meet the teacher's requirements or they intentionally decided not to work towards achieving them. The last strategy, managing competing demands, was related to time constraints and includes managing course and work load, regulating the investment and cognitive load, and managing the demands of one's life.

Mu and Carrington (2007) investigated the strategies 3 Chinese ESL learners implemented in their writing process while working on the research paper for their post-graduate classes. Following Riazi (1997) and Wenden (1991) categorized strategies in four major categories (macro-strategies) with a number of subcategories (micro-strategies). Rhetorical strategies (with the subcategories of organizing strategies, cohesive strategies, and genre awareness) are strategies that writers use to organize and to present their ideas in writing conventions acceptable to native speakers of that language. Metacognitive strategies (with the subcategories of planning strategies and evaluating and monitoring strategies) refer to strategies that writers use to control the writing process consciously. Cognitive strategies (with the subcategories of generating strategies, revising strategies, imitating strategies) are writing strategies that writers use to implement the actual writing actions. The last category, social/affective strategies (with the subcategories of reducing anxiety and drawing on previous experience) refers to those strategies that writers use to interact with others to clarify some questions and to regulate emotions, motivation, and attitudes in the writing. Mu and Carrington (2007) understood that not all writing strategies used in L1 (Chinese) and related to one culture can be

successfully transferred to L2 (English) and the target culture. While there is more possibility that most of the metacognitive, cognitive and social/affective strategies can be transferred across languages positively, the transfer of rhetorical strategies produces less successful results.

The Use of L1 in L2 Writing. Research dealing with the use of L1 in one's L2 writing focused on the amount and the way L1 is used when writing in L2 and what kinds of results it produces. The effect of translation on L2 texts, where lower L2 proficiency writers first write a draft in their L1 in order to solidify content and organization and then translate it to the target language was frequently researched. Cohen (2002) for instance compared the writings where students were asked to first write in their L1 and then translate it into L2 to those that were directly written in L2. He found out that two-thirds of the students did better on the direct writing task based on the rating scales that focused on the form and function: expression (freedom from translation effect, variety in vocabulary, and sense of the language), transitions (organizational structure, clarity of point, and smoothness of connectors), clauses (use of subordination and use of relative pronouns), and grammar (prepositions/partitive articles, noun/adjective agreement, and verbs). However, through retrospective verbal report from the students, it was obvious that these students were often thinking through their L1 when writing in L2, so that the process in which direct and translated writing were produced did not differ much.

According to Wolfersbenger (2003), Jones and Tetroe (1987) found that less proficient L2 writers were more effective and produced more details if they used L1 during the planning stage. Apart from producing more details, the writers who used L1

were able to do more abstract thinking during planning. These findings show that using L1 may be more effective during the brainstorming and idea organization stages of the writing process than writing whole drafts in L1 first and then translating them into L2. Wolfersbenger (2003) explains that after writers generate all the ideas and have a well developed organization to their texts, they can produce the actual texts in L2 more easily, if following the previously produced outline.

Woodall (2002) was interested in the effect of proficiency levels and text difficulties on using L1 during writing in L2. He found out that less proficient L2 learners switched to their L1 more often than more advanced learners and that the increased difficulty of the task increased the duration of L1 use in L2 writing

Other Differences Between L1 and L2 Writers

The notion that teaching ESL writing should resemble teaching L1 writing was based on the understanding that the writing processes in both languages are the same. However, although some researchers advocate that teaching writing to ESL students is not much different than teaching writing to native speakers (Zamel 1976, 1982, 1983), others (Leki, 1992; Reid, 1993; Matsuda,1996; Ferris and Hedgcock, 2005; Friedrich, 2006) warn that these students bring to class some unique linguistic and cultural features that ESL writing teachers and mainstream composition teachers, should be aware of.

It is true that international students have different expectations about classroom behavior than resident students have. Leki (1992) lists some variables that may play an important role in ESL students' behavior in a writing class and any other class. For instance, Leki notes that international students sometimes may not be used to the

professors being so approachable, informal, and friendly, holding office hours for students to talk about their problems and concerns in private. Moreover, these students may not be used to the style of class participation where students are welcomed to ask questions and to express their ideas and opinions. Language can be another big issue. While ESL students may be paying careful attention to what the teacher is saying, they may not understand everything. Depending on the culture, some students may claim they have understood the teacher even if they do not. Not only linguistic competence can be a problem, but whole communicative competence can be problematic. For instance, these students may not know how to take turns in conversations, what are the appropriate questions to ask, or may misunderstand some of the body language expressions. Leki also notes that evaluation and grades can be a big issue for these students as various reasons to get good grades can place them under tremendous pressure.

ESL versus Basic NS Writers. L2 writers are too often misunderstood as basic writers and placed in the same courses. Leki (1992) points out the differences between the basic NS writer and ESL writers and argues that while some similarities between ESL and the basic writers exist, these are mainly superficial. According to Leki, ESL students differentiate in their use of the register, as they might be more comfortable with formal language than monolingual basic writers usually are. These students are also usually already highly literate in their native language and are most likely able to transfer their L1 writing strategies to English. Even though their written or spoken language displays ESL errors, they are, unlike basic writers, often aware of the differences between the two language registers. Moreover, ESL students usually possess some grammatical

knowledge of the target language, and are aware of the fact that they produce errors.

Ferris and Hedgcok (2005) provide an overview of differences between novice NS and NNS writers in terms of knowledge of language and writing system, schematic and rhetorical knowledge, and response to composition instruction. Further, Ferris and Hedgcock (2005, p. 21) note that ESL students are heterogeneous in terms of linguistic, ethnic, and cultural background, language proficiency, educational attainment, and cognitive development. Learners may also have different attitudes towards learning, and acquiring linguistic, cognitive, and academic skills. Other factors mentioned by Ferris and Hedgcock that influence learning are age, academic goals, aptitude, anxiety, cognitive strategy use, language awareness, and social distance. They argue for the importance of attention to these variables because they influence language proficiency, academic performance, and students' predispositions towards writing process and task. Ferris and Hedgcock see as the most important for ESL composition the dimensions of student's knowledge and prior training that have shaped their linguistic capabilities, L1 and L2 literacy skills, metacognitive strategy repertoires, and language awareness. However, as they point out, the main distinction between ESL and NS writers is the language proficiency in one or more languages other than English. However, this multilingual, multicultural and multiliterate knowledge can be both a burden and a facilitator in the development of L2 writing skills (p. 22).

ESL Diversity

Already Raimes (1991) pointed out that there is "no such thing as a generalized ESL student" (p. 420). Raimes is convinced that we need to learn more about our ESL

students before we try to make any conclusions about the best pedagogy we should adopt. She argued that we need to know the type of institution where the student is studying, the academic year of the student, if the student is an international student or immigrant/refugee student, the level of writing expertise in L1, and the level of language proficiency (p. 420).

Friedrich (2006) argues that ESL writers are also so individually different that making a three-way disctinction is necessary. Therefore, she goes a step further and complements Leki's (1992) contrastive examination of basic and ESL writers with characteristics of resident ESL writers, also called Generation 1.5 writers. Harklau, Siegal, and Losey (1999) identify these students as bilingual students, who had completed years of education in the U.S. before entering colleges and universities in the U.S.. These students were usually born to immigrant parents and speak a non-English language at home. However, many of them are completely fluent in English.

Addressing ESL Students' Needs

Despite the growth of ESL students in the U.S. universities, many researchers have pointed out there has not been a corresponding increase in the amount of attention given to ESL students, especially in the writing programs. Silva (1997) for instance writes about the ethical treatment of ESL writers. This includes a proper understanding of their characteristics, needs, and especially of how their writing differs greatly from that of their NS counterparts. It also includes placement in a suitable learning context with instructors who are knowledgeable about and have experience working with ESL writers. Moreover, treating students ethically means considering the kind of instruction ESL

students receive, offering programs that focus on writing and students' own interests, and evaluating ESL students' work in an informed and equitable manner.

Placement Options for L2 Students

　　　Silva (1994) was also concerned about the advantages and disadvantages of the four placement options generally available to ESL students. These are: mainstream classes, ESL writing classes, basic writing classes, and cross cultural writing classes. According to Silva, in the "sink or swim option"- mainstream classes-both ESL and NS students would benefit in terms of gaining new cultural experience and linguistic insights. However, Silva fears that ESL students in such classes may not be getting the extra time and attention necessary to satisfy their needs and instructors may not be prepared to deal with ESL students' linguistic, rhetorical, and cultural differences properly. Other concerns are the expectations for these students who would compete with native speakers and so could be put at a severe disadvantage. Silva sees this option as the least desirable one. The basic writing option does not seem much better to Silva either. In these courses, ESL students as well as NS could again benefit from their interactions in different ways. Regarding addressing their needs and getting the extra time that they need to complete the assignments, ESL students may be at an advantage. Nevertheless, the teachers in these classes may not necessarily be trained to recognize and address the needs of ESL writers, who might be again held to some unrealistic standards. Another disadvantage of placing ESL students into the basic writing courses is the fact that these students may not be necessarily inexperienced writers and as such have completely different needs which could not be addressed with the curricula prepared for basic native writers. Enrolling ESL

students into an ESL course seems to Silva more promising, as this could be an optimal opportunity to meet the specific needs of ESL writers, as the instructors should be trained to recognize and deal effectively with culturally and linguistically diverse students. However, this option would usually require a lot of administrative work and effort. As Silva points out, this option may be seen by some as a segregationist move where ESL and native speaker students would be deprived of the interaction and opportunity for a shared learning experience. Additionally, these classes might be seen as remedial classes and be devalued. The fourth option proposed by Silva is a cross cultural class in which ESL and native speakers would be enrolled in equal numbers and the goal would be to meet the needs of both groups equally. Silva sees this as the best option, however, the ideal would be if as many options as possible could be offered to the students so that they could be able to choose the best option for themselves.

