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L1 Use in L2 Writing: A Case of Multilingual Undergraduates in a Basic Writing Course

By Lal Bahadur Rana

A Thesis Submitted in the Partial Fulfilment of the

Requirement for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in

Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TESL)

Minnesota State University

Mankato, Minnesota

April 2018

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This thesis paper has been examined and approved.

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Dr. Paolo Infante, Committee Member

## Abstract

The study entitled “L1 Use in L2 Writing: A Case of Multilingual Undergraduates in a Basic Writing Course” is a qualitative case study research carried out to find out the purposes for which undergraduate students use their L1s in an L2 Basic Writing course in the US university context, their perceptions regarding the effects of their use of L1s in L2 writing, and the ways they utilize their prior experience of writing academic essays while they are writing similar types of texts in L2. To these ends, the data were collected from the students enrolled in the Basic Writing course in a state university in the Mid-western part of the US. There were eighteen participants with eight different L1 backgrounds. Open-ended questionnaire and further follow-up questions were the tools for the data collection. The data for the study were collected during the 2017 Fall semester. Thus, the data collected in this way were codified using MAXQDA and analyzed and interpreted based on the recurring themes.

The analysis of the data shows that multilingual writers make use of their L1s for generating ideas, reducing cognitive load, finding target language words, finding the information required to write essays and backtranslating. Regarding whether it is beneficial to use their L1s, they believe that it can be both facilitating such as easy to think and debilitating such as fear of making mistakes. Similarly, when it comes to the case of the use of prior knowledge, they mainly use their prior experience of writing for structuring their essays. Based on the findings, pedagogical implications have been drawn.

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## Dedication

I would like to dedicate this thesis to my mother, who always inspired me to pursue my studies.

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April 2018

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## **Chapter I**

### **Introduction**

#### **Background of the Study**

The use of students' native language or mother tongue (henceforth L1) in course of learning a second or foreign language (L2 hereafter) has been just like the swinging of a pendulum, as its use has been accepted and rejected time and again. From the distant past, learners have been using their L1s in course of learning L2s. Students' L1s were extensively used, while teaching and learning classical languages such as Latin and Greek in the West and Sanskrit in the East through Grammar Translation Method. However, the use of students' L1s in L2 classrooms was vehemently criticized and strictly prohibited by the proponents of the Direct Method while going against what the Grammatical Translation Method had proposed. One of the main mottos of the Direct Method was to use L2 as the only means of instruction in language classrooms. Their prohibition was also validated by the contrastive and error analysts who blamed students' L1s as their major source of errors. During the 1940s and 1950s, in fact, there was a trendy belief that the more the learners forgot their native language, the more successfully they could learn or acquire their L2s. Therefore, the use of students' L1s in L2 or foreign language classrooms was stigmatized until the proponents of Communicative Approach to Language Teaching (CLT) advocated that the use of the students' L1s for providing directions and clarifying questions or tasks could play some facilitative roles in developing students' L2 or FL (Richards, & Rodgers, 2001; Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011). Thus, from the late 1970s, the use of L1 is taken as a resource to learn L2s both in EFL or ESL contexts.

It is not uncommon for multilingual writers to use their L1s as the prior gained dominant cognitive tools (Vygotsky, 1978) while they are learning to write in their L2s . They are likely to use their L1s while writing in L2s they are learning because of the dominance of the first languages in their thinking processes. They often use their L1s (albeit not necessarily consciously in all occasions) while writing in their L2s for various purposes such as finding suitable words for expressing their ideas precisely and organizing their ideas in L2 texts. It is because, with the help of their L1s, they can activate the prior experience of writing existed in their L1s, which can help them process new knowledge (Brinton, 2014). While learning to write in L1s, they might have experience of writing various kinds of texts such as essays, letters and invitation cards. They might follow the same styles and strategies of writing that they have learned in their L1s even if they are writing in L2s. In this regard, Edelkey (1982) maintains that even the beginners such as first, second and third-grade students also use their first language strategies and knowledge to write well in their second languages. From general learning perspectives too, it is quite natural for learners to construct new knowledge or, in some cases, reconstruct their existing knowledge in order to accommodate their knowledge in new learning situations (Hailikari, Katajavuori, & Linindblom-Ylänne, 2008).