Mainstream Placement Option. Certainly, there are advantages and disadvantages for ESL students to be enrolled in the mainstream classes. Braine (1996) and Harklau (1994) point out that affective factors such as anxiety and inhibition play an important role in ESL student achievement in the composition classes.

Harklau (1994) investigated the differences between ESL and mainstream classes and was, according to the experience of 4 Chinese ethnic immigrant students able to conclude that the main advantage of mainstream classes was the great amount of the authentic input and vast opportunities for genuine communication in the L2. Students could also get involved with rich and ample linguistic interactions through writing. However, due to the syllabus design, the opportunities for extended interaction were

somehow limited and L2 explicit feedback or instruction in the target language was rarely provided. ESL students also felt a barrier between themselves and the other students and rarely engaged in communication with them. On the other hand, ESL classes provided students with language instruction that mainstream curriculum missed, guided students into productive use of both spoken and written language and provided explicit feedback on students' linguistic production.

According to Braine (1996) the most cited reason by the ESL students for withdrawing from the mainstream classes were that they did not feel comfortable in the mainstream classes; they "were afraid to ask questions or speak out in the class, fearing that their accents and errors in speech would cause embarrassment" (p. 97). Students also shared negative feelings towards peer revision, where they felt that NSs were impatient with them and barely wanted to speak to them. Teachers were seen as being also of little help and support, as they would direct students to the writing lab instead of dedicating their office hours to their needs. However, the revisions that students did in the writing labs did not satisfy their teachers. Moreover, this study showed that students who were enrolled in ESL writing classes achieved a better passing rate overall on the written exam than the ESL students in the regular composition classes.

Satisfying ESL student needs could be especially challenging when ESL writers are enrolled in the mainstream classes with other NS students or in the basic writing classes with developmental writers.

Hinkel (2006) adopts the perception that "curriculum design in L2 writing instruction has to include grammar and vocabulary to enable L2 writers to communicate meaningfully and appropriately" (p. 124).

Friedrich (2006) proposes that instructors should conduct a needs assessment of their students to identify exactly what their concerns and needs are in order to tailor their courses around the identified needs. She also proposes some individualized attention for the students in need, especially during the times of student stress or increased demands. Moreover, she urges instructors to take a different approach to literacy and to see the linguistic differences of the students as potentials on which to develop their writing ability. Due to the constraints of the curriculum instructors are subject to, the writing center can have a crucial role in dedicating some additional attention and one-to-one interaction with students, especially when working together with the instructor. Another suggestion Friedrich provides is to pair up the linguistically diverse students with the intention that each of them can bring something unique to group. According to the author, "the benefits of peer review, for example, are maximized if students who can offer different interpretations of texts can be paired with one another" (p. 30). Additionally, she believes that teachers should employ different feedback for different groups of students and be aware about the quantity and quality of corrections and suggested changes. Last, she proposes a shift in the overall focus from the surface level to the rhetorical practices, where students become more aware of the ways language works to address the consideration of audience and purpose.

As the previous research has shown that writing in L2 is more laborious and less effective for L2 writers than it is for L1 writers and that mainstream classes may not address the needs of the non-English dominant students sufficiently, this study was designed to understand how non-English dominant students work on their writing

assignments in a mainstream composition class and what kind of strategies they develop in order to overcome their difficulties.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

In order to understand what strategies non-English dominant students use and how they work on the writing assignments, a qualitative study was developed to construct an emic perspective about students' experiences and answer the two research questions. Data were collected mainly through interviews with students and coding of their reflective writings. Data collected with teacher interviews and surveys were used to support the findings. All instruments and data collection procedures were presented to and approved by the UTPA Institutional Review Board (IRB) for use of human subjects in research. (See Appendix A.)

Instrument

To collect data for this research four different instruments were used: student interviews, students' authors' notes, teacher interviews, and surveys.

Interviews

Student Interviews: Interviews with students were the main source of data as they were structured and used to answer both research questions. In total, interviews with 7 students were conducted. Eight main tentative questions were prepared to be asked to

each student. The interview questions were adapted for each interviewee and according to

the answers the student provided, the interview questions changed. (See Appendix B for a

sample list of questions that were asked to the students during the interviews.)

All the interviews were conducted in the researcher's office on the campus. Each

interview lasted from 55 to 75 minutes. All interviews were audiotaped. The tapes were

stored in a locked place in an office at UTPA. The recordings were later transcribed and

coded.

Teacher Interviews*:* Teacher interviews were used to provide an additional view

on the second research question, which asked about how non-English dominant students

used strategies to overcome the difficulties they have with their writing. The teachers'

perspectives provided additional detail about the dynamics of the English course and a

clearer picture of each interviewed student's participation (i.e., how the student works in

the class, what strategies the teacher sees this student use). Eight tentative questions were

prepared to be asked every instructor. (See Appendix B for a sample list of questions that

were asked to the instructors during the interviews.) The questions for each instructor

were slightly adjusted according to the answers they provided as well as information

obtained in student interviews..

All the interviews with students' instructors were conducted in the researcher's

office on the campus. Each interview lasted from 40 to 60 minutes. All interviews were

audiotaped. The tapes were stored in a locked place in an office at UTPA. The recordings

were later transcribed and analyzed.

Surveys

According to the data gathered from the interviews, a survey was developed to find out if the strategies that were identified through the interviews could be supported by data collected with the surveys. This survey instrument contributed data helpful to constructing a composite response to research question one.

The survey consisted of two sections. Section one contained three questions and was used to determine demographic information about the participants and to include or exclude them from participating in this study. The questions asked about the language the student speaks at home, the language in which the student produced his/her writing assignments in high school, and about the language in which the student feels more comfortable producing writing assignments. The questions were multiple choice questions where the student chose the most appropriate answer for them.

The second section of this survey was designed to provide additional information about the strategies identified from the interview data. It was designed to provide a limited idea of the pervasiveness across composition classrooms of the strategies identified in interviews with students. It included 16 questions. The items of the survey were designed using a 7 point-Likert scale representing participants' degree of agreement with a given statement. (See Appendix B for the survey.)

The survey was administered to students in five sections of the ENG 1320/1301 course on three different days including the section taught by the researcher. In total, 72 students answered the survey, but only 23 were classified as non-English dominant and included in this study.

The terms NNES and NES were used in the survey as it was reasoned that these terms are better known to the students than the less common terms of English Dominant and Non-English Dominant and would, therefore, be easier for students to identify with as they completed their surveys.

Authors' Notes to the Project

In addition to interviews and surveys, the authors' notes that each student wrote for the assignment were collected and analyzed. The author's note is a short reflective writing assignment written to help the instructor read the main paper and give feedback on it. All students produced this assignment for the project for their composition course, but only the ones produced by the interviewed students were analyzed for this study. The data obtained with the analysis of the author's note were used to identify additional strategies students used while working on their writing assignments. These data thus contributed to both research questions.

As each instructor gave his/her own instructions about how to write the author's note, not all of the authors' notes' from the participant students were completely the same. Although they differed in length and structure, they all addressed the question about how each individual worked his/her way through the assignment.

<p align="center">**Participants**</p>

Interview Participants

Students: the seven interviewed students were the most important group of participants for this study as the majority of data were collected through them. They were

all UTPA students enrolled in one of the developmental composition courses paired with a freshmen composition course as described in the introduction of this thesis.

All student participants in this study were non-English dominant speakers. The following variables were considered for the selection of participants for the interview: a) primary language of communication at home, b) language in which a student has produced most of his writing during high school, and c) language in which a student feels more comfortable writing. This information was ascertained during initial visits to the classrooms. If a student indicated that his/her primary language of communication at home was not English, the student was chosen as a potential participant. To be invited to participate, students had to answer affirmatively to the two additional questions of (1) majority of high school writing was in a non-English language, and (2) more comfortable writing in a non-English language. However, not all students answered all questions in the affirmative and thus required some further thinking about how to categorize them for the purpose of this study. However, as some students indicated that their writing in high school was done in English, but they still feel more comfortable writing in a non-English language, these students were also included in the study. On the other hand, some students indicated that they feel more comfortable writing in English, but only because they have never been required to write in their L1. Therefore, also these students were categorized as non-English dominant students.

Six out of seven interviewed students claimed to speak Spanish as their L1 and only one interviewed student spoke Chinese at home. For five of these seven students a TOEFL score of minimum 500 was required in order to fulfill the enrollment requirements of this university. The participants' scores show that these students have

varying levels of proficiency in English. Daniel (all names are pseudonyms) was the only participant who was not required to take TOEFL, as he completed high school in the U.S. However, he indicated that most of his writing in high school was done in Spanish and that he has been learning most of his English this semester in college. Years of English language learning self-reported by students varied from individual to individual. Except for Abel, all students questioned the quality and quantity of English training they received prior to entering their current university. Some of these students (Leonardo, Luca, Lisa, and Chen) took courses in the U.S. to prepare for the TOEFL exam. The following table presents the linguistic backgrounds of the seven participants included in the interview part of the study.

Table 1: Students' Linguistic Backgrounds.

Student	Home language	TOEFL score	Years learning English	Training in the US
Daniel	Spanish	not needed	6	High School
Leonardo	Spanish	520	12	English Language Institute
Luca	Spanish	500	10	English Language Institute
Alicia	Spanish	503	12	none
Lisa	Spanish	500	8	South texas College
Abel	Spanish	583	14	none
Chen	Chinese	572	6	English Language Institute

Teachers: The composition instructor of every interviewed student was also interviewed. In total, four instructors were interviewed to obtain a better understanding about the students' working behavior in the class and about the nature of the composition course the student was taking. All interviewed teachers were female and had more than one year of experience with teaching composition courses. The courses these instructors were teaching were all freshman composition courses paired with developmental writing courses and they all followed the same syllabus.

Survey Participants

The same criteria that applied to the interview participants applied also to the survey participants. Therefore, all survey participants were UTPA students enrolled in one of the developmental composition courses paired with a freshmen composition course. As the survey was administered to all the students in those courses, the same criteria used to select interview student participants were also used to select survey participants. The inclusion of participants in the non-English dominant group followed the same variables as with selecting interview student participants. These were: a) primary language of communication at home, b) language in which a student has produced most of his/her writing during high school, and c) language in which a student feels more comfortable writing. If a student indicated that his/her primary language of communication at home was not English, the student was chosen as a potential participant. The surveyed student was categorized as non-English dominant if he/she indicated that his/her language of communication at home is not English, and that either his/her writing in high school was done in a non-English language or that he/she feels more comfortable writing in a non-English language.

Data Collection Procedure

The present study draws upon student interviews as the major data source and is supported by three other sources, i.e., interviews with instructors, surveys, and students author's notes. Data from multiple sources were collected in order to provide a composite portrait of students strategies used when working through the writing process. The multiple data sources provide a stronger ground on which to reach findings regarding the

strategies non-English dominant students develop and how they use them to overcome their difficulties of the writing process in L2.

First, the study was presented to the four writing instructors who were teaching a freshmen composition course paired with a developmental writing course (ENG 1320/1301 course) during the Spring semester of 2010. As all instructors were using the same syllabus which followed the process approach to writing (Perl, 1979; Sommers, 1980), all of those who indicated their willingness to participate in the research were selected. Later, the researcher presented the study to their students during their composition classes. The students were asked to fill out a form in which they indicated their willingness to participate in the interview part of the research. It confirmed that the students understood that all collected data would be confidential and would not be revealed to their teacher or any third person. It was explained to the students that their participation in the study would not influence their grade, but instead they would be given a small amount of money in appreciation for their taking part in the research. It was also made sure that the volunteers understood that their name would not be revealed under any circumstances and that pseudonyms would be used instead. The students were asked three questions to determine their appropriateness to participate in the study as a non-English dominant writing student (as discussed above).

Students were asked to provide their contact information. All 13 students who volunteered to participate and provided their information were contacted, but only seven answered back. All seven were interviewed. Students were asked to sign an informed consent form as required by the Institutional Review Board. The interviews were audiotaped, and later transcribed and analyzed.

After the students got back their drafts from the teacher, they were also asked to provide their author's notes that would accompany their assignments.

After the data were gathered from the students, appointments were made with their instructors and formal interviews with all four instructors were conducted. The interviews were conducted in the department office and lasted between 40 minutes to an hour. All interviews were audiotaped, transcribed, and analyzed.

To complement the data collected in the interviews, data were also gathered through surveys. The surveys were administered to students in all freshmen composition courses that were paired with developmental writing courses (ENG 1320/1301 classes) and were following the same syllabus, including the class that was being taught by the researcher. In total, 72 students were surveyed in 5 classes. It was made sure that the students were given enough time to answer all the questions and that they understood that the survey was anonymous. From the 72 participants, 23 were selected according to the criteria presented above and their answers were analyzed using descriptive statistics.

Data Analysis

Data collected for this study were subjected to two methods of data analysis: coding and descriptive analysis. Coding was used to analyze data obtained with interviews and authors' notes. Descriptive statistical analysis on the other hand was used to analyze survey data. The results of individual analysis were composited to obtain a more comprehensive view.

Interviews and Author's Notes

  Coding and Memoing: Interviews with students and teachers were transcribed and both sets of interviews and the author's notes were read several times. Coding and memoing (Dana and Yendol-Silva, 2003) was used to look for salient themes and categories. Following Dana and Yendol-Silva's (2003) advice, three organizing units were allowed to emerge from the data rather than forcing an external set of units (p. 93). Salient or recurring themes about preferred ways of trying to overcome the difficulties when working on the writing assignments in English class were searched for. Following Leki's (1995) approach to data analysis, every strategy that was mentioned or implied by the interviewed student was noted. Subtopics for each major category which included all possible ways of compensation mentioned by the interviewees were identified. For instance, Abel's remark that he never uses dictionaries, because "he is not into them" was coded as focusing/avoiding strategy and subcategorized as avoiding problems.

  As the main interest of this study was to understand what kind of strategies non-English dominant students develop to address the issues related to the difficulties with writing in L2, the strategies that were clearly not related to dealing with the problems that emerge in L2 writing were eliminated. For instance a strategy related to trying out different topics emerged, where the student was trying to find a topic for which she had enough knowledge and information to be turned into a paper. As this strategy could be used also when writing in L1, it was eliminated.

Survey data

Descriptive Statistics: Surveys with students were used as another source to clarify how non-English dominant students try to overcome the difficulties when writing in English and to get a supplemental but limited perspective on the interview data. Twenty-three surveys that fit the criteria for non-English dominant students were analyzed using a descriptive statistics approach. For the purpose of analysis the numbers on a scale from 1 to 7 were translated into categories from strongly agree to strongly disagree, where 1 was considered as strongly agree, 2 and 3 as agree, 4 uncertain, 5 and 6 disagree, and 7 strongly disagree. Frequencies for each item were calculated. The results present what percentage of the non-English dominant students indicated strongly agree, agree, are uncertain, disagree, or strongly disagree to use a certain strategy.

This combination of data collection procedures and data analysis allowed for a composite approach to addressing the two research questions set forth in this study**:** To answer the first research question "What strategies do non-English dominant students employ to address the difficulties they have with the writing assignments in the composition courses?" a composite of data was used, which was gathered by coding and memoing student interviews and authors' notes and by calculating the frequencies of data gathered with surveys. To answer the second question "How do some successful students implement different strategies to address their difficulties when working on the writing assignments for the mainstream composition courses?" data gathered in student interviews and from student author's notes were revisited in order to be compared against the data from teacher interviews. The second look at the data was valuable because it helped reveal students' choices behind their strategies.

The following chapter presents the results to the two research questions as understood through the composited data analysis procedure

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The results of this study are organized in two parts and presented around the two research questions. The answer to research question one "What strategies do non-English dominant students employ to address the difficulties they have with the writing assignments in the composition courses?" presents all strategies employed by non-English dominant students to overcome their difficulties while working on writing assignments for their composition course. This information was collected mostly through interviews with students and the analysis of their author's notes and partially through surveys. The composite of collected data yields a better understanding of the findings.

The results to research question two "How do some successful students implement different strategies to address their difficulties when working on the writing assignments for the mainstream composition courses?" shed light on the wider context in which these strategies and resources were used by each individual student. This includes the understanding of the purpose and rationale for developing certain strategies and interpreting the ways in which these strategies are used. This second set of data was obtained by interviewing students and instructors and by looking at author's notes students produced. Combining the data was for the same reasons as indicated with question one.

After the results are presented, they are discussed in the discussion section of the conclusion chapter.

Research Question 1: What Strategies do Non-English Dominant Students Employ to Address the Difficulties They Have With the Writing Assignments in the Composition Courses?

The results of question one are organized around the six strategies identified by coding the interview data and the students' author's notes. These strategies are: (1) Managing time effectively; (2) Putting in extra work; (3) Asking for help, feedback, or clarification; (4) Using L1; (5) Using external resources; and (6) Focusing on or avoiding problems.

Strategies will be presented in two parts. First, each strategy will be described as understood through interviews and students' author's notes. Second, frequencies of use as understood with the analysis of survey data will also be presented for those strategies that these findings were collected.

The analysis of the interviews revealed that student participants use a variety of strategies to deal with the writing difficulties in L2. The results show that all students used multiple strategies, except for one participant, who used only one. The strategies will be presented and explained as employed and seen by all the students in the study, regardless of whether the strategy worked well for the student or not. The fact that the students tried to use it as a possible strategy for improving his/her draft is the criterion for its inclusion in this list. Terms NS, NNS or ESL will be used in quotes in that they were used by the students as they responded to survey questions, which were described above.

Table 2 presents the strategies as implemented by the seven interviewed students. A checkmark denotes that the strategy could be identified from his/her answers in the interview or in the author's note. The cross shows that students explicitly stated in the interview that he/she never uses this strategy to deal with the problems.

Table 2: Strategies Employed by the Seven Participants

STRATEGY/ STUDENT		Daniel	Leonardo	Luca	Alicia	Lisa	Abel	Chen
Managing time effectively			✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Putting in a lot of effort		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
Asking for help, Feedback, or clarification	Peer			✓	✓			✗
	Teacher	✓	✓		✓	✓		
	Friends/family	✓	✓	✓	✓			✗
	NS							✗
	NNS		✓	✓		✓		✗
Using L1	brainstorming				✓			
	sentences				✓	✓		✓
	Seeking help	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Using external resources	Word processor	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
	Google	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
	Grammar books	✓		✓			✗	
	Peer feedback		✓		✓	✓		✗
	Others' examples	✓	✓	✓				✓
	Dictionaries	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓
Focusing on/ avoiding problems	Focusing on problems	✓	✓	✓	✗	✓	✗	✓
	Avoiding problems				✓	✓	✓	

Strategy 1: Putting in a Lot of Effort

Interview/Author's Note Results: An obvious strategy that students used was that of putting a lot of effort into each writing assignment. Their willingness to work hard was shown on different levels:

- spending a lot of time on the writing process

- spending a lot of time on revision

- using multiple strategies and resources

- trying to produce perfect work

Six students mentioned that putting a lot of effort into the assignment is the key to success. Students recognized that writing can be a tiring process, especially if your language knowledge is somehow limited. Evidence from student interviews comes from Chen, Lisa, Daniel, and Alicia.

In the following example Chen explains how much time he spends and the effort he puts into one of the assignments he needs to produce for this class, Q&R (Question and response paper), which asks him to ask a question and write a response to it in relation to the assigned scholarly article.

I don't know what the other classmates write. I think they just spent like...like for Q&Rs..... I think they maybe spent half an hour, but for me, I have to spent like two hours to finish Q&R, because I think I have to write everything correct, check grammar, if everything is correct, if this...if this....is proper, or change another word....but I get a good grade. (Chen, student participant.).

Lisa talks about the effort she puts into understanding all the assigned reading for the class.