Along with the emergence of the belief that students' L1s could be useful resources for learning L2s, many scholars in writing studies focused on how students' L1s can be used effectively deployed in various stages of the writing process. The use of students' native language for generating texts can be beneficial especially for those who are not proficient enough in their L2 (Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992). Matsuda (2014) believes that multilingual writers can benefit from using their L1s while they are writing

in their L2s, especially when they are free to choose the topic of their own interests or carry out their writing tasks based on their prior knowledge or experience gained in their L1s. However, he makes teachers or instructors aware that, “Some L2 writers may prefer to write only in English; not all L2 writers are comfortable using their L1 in the composition classroom” (p. 273). Like Matsuda, Swain and Lapkin (2000) maintain that the use of students’ L1 while learning L2 is beneficial, mainly because with the use of their L1s they can better understand task requirement, find appropriate vocabulary and get ideas on how to organize their texts. Similarly, Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) found that the use of L1 in the L2 setting is beneficial because students tend to take the recourse of their L1s while they need to carry out cognitively challenging tasks. In the same way, Yigzaw (2012) reports the beneficial effects of allowing students’ L1s in pre-writing stage.

However, van Weijen, van den Bergh, Rijlaarsdam and Sanders (2009) argue that the use of students’ L1s can be beneficial or harmful depending upon the purpose for which they use their L1s. For instance, while multilingual writer’s use of their L1s for goal setting, generating ideas and structuring the essay has been found to exert positive effects upon the texts they create, the use of their L1s for self-instruction and metacomments has negative impacts upon the process as well as products of writing. Additionally, Friedlandar (1990) argues that whether the use of students’ L1 in the L2 writing process is effective is dependent on the topics of assignments. He found that Chinese ESL writers could produce qualitative texts if they prepared their outlines of letters in the languages in which they had received information. In other words, his participants could produce better texts thinking in Chinese if the topic was related to the

information that they had received in Chinese, but they could produce the better texts if they thought in English for the topic which was related to the information gathered in English.

Like in the case of determining the effects of the use of students' L1s, several research studies have been undertaken with a view to finding out the reasons for which multilingual writers make use of their L1s while they are producing their texts in their L2s. Uzawa and Cumming (1989), Wang and Wen (2002) and Wang (2003) have reported that L2 writers use their L1s for generating ideas related to the topic in question. Similarly, Qi (1998) and Cohen and Brooks-Carson's (2001) maintain that L2 writers, particularly to those who do not have sufficient proficiency over their L2s tend to use their L1s while carrying cognitively challenging tasks, thereby reducing their cognitive loads. Likewise, Manchón, Larios, and Murphy (2000) and Kim and Yoon (2014) have found that L2 writers use their L1s for backtracking, a process of checking whether the target language texts they have created make senses translating back into their L1s.

### **Statement of the Problem**

The growing number of international student population in the US colleges and universities indicate that these higher academic institutions are linguistically, culturally, and academic diverse and complex as they speak various languages, are from diverse cultures and bring different ways of learning. The data released by Pew Research Center (2017) show that the number of international visa students recently enrolled at U.S. colleges and universities has significantly grown over the last decade, increasing from 138,000 in 2004 to 364,000 in 2016. Though recently published report by Open Doors survey indicate that the number of international students decreased by 7% in the

academic year 2016-2017, compared to the previous academic year's population (Rodden, 2017). Nevertheless, the number of this group of population at the university where the study was conducted slightly increased, from 1129 students in 2015 to 1238 until 2017.

From the 2016 fall semester, I have been teaching basic writing course for multilingual writers at a university in the Mid-western part of the US . My teaching experience here has intrigued and inspired me to explore how multilingual writers majoring in various disciplines such as science, engineering, nursing, management and humanities and social sciences develop their genre-based academic writing skills in English. I still vividly remember one of my students named Tunju (pseudonym), who was struggling to write his “comparison and contrast essay,” saying to me during our one-on-one conference, “Teacher, I have paragraphs and paragraphs of the essay in my head; How can I write them to English?” (Tungju, 2016, personal communication). This question unknowingly forced me to think about how I could support him so that he could use the linguistic repository of his native language to develop his academic writing skills in English. As I had not expected that kind of issue from students, I could not give him specific ideas or strategies that might help him express the paragraphs that he had conceived in his native language. After rumination for some time on his issue, I gave him general ideas such as using Google Translate or bilingual dictionaries particularly from his native language to English for finding vocabulary items, collaborating with his colleagues who share the same native language background with him, and requesting his native speaker friends or Writing Center tutors to make sure that the text that he creates makes sense to readers. Before I faced this question, I would believe that words and

structures can no longer be the barriers of expression after the writers have basic functional competence in their L2s. I would generally believe that they should be able to write well if they have experience of writing in their native languages. Considering the challenges encountered by him in course of learning to write genre-based academic essays, I was motivated toward delving into the challenge posed by my student in greater detail.