I work a lot on my papers...... I put all my time, because it is difficult for me... I work like 5 to 6 hours for this class per day, I read every article

maybe 2 or 3 times, maybe 1 reading is 2 or 3 hours. My mom says I am

reading and writing all day for this class. (Lisa, student participant.,).

Daniel explains that his motivation to work hard comes from competing with his other peers: "I said OK, I need to be better than the others. I worked so hard to make it different."

Also Alicia was very explicit about the effort she put in the given writing assignment: "I feel so nervous about my teacher reading my paper....I.....I want everything to be hmm......perfect, I did everything that I could so far, I put a lot of effort."

Survey Results: Three questions from the survey were related to this strategy. The results are presented in table 3 on page 50.

Question 1: I work very hard already on the first draft, even if I know I will have a chance to revise later.

Fifty-two percent of the non-English dominant respondents (12 out of 23) agreed or strongly agreed to work very hard already on the first draft and 22% (5 out of 23) were neutral. Twenty-six percent of respondents (6 out of 23) disagreed or strongly disagreed to work hard on the first draft.

Question 2: I spend a lot of time writing and revising each assignment in this class.

Forty percent of the surveyed non-English dominant students (9 out of 23) indicated to agree or strongly agree that they spend a lot of time writing and revising each assignment. Thirty percent of students (7 out of 23) were neutral and 30% of them (7 out of 23) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

Question 3: I put a lot of effort in writing and revising each assignment in this class. Seventy percent (16 out of 23) agreed or strongly agreed to put a lot of effort in writing and revising each assignment. Thirteen percent of the students (3 out of 23) were neutral regarding the effort spent of the assignments and 17% (4 out of 23) of them disagreed or strongly disagreed to put a lot of effort.

The results show that the majority of the non-English dominant students agreed to work hard and to put a lot of effort in the assignments for this class. In this view, the survey participants supported the claims of interviewed students that they put in a lot of effort into the work produced for this class.

Table 3: Putting in a Lot of Effort

Number of non-English dominant students (out of 23)	Agree or Strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
I work hard	12	5	6
I spend a lot of time	9	7	7
I put in a lot of effort	16	3	4

Strategy 2: Managing Time Effectively

Interview/Author's Note Results: Interview data revealed that working on the writing assignments took most of these students a lot of time, therefore developing a strategy to deal with the workload and time needed for completing the assignments by the due date was a real necessity. Five students out of the six that spent a lot of time on assignments reported they started working on the assignments early enough so that they

were able to divide the assignment over more days and leave enough time to do necessary revisions. Lisa described,

> *I started on Monday with the first topic and then I changed it, but I was working also on the other subjects, and then on Wednesday, I started working on the other topic, which was oratory, and I wrote one page and a half. On Thursday I reread it and go on, but only one more page and then on Sunday I finished the draft, I used the spelling checker, I finished at midnight, but I started at 7. (Lisa, student participant.).*

Leonardo reflected,

> *With my Math class if they give me homework I start 2 or 3 days before and all my friends one day before and they have bad grades and I have better grades, and it is the same with English. (Leonardo, student participant.).*

Survey results: Survey administered to students did not yield any results about students' time management.

Strategy 3: Asking for Help, Feedback, or Clarification

Interview/Author's Note Results: This strategy includes students' attempts to enter the communicative situations in order to obtain some missing data or to get clarification on issues the participants were confused about.

This strategy included:

- asking peers about the content of the prompt (NS and NNS)

- asking a teacher for feedback as a compensation for weak peer feedback

- asking friends about correct spelling (NNS)

- asking a sister about grammatical accuracy (NNS)

- asking a brother about the meaning of some words (NNS)

- asking a girlfriend for revision assistance (NNS)

- asking a teacher or peers for clarification of the prompt

Chen was the only participant that did not talk to anybody about the assignment. He said he never asks anybody for help and this time it was the same for him. Alicia was the one that talked to the most people. She asked four people for feedback and suggestions on her draft before turning it in for the compulsory teacher feedback.

Students were very selective regarding whom they asked for help. When seeking help, the interviewed students showed a strong tendency towards talking to people whom they could trust and with whom they shared the same L1. Usually, these were friends or family members. When talking to peers, students preferred to talk to people with whom they share their L1. Lisa reflected about the benefits of talking to NNES:

"I prefer talk to non-native speakers, native speakers sometimes don't understand you or you don't understand them."

The participants asked for clarification when trying to understand better what was required of them on assignments. The people these students talked to were usually peers or the teacher who already had some idea about the issue students were confused with.

Survey Results: Five survey questions were related to this strategy. The results are presented in table 4 in on page 54

Question 1: If I need feedback on or help with the writing assignment I would ask a native English speaker (NES).

Forty-three percent of the surveyed non-English dominant students (10 out of 23) agreed or strongly agreed they would ask a NES, while 38% (9 out of 23) of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed they would do it. 19% (4 out of 23) were neutral.

Question 2: If I need feedback on or help with the writing assignment I would ask a non-native English speaker (NNES).

Sixty percent of the surveyed non-English dominant students (14 out of 23) agreed or strongly agreed they would ask a NNES and only 8% of the students (2 out of 23) disagreed or strongly disagreed they would do so. Thirty percent of students (7 out of 23) indicated they are uncertain about the answer.

Question 3: If I need feedback on or help with the writing assignment I would ask my teacher.

Fifty-two percent of non-English dominant students (12 out of 23) indicated that they would ask their teacher for feedback or help, while 25% (6 out of 23) disagreed or strongly disagreed they would do so. Another 21% (5 out of 23) indicted to be uncertain about the question.

Question 4: If I need feedback on or help with the writing assignment I would go to the writing center.

Seventeen percent of the surveyed non-English dominant students (4 out of 23) agreed or strongly agreed they would go to the writing center to seek help or feedback on their writing. On the other hand, 60% (14 out of 23) of them indicated disagree or

strongly disagree they would use a writing center for help or feedback. Twenty-three percent (5 out of 23) were neutral.

Question 5: Although I need feedback on or help with the writing assignment I would not ask anybody, but try to do it myself.

Thirty-nine percent of the students (9 out of 23) agreed or strongly agreed that they would not ask anybody if they needed help with the writing assignment. On the other hand, 47% (11 out of 23) of the students disagreed or strongly disagreed that they would not ask anybody for help. Thirteen percent of the students (3 out of 23) reported to be uncertain about it.

Although the majority of the interviewed students agreed they would rather talk to the non-English dominant speakers, the survey results show that the students were almost equally divided between being reluctant and being prone to talking to English dominant students. On the other hand, the survey data confirmed the understanding that students very rarely utilize the services offered in the writing center.

Table 4: Asking for Help, Feedback or Clarification

Number of non-English dominant students (out of 23)	Agree or Strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
I would ask a NES	10	4	9
I would ask a NNES	14	7	2
I would ask a teacher	12	5	6
I would go to the writing center	4	5	14
I would do it myself	9	3	11

Strategy 4: Using L1

Interview/Author's Note Results: The use of L1 was a very popular strategy among these participants as 6 students talked about relying on their L1. Students would take advantage of their mother tongue to differing degrees:

- translating sentence by sentence from L1 to L2

- brainstorming and taking notes in one's L1

- using L1 when seeking for help or feedback

All students agreed that this was probably one of the least convenient strategies they used. Chen was the one that would think in his native language first and then try to translate sentence by sentence into English. He also realized that while he is doing it, he has to do revision all the time, as he cannot just translate literally all his ideas. Luca mentioned that sometimes, "when you try to translate words.....there are a lot of words that here doesn't even exist". That would frustrate him, as his ideas could not be directly translated into English language. Lisa found herself at the point where she started to think in both languages. Before, she would first write her essays in Spanish and only then translate everything in English. Alicia was the only one to indicate she uses L1 to brainstorm ides: "I sometime write in Spanish and think how to put it in English….hmmm…if it is more difficult I do it, I like write ideas down in Spanish and then write it in English.'

Survey Results: Survey administered to students did not yield any results about the use of one's L1 as a possible strategy on the writing assignments.

Strategy 5: Using External Resources

Interview/Author's Note Results: This strategy refers to the use of a variety of external resources to improve one's own writing. Most of these resources were used with the purpose of looking up new words and checking their meaning. The resources students mentioned using were:

- Word processor tools to check spelling

- access Google website to check the meaning of words

- grammar books/textbooks/notes to look for grammar rules

- dictionaries (bilingual dictionary, thesaurus, google translator) to translate unknown words

- teacher and peer feedback to revise accordingly

- the writing of others as an example to imitate or generate ideas

a) Word processor tools:

Five out of seven students mentioned using a word processor spell checking tool to help themselves with the spelling difficulties. Alicia specificity mentioned she tries to remember the spelling of each word after the spell checker corrects a wrong spelling.

b) Internet:

Internet as a resource was mostly used to search for the meaning of the unknown words. Five out of seven interviewed students mentioned using google for this purpose.

c) Grammar books:

Daniel and Luca mentioned they occasionally use grammar books to check the grammaticality of their sentences. Luca pointed out that the books he keeps from his

previous ESL class are very useful when he needs help with transitional words (e.g., therefore, however, etc.).

d) Dictionaries:

Six out of seven interviewed students reported using at least one type of dictionary. The most common ones, however, are thesaurus and google translator.

Overall, Daniel was very explicit about the importance of the resources he uses in his writing assignments. He was convinced that by being allowed to use all the resources he can do as well as English-dominant students can.

Daniel: "Most of the work you do at home, and even if I am not strong in vocabulary, but with all the resources that I can use......that makes me equal."

e) Feedback:

Students also showed a strong opinion regarding whose feedback they found more useful and the type of feedback they would like to get from their instructor or peers. It is very clear that students highly value teacher feedback. At the time of my research and interview, the students were waiting for teacher comments on the assignment they were working on. Even if they had already gotten feedback from their peers and revised, they still highly valued teacher feedback on their drafts.

> *I think the feedback it will be good for me, 'cause I'm gonna see what do I*
>
> *do wrong and what do I have to learn about..maybe punctuation,*
>
> *grammar, organization......[If she corrects all the grammar mistakes] it*
>
> *would help me a lot.....If she doesn't tell me what do I do wrong, who is*
>
> *gonna tell me? (Luca, student participant.).*

Most of the interviewed students also had a strong opinion about the type of feedback they wanted to get from their instructor to improve their writing. Chen was one of them.

> *I think maybe I need feedback on my idea, because for grammar, if she gives feedback I can check it, even if I don't know the grammar I can check it on the Internet, but the idea, I can't check. But even when I write I check it all the time correct on the Internet. (Chen, student participant.).*

Alicia reasoned that feedback on content would be more valuable for her than form feedback: "I would like feedback about the main idea, because with grammar somebody else can help me."

While it was very clear that students believe teacher feedback to be a powerful resource that should be used to improve their drafts, peer feedback seemed less important to students and not useful to the same extent as the teacher's. Chen seemed particularly in favor of teacher feedback over peers': "When the peers give you feedback I don't even know what they want to talk."

f) The writing of others:

Four people mentioned the importance of seeing other peoples' work. Looking at other students' examples had two purposes:

- seeing a model or an example to imitate it

- comparing one's work to others' to critically evaluate it

Leonardo and Chen both pointed out that seeing examples helps them with their work. Chen was very explicit about looking for models and imitating them.

I don't post the first one, because I don't know what the writing should be like. So, when somebody post something I just look at it and say well, that's the format, that's how I should write. Just imitate what they say....I have my own idea but don't know how to say it in the correct way. I just change my ideas into their structure....for me is like, OK, they have three paragraph, I make three paragraph...I don't want to be any different from the mainstream. (Chen, student participant.).

Luca believed that the teacher should show some specific examples about grammar structure and organization of the whole essay. He reasoned that while English dominant students already have an idea of how to write and put essays together, for L2 students it would be more useful, if they were shown some examples to follow. Daniel was pleased when his teacher brought an example of the assignment to class. It was very beneficial for him to see the example, and he realized that what he had done was nothing similar to what the teacher expected. After that, he got an idea, felt more motivated and said that he started revising his draft more purposefully.

Survey Results: Seven survey questions were related to using external resources to improve one's draft. The results are presented in table 5 on page 62.

Question 1: When I write I use a bilingual dictionary to find the meaning of the words I don't know.

Fifty-two percent of the surveyed non-English dominant students (12 out of 23) agreed or strongly agreed they use a bilingual dictionary while working on the writing assignments for this class. On the other hand, 29% (7 out of 23) of non-English dominant

students disagreed or strongly disagreed with doing so. Seventeen percent of the students (4 out of 23) were neutral.

Question 2: When I write I use a thesaurus to find the meaning of the words I don't know.

Again, 52% of the surveyed students (12 out of 23) indicated to agree or strongly agree to use a thesaurus to check the meaning of words when they write. Thirty-four percent of the surveyed non-English dominant students (8 out of 23) claimed to disagree or strongly disagree with using a thesaurus and 13% of the non-English dominant respondents (3 out of 23) were neutral.

Question 3: When I write I use Internet to google for things I need help with.

Sixty percent of the surveyed students (14 out of 23) indicated they agree or strongly agree to google for help when writing the assignments and only 14% of the students (3 out of 23) disagreed or strongly disagreed about doing so. Twenty-six percent of the students (6 out of 23) were neutral.

Question 4: When I write I use grammar books to check if my grammar is correct.

The results of question 4 show that 34% of students (8 out of 23) agreed or strongly agreed to consult grammar books when writing. However, 52% of students (12 out of 23) indicated that they disagree or strongly disagree with using grammar books to check the grammatically of their writings. Thirteen percent (3 out of 23) of students were neutral.

Question 5: When I write in the Word processor I use a spell checker.

Seventy-one percent of surveyed non-English dominant students (17 out of 23) indicated to agree or strongly agree to using a spell checker. Nineteen percent of the

surveyed non-English dominant students (4 out of 23) disagreed or strongly disagreed to use this tool and 10% (2 out of 23) were uncertain.

Question 6: I always revise my work according to what my peers say.

Forty-seven percent (11 out of 23) indicated that they agree or strongly agree they revise their work after getting peer feedback. Twelve percent (3 out of 23) of surveyed students answered that they disagree or strongly disagree to revise according to what their peers say and 39% (9 out of 23) of them were neutral.

Question 7: If my teacher gives me a chance to revise my work after her comments, I will do it.

Eighty-two percent of the non-English dominant group (19 out of 23) agreed or strongly agreed they would revise their assignment according to the teacher feedback. Eight percent of students (2 out of 23) were neutral on this statement and another 8% (2 out of 23) disagreed or strongly disagreed.

While all interviewed students except Abel showed a strong necessity for external resources during their writing, the survey results show a slightly lower tendency towards their use. Nevertheless, approximately half of the students agreed or strongly agreed to use all the presented resources, except for the grammar books, which were less commonly used. Teacher feedback, on the other hand, was seen as the most valued resource.

Table 5: Using External Resources

Number of non-English dominant students (out of 23)	Agree or Strongly agree	Neutral	Disagree or strongly disagree
I use a bilingual dictionary	12	4	7
I use a thesaurus	12	3	8
I use Google	14	6	3
I use grammar books	8	3	12
I use spell checker	17	2	4
I revise after teacher feedback	19	2	2
I revise after my peer comments	11	9	3

Strategy 6: Focusing on/ Avoiding Problematic Areas

Interview/Author's Note Results: To compensate for some difficulties the participants had with writing, they would either focus on the problematic areas or completely avoid them. The examples include:

- revising and consulting external resources in order to overcome one's problems

- completely disregarding one's own language difficulties in exchange for fluency

- avoiding using difficult/unknown words

a) Focusing on problems:

To compensate for grammatical difficulties, students of this study tried to edit their texts as much as possible looking for grammar mistakes and to produce texts as free of grammar mistakes as possible. Chen for example, was very concerned about the way he was using words and creating sentences so he spent most of his revision time making sure his draft was syntactically and semantically correct all the time.

b) Avoiding problems:

Alicia, on the other hand, aware that focusing on grammar correctness interfered with her writing fluency, consciously decided not to put too much attention on it.

One student, Lisa was able to implement both of these options. As grammatical correctness was not that important for her instructor, she decided not to focus on it. On the other hand, she spent a lot of effort and time making sure her vocabulary was diverse enough to follow her teacher's advice.

Survey Results: No questions in the survey were related to focusing and avoiding strategies.

Research Question 2: How do Some Successful Students Implement Different Strategies to Address Their Difficulties When Working on Writing Assignments for the Mainstream Composition Courses?

As the strategies presented above form a list of all strategies employed by all interviewed students, the following part will focus on the strategies implemented by the four students that their instructors described as successful in the writing class and on the given assignment. In this composition course the students were seen as successful if they were able to read rhetorically, show metacognitive awareness of their reading and writing processes, perform critical thinking and implement all these knowledge and skills into their written work. At the time of this research the instructors were concerned about the content of the student's assignment and the organization of their ideas.

To understand why these students developed and used the aforementioned strategies, we need to look at what difficulties these students were trying to overcome. The following presentation of each separate case study is provided to shed light on the individuality of each student as a human being with unique characteristics and to show how different strategies may work better for different students. To get a more solid understanding of the student behavior in the course and on the given assignment, I compared student's perceptions with his/her teacher's point of view.

Lisa

"If you are not good in something, practice again and again and eventually you can do well, never give up" (Lisa, author's note).

When I asked Lisa to present herself as a writer she pointed out to me that her opinion about her writing is not very high. She especially believed she had problems with the organization of her text and making her sentences grammatically correct. However, she would try to do as best as possible on every given assignment for this class. Her instructor characterized Lisa as an intelligent and hardworking student, and very dedicated to the class. She was seen as the one who participated the most in class discussions and most often led small-group discussions. Her instructor described her as a self confident student, who is probably conscious about her success and who feels ready to comment and give feedback to other students.

During her interview Lisa repeatedly pointed out how much effort and time she has been putting in this class in order to be successful: "I work hard, I put all my time and native speakers always do things in 5 min, I come to class and they ask do we have

homework, oh, I spent 5 hours at home on that...” Even though the assignments for this course were hard for her, her attitude was positive towards all the hard work she was doing. In order to keep up with all hard work, it was important for Lisa to develop good time management strategies. As Lisa knew that the draft of her project was due on Monday, she gave herself one week to work on it, and tried to work on it every day as much as possible. With all the time she needed to spend on it she would never be able to turn it in on time if she would not leave herself one week for completing the draft.

Cultural differences and lack of vocabulary cause Lisa problems with understanding the written and spoken word, so the use of focusing strategies was a real necessity for her. In her project for instance, Lisa had a problem understanding the prompt. To overcome this issue and do her work, Lisa reread the prompt five times, hoping that with each additional reading she would get some better understanding about it. During the next class she also asked her teacher to further explain some of the requirements she was not sure about. Apparently this worked well for her as her teacher commented in the interview that Lisa seemed to have understood the purpose of the project well in contrast to some other students who missed the important point.

Even though Lisa did not specifically indicate that vocabulary was a problem for her, it was clear that it was a big obstacle in working on her assignments. When working on her assignments at home, Lisa's strategy was to look up words that she did not know how to express in English. As her teacher warned her that she needs to expand her vocabulary, she would frequently use a thesaurus and google translator to look for synonyms so that she would not repeat the same words too many times. As Lisa's vocabulary was not broad enough to allow her to think in English, she would usually rely

heavily on her L1 during the drafting process. During the interview she explained that she would first think in Spanish and sometimes she would also start writing the draft in her L1. Lisa's instructor pointed out during the interview that it is very valuable for the students to try to express their ideas in their L1 if that is easier for them. However, Lisa was aware that this strategy may not work well for her. She commented that this is very time consuming method and it requires double work from her, therefore she was glad that she did not take advantage of this strategy on this project, otherwise she may not have time to finish it before the due date.