Though some international students might have been educated in English medium schools right from the beginning of their schoolings, most of them may have the experience of studying in schools or colleges, in which their L1s or the national language of their nation might be the medium of instruction. In such a case, they might have very limited exposure to writing, because they might have studied English as a subject similar to other content-area courses like science, social studies, mathematics, etc. Most of the students from “outer circle and expanding circle” (Kachru, 1994, p. 138) countries might have this kind of experience as they are mostly educated in their L1s, which is why their proficiency over the English language may not be strong due to lack of enough exposure to English. For instance, in Nepal, if students do not go to private schools, their exposure to English is limited just 45 minutes a day and five days a week. Usually, they have strong native language, but weak English as they try to memorize words and grammar rules, rather than using English as a means of communication. Indeed, “they are literate and fluent in their native language, and they have learned English in foreign language classes. That is, they have learned English primarily through their eyes, studying vocabulary, verb forms, and language rules” (Reid, 2011, p. 85). As such, their writing skills might be limited because they might have experience of answering text-based



questions in single sentences in the English language courses they have done in their prior academic institutions (Leki, 1992). Thus, the learners with this kind of previous experiences of writing in English might use their L1s when they write academic essays in ESL university settings. In such a scenario, it is worth studying how multilingual writers use their L1s and prior L1 knowledge of writing that they have already built while learning to write in the academic institutions of their home countries.

Another reason for being interested in carrying out this research is that, as a bilingual, I have my own experience of shuttling between English (the language of academia in the Nepalese context) and Nepali (my native language). While doing so, there can be numerous effects upon my own writings in English. Some of these effects may be very clear, whereas some others may be very subtle. Talking about my own experience of using L1 or prior knowledge of writing, I often subconsciously tend to see English through the lens of the Nepali language. Such a way of looking English through my native language perspective has both facilitating and debilitating effects upon my products. Such effects are quite natural in a sense that L2 learners cannot think through their L2s (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). That is to say, though L2 learners/ writers can have mastery of L2s, they cannot exactly think the way native speakers think in their L1s. The final reason of my motivation of undertaking this research is that I myself teaching the course might be better informed about the dynamics and complexities relating to how students use their L1s and prior genre knowledge that they have built in their L1s in course of writing in the target language if I could carry out a research and get some ideas and insights on how I can better help my multilingual students who face challenges while leaning to write genre-based academic essays.

Having the motivation from various factors such as the challenges my students would be facing and reflections of my own practices or writing in English, I reviewed the existing literature related to the issue in question, I found several research studies conducted on the use of students' native languages in the L2 writing processes. Mainly, they have been carried out in either foreign language contexts such as China, Turkey, Japan, South Korea, etc. or in immersion programs. All of them have the similar kinds of contexts- homogenous students in terms of their native languages learning their L2s. Likewise, there exists a substantial body of research conducted taking the data from composition classes, particularly from contrastive rhetoric perspective. However, sufficient research studies collecting the data from the multilingual writers studying in the university ESL contexts have not yet been done taking data from ESL writers, who are often categorized as the students who do not have sufficient proficiency in the English language. As many studies particularly carried out with a view to finding out how L2 writers make use of their L1s while writing in L2 such as Woodall (2002), Wang (2003) and Kim and Yoon (2014) report that the students who have low proficiency over their L2 are mostly likely to revert to their L1s in course of writing, it might be worth studying this group of population in the US university context.

### **Research Questions**

The following are the questions that this study aims to answer based on the analysis of the primary data collected for the study.

- In what ways do undergraduate students use their L1s in an L2 Basic Writing course in the US university context?
- What are their perceptions regarding the effects of their use of L1s in L2 writing?

- How do they utilize their prior experience of writing academic essays while they are writing the similar types of texts in L2?

### **Significance of the Study**

This empirical study is significant from both theoretical and practical point of views. The study contributes some additional literature to the existing body of knowledge on how multilingual writers make use of their L1s in course of learning to write compositions in the ESL contexts, particularly in the US university settings. Regarding the practical significance, the study can have three major practical implications in teaching and learning genre-based essays. First, the findings of the study can better inform the instructors or professors of ESL writing about the complexities and challenges that their multilingual students have while they are learning to write academic texts in the first year English for academic purpose (EAP) writing classes. With this information, they can be better prepared to deal with the difficulties that their students encounter by offering them “helpful strategies or processes, not only for success in composition course but also for writing in other college/university classes” (Ferris, 2009, p.116). They can “develop instructional...practices that are sensitive to their linguistic and cultural needs” (CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing and Writers, 2014). Second, the ideas and insights obtained from this research can be useful for those who are involved in preparing or training teachers for ESL/EAP writing courses. They can raise teachers or prospective teachers’ awareness of the dynamics and complexities of L2 writing processes. Consequently, such awareness can be instrumental in instructors’ preparations for coping up the challenges that they face in their multilingual writers’ classrooms. Third, prospective researchers are likely to benefit from what has been done in this

research. It is because further researches can be built on the findings of this research for unfolding how and why multilingual writers revert to their L1s in various stages of writing.

### **Definitions of the Key Terms**

To make the study specific, it would be worth defining some important terminologies that have been used frequently in the study. The following listed and defined words are the words that carry the key concepts of the study.

**L2 Writing.** It is an interdisciplinary field of inquiry which studies writings performed by the non-native speakers of a language. In this study, writings particularly refer to the texts produced by the non-native speakers of English. It is “roughly situated at the crossroads of composition and applied linguistics” (Kubota, 2010, p. 191).

**Multilingual Writers.** These writers generally refer to international visa students, resident writers and native-born citizens of the English-speaking country, who have acquired their own languages or even dialects of the English language as their native languages or dialects (Ferris, 2009; Matsuda, 2014; CCCC, 2014). In this study, however, they exclusively refer to international visa students enrolled in universities or colleges.

**Basic Writing.** Basic writing generally refers to “a subfield of composition studies in the US that deals with the teaching of writing to students at college or university level who have not mastered genre of academic writing” (Richards & Schmidt, p. 51).

**Academic Writing.** Academic writing is a type of writing in which writers are required to “demonstrate knowledge and proficiency with certain disciplinary skills of thinking, interpreting, and presenting” (Irvin, p.3).

**Prior Genre Knowledge.** The knowledge and experience of writing various kinds of texts such as essays, papers, reviews, fictions, non-fictions in both first and second languages before carrying out any tasks or projects (Reiff & Bawarshi, 2011). In fact, Hyland (2007) maintains that it is the knowledge of communicative purposes, appropriate forms, contexts and registers, and contexts.

### **Chapter Conclusion**

In this chapter, I firstly situated my research studies discussing briefly the background of the study and then proposed the statement of the problem. While proposing the statement of the problem, I grounded the problem based on the challenges that I faced while teaching to multilingual writers in a US university context. In line with the problem raised in the statement of the problem, I asked three research questions which would propel all the research activities done for this study. Then, I discussed the rationale behind carrying out this research. In so doing, I attempted to justify how the research can be relevant from both theoretical as well as practical points of view. Finally, I included the definitions of the key terms the knowledge of which can be very useful for the readers to study the report of the study.

### **Chapter Organization of the Thesis**

This thesis comprises five chapters. The next chapter deals with the literature review, which has been organized with the following thematic sub-headings: 1) historical overview of L2 writing, 2) similarities and differences between L1 and L2 writing, 3) effects of using L1 in L2 writing, and 4) effects of the use of prior L1 genre knowledge in L2 writing. Both seminal and current literature related to these headings have been reviewed thoroughly.

The third chapter is about the methodology that discusses the research design, the study population, tools for data collection, data collection procedure, data processing and analysis and delimitations of the study. The fourth chapter is the crux of the study, which includes the results and discussions. These results and discussions are organized based on the research questions within which further subheadings are given on the basis of the emerging of the themes, specifically various purposes for which the multilingual writers make use of their L1s while writing essays in English and their perceptions towards the use of their L1 and prior L1 genre knowledge in different stages of writing genre-based academic essays. The last chapter includes conclusions, pedagogical implications drawn based on the results and discussions, suggestions further research and conclusions.