As the organization of texts in different languages is different (Connor, 1996), Lisa had difficulties organizing her texts and staying on topic. She commented that she could never be sure if her organization was correct or not. Even though she would always check her project to make sure she was staying on topic, Lisa pointed out that alone, she would probably not be able to make it right. Therefore, she hoped that peer revision in class could help her with that problem, but she was disappointed to find out that her classmate had the same problem as she did and actually wrote only one paragraph for this assignment. As Lisa did not get all the feedback she needed, she asked her teacher for help.

Although Lisa would not be ashamed to ask for help, she was very selective about who she would talk to. She observed that although her teacher makes herself available to students all the time, she does not make use of all of the teacher's availability as much as she could. Lisa explained: "Our teacher only speaks English, all the instructions are in English and everything is in English, so I never talk to her in Spanish". Instead of asking

her teacher, Lisa would rather talk to her friends. "I prefer talk to non-native speakers, NS sometimes don't understand you or you don't understand them....."

Although Lisa had various problems in her writing assignments, she did not deal with all in the same way. Lisa was very selective in her revision process and making effective use of focusing and avoiding strategies. On the one hand she spent quite some time making sure that the organization of her paper was correct and she frequently reread it to check if she was "staying on topic." Moreover, as her instructor suggested she needed to extend her vocabulary, Lisa spent a lot of time focusing on her use of vocabulary. On the other hand, however, she did not spend much time on correcting her grammar mistakes even though she believed grammar was also one of her greatest problems in writing. Lisa was aware that her instructor would not pay much attention to grammar in that draft, so she decided to work on it later. Lisa commented: "I didn't ask for grammar, because the teacher said grammar is not important....it is good that she does not classify grammar, otherwise I would get a bad grade."

Daniel

"I don't want to be treated differently...the only thing is that they let me use my dictionary, my thesaurus, translator."

When I talked to Daniel about his perception of his writing skills he was very clear that they are not good. Daniel saw his weakest points being grammar, vocabulary, and spelling. He commented that it was never required from him to read or write in English, so that this is the reason for his difficulties. His instructor described Daniel as an engaged and vocal student, who is ready to discuss his ideas out loud and who is willing

to ask a lot of questions. In her opinion, Daniel seems to be responsible as he always turns in all the assignments on time and always comes to talk to her if he needs help with his work.

During his interview, Daniel constantly pointed out how important it is for him to improve his writing. He seemed really motivated and dedicated to the class. As most of the other interviewed students, Daniel also pointed out repeatedly how much time and effort he spends on the writing assignments. But that was fine for him, because he knew that if he wanted to produce the best project in his class, he needed to revise multiple times and make sure everything is correct.

Daniel's major preoccupation about his current assignment at the time of data collection was if he would be correctly understood and if he had made some mistakes that would change the meaning of his sentences and consequently the meaning of the whole text. His argument was that as a non-English-dominant student, he needed to put much more effort in searching for correct words, and consequently he needed to make more changes than an English dominant writer would. Therefore, his focusing strategy included spending a great amount of time and effort making sure all the words he used were used and spelled correctly and thus conveyed the right meaning. In his author's note he put: "I don't know if the readers are going to understand what I am try to said. I would like to know from you as a reader if you are getting my ideas or do I need more details, also my vocabulary I'm not sure if I am using the words correctly."

To make sure all words express the right meaning, he made frequent use of his dictionary, thesaurus, and translator in his writing. Daniel rationalized that for a non-English dominant student these resources are an invaluable tool for making meaning in

the target language. Daniel felt very disadvantaged in one of his classes, where his professor did not let him use his computer and Internet resources on the writing assignment they did in class. He claimed that he does not want to be treated differently by his professors, but to be allowed to use the resources is very important for him. Daniel believes that that by using them, he can do equally well or even better on the writing assignments than English dominant students can. To find out if he "sounded like a seven grader" and if he needed to improve his vocabulary on his writing assignment further, he decided to use another strategy, which included asking his girlfriend for feedback on words he has used. As his girlfriend told him there is still room for improvement, he went back to using his computer resources.

Daniel also reasoned that as most of his work is done at home, where he can use all the resources and strategies available to him, the teacher should not treat him differently or give him different feedback than she/he would to NS students. He believed that the reason why his English has not improved so far was that he was always treated like an ESL student. Although he completed his high school in the U.S., his English and his writing were still not good.

Although Daniel's instructor allowed and even encouraged the use of L1 in her course to express ideas that students would not be able to express in English, Daniel never mentioned he would use L1 to generate his thinking process. Actually, quite the opposite was true. Daniel often complained about his previous writing class where the instructor allowed too much L1 in the class and even talked to students in their native language. Daniel saw that behavior as completely demotivating and impeding his learning of the English language.

Alicia

"At the beginning of the semester I was like... I didn't even write a completely page, but now I write three or four pages and it's like easy. I don't concentrate on take lot of emphasis on mistakes of grammar."

Alicia's opinion about her own writing was very low too. She believed she had a lot of problems with the organization of her writing, grammar correctness, and spelling and punctuation. However, her instructor described Alicia as an overachiever, who is very engaged in the class, very active in small group discussions, and who provides useful and insightful comments to her peers. In fact, during our interview Alicia pointed out that while writing this project she produced eight drafts. As she was not satisfied with what she saw on the paper, she kept deleting paragraphs and writing new ones until she was finally pleased.

Although the requirement for the draft was to be three pages long, Alicia wrote seven pages. She was able to write such a long paper because she decided to put her focus on organizing and making sure her ideas were correct rather than really caring too much about grammar. Before, Alicia was very concerned about her grammar correctness and would try to make her writings grammatically correct all the time, so she remembered how difficult it was for her to write even one page. Now that she started to concentrate more on the ideas she wants to convey than on the surface level correctness, Alicia said she can write three or four pages with ease. It was clear that focusing on one area and avoiding being distracted by others worked well for her.

To compensate for the fact that she put less focus on grammar herself, Alicia decided to ask her sister for help with grammar and punctuation. "I am afraid my

grammar will be bad, I wanted more feedback on grammar, because I know my peer will tell me about content" Alicia told me during her interview.

To compensate for her lack of vocabulary and spelling skills, Alicia would use Google translator or a bilingual and monolingual dictionary. That she made a good use of the external resources is supported by her willingness to first check for the meaning of the words she does not know how to say or spell in English in her bilingual dictionary and then to verify their meaning with an English-English dictionary. Moreover, Alicia asserted that when using a spelling checker, she always tries to remember the correct way of spelling the words she did not get right on her own.

Because her vocabulary was not broad enough, Alicia found it difficult to think and brainstorm in English. During the interview she noted that whenever the topic seemed to be more complicated, she tried to put down her ideas in Spanish first. However, Alicia observed that the use of L1 is not a good strategy. In the author's note assignment she explained that thinking in Spanish and writing in English confused her a bit, so she put more effort into thinking in English and she was able to write her ideas down more easily.

Chen

"When you learn a language just imitate."

Chen is the only non-Spanish speaker that I interviewed. In this respect, he is much different from others. But as also the South Texas region where UTPA is located is becoming more culturally and linguistically diverse, I have decided to include him in my research. Nevertheless, he is an English language learner and according to himself an

average writer with difficulties in organizing his texts, making grammatically correct sentences, and spelling and vocabulary problems. As Chen's instructor was concerned mostly about how students convey their ideas in writing, she saw Chen as a student with good ideas, who understands the topics discussed in the class and can relate them well to outside situations.

Chen's biggest problem in writing is thinking and brainstorming his ides in English. Therefore, for his thinking process he relies heavily on his L1. When he is writing, he always generates ideas in Chinese and only then tries to translate them into English. He acknowledges, however, that as words and sentence structures are so different between English and Chinese, this is a very slow and tiring process: "When you type you revise and you do the translations".

To address his spelling and grammar difficulties, Chen clearly uses focusing strategies. He described his writing process as a combination of constant writing and revising. Chen needed to make sure that each word and sentence is written correctly, conveying the idea exactly as he wanted and only then he would move on. While writing and revising Chen used external resources such as google translator, a thesaurus, or a spell checker all the time. During the interview he was lamenting about this being a very tiring process and also a very disturbing one, as his flow of thoughts got frequently broken up. He contrasted his writing with that of his English dominant classmates, who, from his perspective, first write everything fast and only then come back and revise.

Chen pointed out to me that as a language learner the only thing you need to do is observe and imitate. As the organization of texts in English is so different from the organization of texts in Chinese, Chen always needs to imitate some examples to write

according to his teacher's expectations. For his writing assignments Chen would never post his assignments first, but he would always wait for his classmates to post their writings before him. Chen clarified that this was not to copy their ideas, but to see their format: "I just want to see how it should look; I have my ideas, but if they would write three paragraphs, I would make my ideas fit that". However, the problem with this is, Chen noted, that native speakers would always post all the assignments the last day and he would rather finish all the work earlier.

The discussions of the results to both questions are presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Discussion

First, it needs to be pointed out that the choice of the term non-English dominant speaker was justified given the unique characteristics of this area, which are caused by the linguistic and cultural contacts of the two groups and the frequency of mobility of people from both countries across the Mexican-American border. On the one hand, it was difficult to classify survey participants into two distinctive groups. Therefore the three-way categorization of participants was necessary. Due to the given circumstances, the use of the traditionally established terms (e.g., ESL) would be impossible and inappropriate. Except for Chen, none of the other interviewed students would fit into the traditional category of an ESL learner as an immigrant student. Moreover, as Spanish is widely spoken in this area, the Spanish dominant speakers could easily find a person who shares the same L1 and spoke in Spanish most of the time. Therefore the idea of the ESL immigrant student, who needs to use the target language in order to communicate inside and outside of the class could not been used in this setting.