## **Chapter II**

### **Literature Review**

This chapter includes the reviews of the existing literature related to the research questions of the study. As the study aims to explore the purposes for which L2 writers use their L1s in their L2 writing process and determine the effect of using L1s in writing processes and products based on participants' perceptions, the review of the literature has also been sequenced considering the research questions. Firstly, some literature related to the background of L2 writing such as its historical overview, comparison and contrast of L1 writing and L2 writing, characteristics of L2 writing, process approach to teaching writing and L1-L2 relationships based on the linguistic interdependence theory. Then, it discusses the literature related to crux of the study- L1 use in L2 writing and its effects upon both upon both processes and products.

#### **Historical Overview of L2 Writing**

Although writing was one of the major focuses of scholarships from the distant past of human civilizations, L2 writing did not come to its being until the 1980s. It was developed during the 1990s only (Silva, 1990). The reason was that when the grammar-translation method of teaching was popular in the past, reading and writing skills were the skills, which were mostly taught and learned (Larsen-Freeman & Anderson, 2011; Richards & Rodgers, 2000). During this time, the focus particularly laid on the translation of the texts from the native language to target language and vice-versa. However, the focus shifted from reading and writing to listening and speaking with the advent of direct method, oral, structural and situational (OSS) approach, audio-lingual approach, and communicative approach. These approaches and methods considered reading and writing

as the secondary language skills based on the belief of the modern linguistics that language basically exists in speech. Thus, with the insights from modern/structural linguistics, the proponents of direct method considered writing as an imperfect manifestation of speech. In fact, “writing was defined merely as an orthographic representation of speech” (Matsuda, 2011, p. 21). This notation overshadowed second language writing until the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Matsuda (2011) states that the emergence of L2 writing is often connected to the increment of the number of international students coming to the US for higher studies after the World War II, particularly during the 1950s. During this time, “approximately 35,000 international students enrolled in U.S. colleges and universities annually. Their numbers doubled in the 1960s, and 1970s, and numbers doubled yet again” (Hinkel, 2002, p. 45). Thus, the presence of non-native speakers of English in higher education institutions initiated the development of second language writing, as the way the L1 speakers of English were taught could not really work to the non-native speakers of English. To cater the writing needs of those non-native speakers of English, many remedial writing classes were offered to the students belonging to this group of the population. For this reason, L2 writing was exclusively connected to L2 studies, rather than composition studies, because of its disciplinary nature.

As the number of non-native speakers of English continued to increase at US universities, writing teachers began to compare and contrast between their native and non-native students’ language use with a hope of finding some resolutions to those challenges encountered by non-native speakers of English. Fujida (2006) asserted that such as a trend that occurred during the 1960s and 1970s had augmented research studies



that followed the contrastive rhetoric framework and process pedagogy. The earliest scholar to study L2 writing through contrastive rhetoric perspective was Kaplan (1966). Comparing the rhetorical organizations in L2 writers' texts, he claimed that the "idiosyncratic rhetorical patterns" are because of the influence of their native languages. In a similar vein, Kubayashi (1985) differentiated how Japanese learners of English and the native speakers of English would organize the information in their essays. She stated that Japanese learners of English organized their ideas in a composition inductively (specific to general), whereas the native speakers of English organized the information deductively (general to specific).

Regarding the use of the process approach, it was Emig (1971) who introduced writing as a process by studying how L1 writers of twelfth grade composed their essays. Similarly, Zamel (1983) studied how students composed their texts in L1 and L2. In her study, she reported that there were no significant differences between composing processes followed by native speakers and the non-native speaker of English. However, she proclaimed that whether or not writers were skilled was much more important than what language they speak natively or non-natively. Similarly, Cumming (1989) also distinguished writers as inexpert and expert in term of their writing skills and found that expert writers and inexpert writers used their native language differently. She suggests that inexpert writers use their L1s for generating contents only, whereas expert writers use their L1s not only for gathering the information required for writing but also for checking whether or not their diction is appropriate.

From the 1990s, L2 writing has become a more interdisciplinary field of inquiry as it draws on and contributes to various related disciplines, including applied linguistics

and composition studies, which themselves are highly interdisciplinary. Apart from the spaces given for L2 writing in the journals and conferences such as the Conference on College Composition and Communication (CCCC), Teaching English to the Speakers of Other Languages (TESOL), National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE), the creation of journal of second language writing and symposium on second language writing have added some more disciplinary qualities to L2 writing. During this decade, the process approach and English for Academic Purpose (EAP) further proliferated in L2 studies. The international students enrolled in various disciplines such as science and technology, business and commerce, medicine and law are required to get mastery over the type of writing necessary for the communication in their disciplinary community. After the new millennium, there occurred post-process approach, which tries to apply the concepts of post-modernism in teaching and learning writing. This approach “encourages us to reexamine our definition of writing as an activity, rather than a body of knowledge” (Breuch, 2002). Like the post-modernist’s understanding of knowledge, she argues that our teachings are indeterminate to help students get mastery over writing because of various variable such as class and culture. Therefore, each group of students in a specific context should be viewed as unique and treated accordingly. Like this approach, another approach that emerged after the turn of the century is genre-based approach to L2 writing. Hyland (2002) and Tardy (2009) argue that each genre such as letters, essays and emails have their own defining features. So, the acquisition of these features can help L2 writers write well. All these developments added some additional avenues in the understanding of L2 writing and research scholarships.

## **Similarities and Differences between L1 and L2 Writing**

**Similarities.** Even though there exist several differences between writing in one's L1 and L2, there seem to have certain premises that can possibly be shared while writing in any language. Therefore, it can be assumed that L1 and L2 writing processes are identical in some respects. Ortmeier-Hooper (2013) claims that all the writers set their goals and create plans to achieve certain writing tasks, disregarding the language in which they write their texts. In other words, they “employ recursive composing process, involving planning, writing and revising, to develop their ideas and find the appropriate rhetorical and linguistic means to express them” (Silva, 1993, p. 657). Similarly, Uzawa (1996) asserts that L2 writers go through the same process of generating ideas and have the same attention patterns, no matter what languages they use while they are writing their essays. In line with her assertion, Hirose (2003) reports that Japanese writers use the same organization patterns for writing essays in both Japanese and English. Additionally, the nature of challenges that writers face in course of writing might be the same because learning to write within certain academic disciplines is a really challenging task in either L1 or L2, which is why academic writing can be considered a second language even for the native speakers (Matsuda & Jablonski, 2000).

Another commonality between writing in L1 and L2 is that writers deploy their prior knowledge and strategies of writing that have worked well in the past while they are writing in any one of those languages (Ortmeier-Hooper, 2013). For this reason, those writers who are proficient writers in their L1s are likely to be proficient writers in L2 as well, given that they have minimally required L2 language proficiency (Cummings, 1989). One of the reasons behind such a belief is that writing does not only involve

language skills, but also the cognitive skills, which is why even if the native speakers who have “extensive stock of language resources to call upon, frequently confront exactly the same kind of writing problems as people writing in a second or foreign language” (White & Arndt, 1991, p. 3). Thus, with these discussions, it can be said that there exist interfaces between L1 and L2 writing.

**Differences.** Despite some similarities in general composing processes discussed in the preceding two paragraphs, research studies have revealed that there are several salient and important distinctions between writing in L1 and L2. From a linguistic point of view, it can be assumed that writing in L1 should be spontaneous, fluent and accurate in a sense that the writers do not need to worry about words and structures. While writing in their L1s, writers should just think of higher order concerns such as appropriate rhetorical choices of expressing their ideas or argumentation, because there do not usually occur issues on vocabulary, grammar, and syntax. Even if such errors occur, they are not as serious as they are in the case of second language writing. Regarding this, Hyland (2002) remarks that writers have “a vocabulary of several thousand words and an intuitive ability to handle the grammar of the language” (p. 34) while they are writing in their native language. However, in the case of writing in the second language, they often take the burden of learning to write and learning L2 in which they are writing at the same time. For instance, ESL writers in the US university context need to develop their writing proficiency along with the proficiency in the English language and acquisition of content knowledge. Therefore, L2 writers’ texts compared the texts of their L1 counterparts are “less fluent (fewer words), less accurate (more errors), and less effective (lower holistic scores)” (Silva, 1993).

Collecting metadata from 72 empirical research studies related to L1 and L2 writing, Silva (1993) draws a conclusion that “L2 writing is strategically, rhetorically and linguistically different in important ways from L1 writing” (p. 669) even though superficially they might appear to be the same or similar in different processes of writing. He presents the findings of his research in two major categories, composing process and written text features. In both the cases, L2 writing is inferior to L1 writing. In a similar fashion, Hinkel (2002) asserts that L2 writing compared to L1 writing is much simpler in terms of syntactic and lexical constructions.