The results of this study show that these student participants were able to develop and use multiple strategies to address the difficulties of writing in L2. Based on students'

explanations during the interviews and through the observed strategies that these students developed, it became clear that these students did not want their instructors to adjust the assignments and activities to their abilities, but that they took all the responsibility for success on themselves. Chen and Daniel for instance noted that they want to be pushed and that working hard in an English writing class (which is not necessarily tailored to their needs) is all they need to become successful L2 writers.

Although students were able to develop a variety of coping strategies, most of them were self-reliant and related to the use of inanimate resources. Overall, these students showed a strong tendency to use external resources like dictionaries, books, or computer resources. External resources, however, such as the writing center or peer's feedback which would require some face-to-face interaction were quite absent. Daniel for instance, was very determined that with the help of Internet and dictionaries, he can produce work which is on the same level of that produced by his English dominant peers. He, however, never mentioned seeking the help of other students, although he was the one to be in the U.S. for the longest period of time and was probably more accustomed to the culture and language than other students were. This finding was also supported by the survey results which show that the majority of non-English dominant students would never go to the writing center, but would use other external resources such as Internet and various dictionaries. While some teachers acknowledge the fact that peer revision may not be as effective as desired, it is still often present in these composition classes. Some instructors also believe that sending their students to the writing center for additional help with surface level difficulties would help students improve their writing.

However, when students do engage in communicative situations with the intention to ask for help or feedback it would be usually with people with whom they share the same L1 and are close to (e.g. family members, friends, among others). Abel and Lisa for instance explained that they would frequently not feel understood by their English dominant peers and that they would be afraid not to understand them. Chen, who was the only non-Spanish speaker, never spoke to other students about his difficulties and asked them for help, which may be explained with the reason that he was not able to use his L1 as much as other students did. These findings are similar to Harklau's (1994) and Braine's (1996) observations that ESL students in the mainstream classes felt a barrier between themselves and the other students and rarely involved themselves in communications with them and were afraid to ask questions or speak out in the class, due to their poor speech performance in L2.

Nevertheless, students did see their native speaker peers as a valuable resource. According to my observations, non-English dominant students were timid about establishing interactions with English-dominant students, but would, on the other hand, try to look for their writing examples and use them as valuable sources. Chen, for instance, who never talked to any of his peers, still waited for them to post their assignments online before he followed their format while organizing his writing. The idea that English dominant peers' writing was perceived as a valuable resource by the non-English dominant students could be supported also by the survey data where the majority of L2 students preferred mixed peer groups of both English dominant and non-English dominant students. One explanation for this could be that such groups combine a safe L1 speaking resource with potential to see an English-dominant student written product. As

students felt the need to see the examples from their English dominant peers, peer revision groups might provide them this option. Moreover, as Luca mentioned during his interview, an advantage could be that an English-dominant student is able to give more feedback on grammar and other sentence level areas, which seems to be highly desired by these non-English dominant writers.

However, while the participants in this study were looking for examples to imitate only inside the borders of their class, Leki's (1995) interviewees were seeking models to imitate in a much broader sense. Those students were looking into real world models like books, articles, and movie reviews to find samples worth imitating. Similar findings came from Mu and Carrington (2007) who reported that all of their three participants looked for appropriate models for their writing. As Leki's (1995) Jien had failed to determine the appropriateness of these sources correctly, and as the students from this study did not even consider looking for examples outside their class, the teacher's role in showing and guiding students to find and evaluate sources that are worthy to be taken as models is obvious.

The use of L1 as a strategy seemed a most controversial one, as the interviewed students believe it to be more of a burden than an aid. All of the students who talked about doing sentence by sentence translation from their L1 into English acknowledged that this took a lot of time and impeded them in expressing all the ideas in the way they could express them in their L1. While Leki's (1995) findings show that using L1 was not very common with her participants, the students in this study employed their L1 in their writing and especially in their thinking process very frequently. They used their L1 mostly for writing whole drafts in L1 and then translating them to English or to do

sentence by sentence translation while writing down a draft in English. Only Alicia expressed that she would be using L1 for the brainstorming process when the ideas are more difficult and then write them down in English. Chen, Lisa, and Alicia frequently lamented the fact that translation took a lot of time and they were frustrated over the fact that not all the words and ideas can be literally translated into English. Therefore, although using L1 as a strategy was implemented by all the students except for one, they also realized it was the most detrimental for their writing process. This can be explained according to the established literature on the use of L1 during L2 writing. For example, according to Wolfersberger (2007), L1 can be effectively used during the brainstorming and idea organization stages of the writing process and not so much for writing the whole drafts that get later translated into L2 (p. 9). Other studies showed that the effect of using L1 varies depending on the parts of the writing process in which it is implemented and depending on the writer's L2 proficiency (Jones and Tetroe, 1987; Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001). Therefore, instructors may need to be more aware of the effects the L1 has on student's writing and thinking processes and be able to guide and suggest more effectively on when L1 should be implemented and when not. If Chen who wrote sentence to sentence translations or Lisa who would write down the whole draft in Spanish to later translate it to English would be told more explicitly or shown how to use their L1s to generate ideas in the brainstorming process, these students may eventually find the use of L1 as a positive strategy and not see their L1s as a disadvantage.

Most strategies that non-English dominant students developed to work with the problems in L2 writing were in clear contrast to the strategies usually emphasized by instructors in a process writing class developed for mainstream students. While the

interviewed teachers most of the time encouraged students not to consider and be overwhelmed with sentence level problems, most of the interviewed students purposely focused on them and reasoned that as their language proficiency level is not high enough, they need to address more surface level issues than English-dominant students need. Chen and Mauricio for instance, were the two, who believed that as non-English dominant students they need to make sure every word expresses exactly the meaning they wanted before they can proceed with their writing. If these students would be presented with the writing processes successful L2 writers employ (Zamel, 1976, 1982, 1983), the interviewed students may reconsider the writing strategies they used and, as Alicia was able to do, focus on content first and leave the revision of the surface level issues for a later step.

Interestingly, the two students, Lisa and Alicia, who had the two lowest scores on their TOEFL exams (500 and 503 respectively) were recognized as the most successful students writers among the interviewed ones. Furthermore, these two students were also seen by their instructors as one of the best students in their respective classes. This could be explained by the fact that both of the two girls recognized which strategies worked for them better and which did not, what other students may had failed to achieve. Alicia was able to avoid paying to much attention on grammar issues during her initial stages of writing and observed that she could write more and more fluently than she did before. On the other hand, the fact that Lisa started to think more in English and stopped with sentence by sentence translations from Spanish, was probably one of the reasons that brought her success

Overview of the Study

The aim of this study was to answer two research questions: (1) What strategies do non-English dominant students employ to address the difficulties they have with writing assignments in the composition courses? and (2) How do some successful students implement different strategies to address their difficulties when working on the writing assignments for the mainstream composition course? Teaching writing using the writing process approach reveals to the students the idea of the recursiveness of the writing process and teaches them some of the strategies successful writers use when they compose. However, as it was shown that writing in L1 is not the same as writing in L2 this research was designed to understand what strategies non-English dominant students develop to overcome the difficulties they have when composing writing assignments in the English language. Composition teachers are usually not aware of the whole set of strategies that non-English dominant students need to use in order to compensate for their differences from English-dominant students who work on the same assignments in their L1.

To get the most comprehensive picture of L2 students' writing behaviors as possible, a qualitative approach to data collection and analysis was followed which aimed for an emic perspective that is informed by student participants themselves.

Furthermore, the findings obtained by interviews and student reflective writings were solidified by data gathered with surveys from ESL students enrolled in a freshman composition course paired with a basic writing course These multiple lines of data collection and analysis all contributed to the construction of a composite understanding of the L2 writing situation and thus provided some answers to the two research questions.

Summary of Findings

The findings from this research show that the majority of the non-English dominant students participating in this study developed and used some kind of strategies to overcome the difficulties that arose when writing in L2. Six major groups of strategies were identified: (1) Managing time effectively due to the amount of time the assignment require; (2) Putting in a lot of effort to produce a perfect draft; (3) Asking for help, feedback, or clarification with different writing and language areas; (4) Using L1 to translate single words, do sentence to sentence translation, or to brainstorm ideas ; (5) Using external resources such as spell checker, Internet, grammar books, writings by others as examples, and various dictionaries; and (6) Focusing and avoiding strategies to either address or avoid working on the problems mostly related to grammar and vocabulary issues.

Most of the strategies these students used seem to be developed because these students took responsibility to overcome their L2 writing difficulties on their own. None of the successful students believed that giving them additional help with language problems is their instructor's responsibility, regardless of their English language proficiency as indicated by the TOEFL score.

Moreover, the findings suggest that most of the strategies used were internal to the students, which did not require the students to rely on the help of others. These strategies included the use of various dictionaries and computer tools to assist their writing. Students also spent a lot of time and put a lot of effort into the assignments, but less commonly talked to other people, especially English dominant speakers. Somehow more often non-English dominant students interacted with people who spoke the same L1

and were close to them. Nevertheless, English-dominant students' writings served non-English dominant students as an example according to which they could shape their writing. They found looking at their writings very beneficial, but unfortunately, they resisted talking to them as they feared not being understood or not being able to understand the other person properly.

The study also suggests that L1 was a common strategy used by the majority of the students. However, as most students used L1 for sentence by sentence translations, they were all united in the view that this strategy was the most detrimental one, as it required double work from these students. It also produced negative feelings, because students could not translate all the words and sentences into the target language and would therefore feel frustrated.

There is no easy and straightforward answer to the second question posed in this study. Due to the unique characteristics of every individual student, a combination of different strategies worked for different students. Although Alicia and Lisa were seen as the most successful writers in the given context and were recognized to use the strategies that are recognized as successful in the L2 writing literature, Chen and Daniel, on the other hand, also found ways to deal with their difficulties and address them to the extent needed to function well in their classrooms. Furthermore, each of these students seemed to put a different importance to all strategies used, but had at least one, which was seen as the most important one and which they believed can bring them success. While Daniel preferred the use of external resources, Chen believed that sentence by sentence translation is the best strategy for him to address difficulties in L2 writing. On the other hand, Alicia believed that avoiding dealing with grammar problems enabled her to

become a more fluent writer. And last, Lisa saw putting in a lot of effort as a necessary sacrifice but acknowledged the benefits of using L2 to brainstorm and generate ideas.

Contribution

Various benefits of this research have been realized. First, this study does not look only at writing and revising strategies of L2 writers (Zamel, 1976, 1982, 1983; Raimes, 1985) but takes into consideration all the strategies and resources that non-English dominant students employ in order to address their difficulties when writing in their L2. Second, the list of strategies non-English dominant students employed in their writing assignments expands our understanding of the strategies that were already identified by other researchers (Leki, 1995; Wolfersnbenger, 2003; Mu and Carrington, 2007).

Apart from listing these strategies, this research sheds light on the writing process that is most of the time invisible to the instructors. The close inspection of individual students' implementation of the strategies to address some specific problems can help us understand the unique needs of non-English dominant students and their behaviors better. Realizing the strategies the students use when working on assignments and understanding the parts of the writing process that are hidden to the instructors will help us better understand also the students' behavior that is overt to us.

By understanding how each strategy worked for the four successful students, the instructors can get a clearer idea about which strategies to implement in their instruction. As most students already use some kind of strategies but are not able to avoid using the ones which negatively influence their writing process, instructors should consult with each student to help him/her focus on using the strategies that are most beneficial for

his/her writing. Moreover, instructors should present and suggest those strategies that the student has not developed on his/her own yet.

On the other hand, the instructors may find this research useful as it points out the diversity in the mainstream or basic writing composition class that some instructors may not be aware of. Therefore, to address the needs of all the students enrolled in these classes, the differentiation of instruction is understood as the best option. In a course that is topically oriented to issues in reading and writing, some non-English dominant students may better identify if examples of L2 writers and readers would be presented to them. Moreover, the findings tell us that for some students included in this study, more explicit instructions about how to balance the difficulties of the L2 writers and the expectation of the mainstream composition course would be beneficial.

Finally, this research supports the idea that the traditionally used terms ESL and NS need to be reconsidered, as neither of them was able to be applied to the studied population in the linguistically and culturally unique area such as the LRGV, where this study took place.

Limitations of the Study

During this investigation it became clear that time was the major limitation in this study. Although highly desired, it was impossible to examine the whole writing cycle the students went through during the assignment. As this research study was not meant to interrupt the flow of the pedagogical process in any way, it could not control the time allotted for the assignment the students were working on, which got extended beyond the time limits of this research. Therefore, every student writer was interviewed only once

during the assignment cycle, and the research study was able to focus only on the production of the first two drafts. If more time would have been available, multiple interviews throughout the assignment cycle would have been conducted, which would give us a more detailed and elaborated set of data. Moreover, as the interviews were conducted only once, there was no possibility for follow-up questions after the data were analyzed.

Due to difficulties in arranging classroom observation visits, the planned observations were not possible. This would, however, provide additional understanding about the student behavior and the decisions they make regarding who to approach for help, feedback, or clarification and who would rather not.

As this is a short-term research study focusing on a few individuals its findings are not meant to be generalizable to the broader context and applied to the population at large. However, these results should be interpreted for the detail they provide regarding the L2 experience in mainstream composition courses. The value of this study, and others like it, is in the details and the complexities it conveys.

Future Research

As this study gave us only an idea about strategies students use and develop when working on the initial drafts of the assignment, an extension of such a study is proposed. The future research should aim towards a study that will be able to follow one complete cycle of one assignment, and include multiple interviews with students and class observations. It is still not understood how these students would work after receiving

teacher feedback and if any other strategies or resources would be used at that stage.

When the time for editing comes, some new strategies may be used by these students.

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APPENDIX A

IRB APPROVAL

INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD FOR HUMAN SUBJECTS IN RESEARCH

THE UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS - PAN AMERICAN

1201 West University Drive • Edinburg, Texas 78541-2999 • (956) 384-5004 Office • Fax (956) 381-2940

NOTICE OF APPROVAL
Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects (IRB)
FWA#00000805

TO: Petra Jakulin Baruca
    COAS 268

FROM: Institutional Review Board for Human Subjects in Research

DATE: February 12, 2010

RE: IRB#2010-003-01 "ESL writing in regular composition courses"

The IRB protocol referenced above has been reviewed and APPROVED.

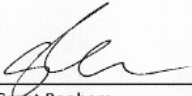**Basis for approval:** Exempt Review, category #2

Approval expiration date: NA

Recruitment and Informed Consent: You must follow the recruitment and consent procedures that were approved. If your study uses an informed consent form or study information handout, you will receive an IRB-approval stamped PDF of the document(s) for distribution to subjects.

Modifications to the approved protocol: Modifications to the approved protocol (including recruitment methods, study procedures, survey/interview questions, personnel, consent form, or subject population), must be submitted in writing to the IRB at irb@utpa.edu for review. **Changes must not be implemented until approved by the IRB.**

Approval expiration and renewal: Your study approval expires on the date noted above. You will receive a continuing review (renewal) form from the IRB approximately 2-4 weeks before approval expiration, which should be completed and returned immediately. If you will be interacting with subjects **or** working with individually identifiable private information, you need to have active IRB approval. Failure to return the form will result in your study file being closed on the approval expiration date.

Data retention: All research data and signed informed consent documents should be retained for a *minimum* of 3 years after *completion* of the study.

Approved by: _____ Date: 2/16/10
Dr. Grant Benham
Chair, Institutional Review Board

cc: Dr. Wendy A. Lawrence-Fowler, V.P. for Research

Bryan Meadows (COAS 272)

APPENDIX B

SURVEY ENG 1320/1301

This is the survey about your ideas on your writing in ENG 1320/1301 class that you are taking this semester. The survey should take you approximately **10 minutes**.

Please, be **honest** in your answers. Chose the answer that best describes you and not the one you believe should be the right thing to do in each case. It is very important for us to get the proper answers from you, because we want to understand your needs as a learner better and make these classes as beneficial for you as possible.

As you don't need to sign or write your name anywhere, you don't have to worry that anybody will find out what you as an individual think or do in this class.

Thank you very much for your honesty and your time!

_____

Please, circle the most appropriate answer.

At home I speak:
a)mostly English   b) mostly Spanish   c) both   d) other:_____

In high school most of my writing was done in:
a) English   b) Spanish   c) other: _____

I feel more comfortable writing essays in:
a) English   b) Spanish   c) both   d) other: _____

I finished my high school in:
 a) USA   b) Mexico   c) other: _____

_____

1. I work very hard already on the first draft, even if I know I will have a chance to revise later
I completely agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 not agree at all

2. I always revise my work according to what my peers say
I completely agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 not agree at all

3. If my teacher gives me a chance to revise my work after her comments, I will always do it
I completely agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 not agree at all

4. I spent a lot of time for writing and revising each assignment in this class

I completely agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 not agree at all

5. I put a lot of effort in writing and revising each assignment in this class
I completely agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 not agree at all

6. When I write, I always

- use a bilingual dictionary for the words I don't understand

I completely agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 not agree at all

- use a thesaurus to check the meaning of the words

I completely agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 not agree at all

- google for things I need help with

I completely agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 not agree at all

- use a grammar books to check if my grammar is correct (if I am not sure)

I completely agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 not agree at all

- use a spelling check tool

I completely agree 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 not agree at all

7. If I need help or feedback with writing
- I ask native speakers
Always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 never
- I ask people who speak Spanish as well as English
always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 never
- I go to the writing center
always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 never
- I ask my English teacher
always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 never
- I don't ask anybody and try to figure it out on my own
always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 never
- I don't ask anybody and just try to do it differently than I planned
always 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 never

Thank you!

TENTATIVE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

STUDENTS:

      1. How is it to be a NNS in a composition course designed for NS? What are your strengths and weaknesses in comparison to other NS?

      2. Tell me about this assignment. Is it easy/difficult for you? What was easy? What was difficult? What did you do to overcome these obstacles? Why did you decide to do this? Is this what you usually do?

      3. Tell me about you writing process in this draft. What was easy? What was the most difficult for you? What did you do about this? Why? Is this what you usually do when you encounter similar problems?

      4. How much time did you spend for this assignment so far? How much effort? Why?

      5. How was your teacher helpful so far? Does she know how you feel about this assignment and what difficulties you have with it (if any)? How could she be more helpful?

      6. How were other students helpful so far? NS and NNS?

      7. What kind of feedback would you like to receive from your teacher?

      8. What would you like that your teacher knew about your work during this assignment that she would never found out just by reading your paper?

INSTRUCTORS:

1.   What can you tell me about your students? Do you have any NS, NNS in your class? How do you know?

2.   How do students in your class work? Do you see any difference between NS and NNS?

3.   What are strengths and some weaknesses of NNS in your classes? Why?

4.   Some researchers believe that the writing processes of ESL and NS are the same, therefore they can be easily placed into regular composition classes. What do you think about this?

5.   What difficulties do NNS have in your class?

6.   How do you address them?

7.   How is your XY student working in the class? How did student XY work on this assignment? What did he/she do well and what could he have done better? What were the reasons for his/her difficulties?

8.   How did you help this student to overcome these problems? (Feedback?)

BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

Petra Jakulin Baruca finished her undergraduate studies in her home country, Slovenia, where she graduated in 2007 with a Bachelor of Arts with a double major in English language and literature and Geography. During her studies she was awarded a Scholarship from the Ministry of Education and Sport of the Government of the Republic of Slovenia.

In May 2010 she earned her Master's degree in English as a Second Language from the University of Texas Pan American (UTPA). Her research interests include second language acquisition, second language teaching, and ESL writing.

Petra gained her teaching experience in Slovenia, where she taught English as a foreign language to a diverse body of students from kindergarten to the Junior-High school. She taught at different private and public schools. While studying at UTPA, she was working as a student and teaching assistant teaching Rhetoric and Composition classes to freshman students.