Even though there are several differences between writing in L1 and writing in L2, there exist some interfaces between them as well. They differ mainly in terms of the experience of writers, language competence, writing styles and writing fluency. Nevertheless, they seem to be similar in a sense that writers undergo basically through the same process of writing such as idea generating, drafting, reviewing, etc. The knowledge of the interfaces and differences between these two writing processes can help me for better understanding the nature and complexities of L1 and L2 writing. So, the well-informed insights on the nature of L1 and L2 writing can be instrumental to figure out how and why L2 writers make use of their L1s in course of writing various academic essays.

### **Characteristics of L2 Writers**

It is, indeed, a challenging task to determine the characteristics of L2 writers as there can be several factors such as language background, rhetorical tradition with which they have prior familiarity, individual differences, etc. that turn out to be very influential in the determination of L2 writers’ characteristics. Nevertheless, many scholars based on

their research studies have attempted to generalize some of the characteristic features that might be applicable to many L2 writers. Matsuda (2014) discusses three major characteristics of L2 writers with reference to L2 writers in the US academic contexts. First, one of the most fundamental features of L2 writers is that they hardly ever have built their communicative competence, which involves “grammatical competence, discourse competence, sociolinguistic competence and strategic competence” (Canale & Swain, 1980). This implies that, unlike their L1 counterparts, L2 writers might have shaky intuitive linguistic foundations. For this reason, L2 writers particularly those who are first year students have to develop their writing skills along with developing all the components of communicative competence.

Another defining feature of L2 writers is that they may have prior experience of writing in their L1s. However, they might markedly differ in terms of the amount of experience of such previous writing practices. Although some of them might have been educated exclusively in the target language medium of instruction from the very beginning of their formal education, most of them bring their L1 writing experiences and practices, which sometimes might be facilitating and sometimes debilitating based on the extent to which their L1s and L2 differ in terms of rhetorical organizations, orthographic systems, genetic proximity, etc. Considering this issue with reference to L2 writers of English, it can be said that writing teachers that there can be miscommunication due to the use of their prior literacy practices and strategies that are drastically different from English.

Third, L2 writers bring diverse educational experiences in their classroom as they are educated in different contexts and countries. While some might have been familiar to

the US classroom cultures and behaviors such as assumptions, expectations, and practices, many others might not have any familiarity at all when they enter a US university classroom (Matsuda, 2014). Their unfamiliarity with how classroom interactions, collaborations, and critiquing take place in the US higher education context can pose additional challenges.

Similarly, Silva (1993) reports some distinctive characteristics of L2 writers in terms of the composing processes they follow while writing essays in English. He maintains that L2 writers are less involved in planning and goal setting, which is why they have to invest a substantial amount of time for generating ideas. Often, the ideas they have generated in the planning stage are not included in their written texts. Another characteristic is that they are more laborious but less fluent and less productive compared to L1 writers. In a sense, it might be quite natural for the L2 writers who are not sufficiently proficient in English, because they might need to have some more times for consulting dictionaries or making mental translations of what they have thought to express in their essays or paragraphs. The other characteristic is that L2 writers are less involved in reviewing their products compared to their L1 colleagues. Even if they are involved in reviewing or rereading of their texts they cannot substantially improve their writing focusing on their higher order concerns such as the organization of ideas, focus on purpose, considerations of audience, etc. All these deficit features are connected to their prior writing practices and language proficiency.

In a similar vein, Hyland (2002) also reviews existing literature on L1 and L2 writing and gives the similar features as presented by Silva (1993). However, two features are different from those of the ones given by Silva. Hyland (2002) asserts that

“advanced L2 writers are handicapped more by a lack of composing competence than a lack of linguistic competence. The opposite is true for lower proficiency learners” (p. 36). This feature implies that both beginners and advanced L2 writers face challenges while they are composing their essays in their L2s, but due to distinct reasons. Another characteristic that he has mentioned is that “L2 writers are less inhibited by teacher-editing and feedback” (Hyland, 2002, p. 36). It might be because they have been over-corrected by their teacher in their previous academic institutions.

### **Process Approach to Teaching Writing**

The process approach to writing emerged as a reaction against product-focused approaches such as “controlled composition and current-traditional approach” (Silva, 1990, p. 15) during the late 1960s or early 1970s (Matsuda & Silva, 2001). Both these approaches were condemned for their linearity and prescriptivism because the advocates of process approach claim that writing as a “non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning” (Zamel, 1983, p. 165). In contrast, process approach advocates that writing is a recursive process and therefore every good writer is a rewriter. As per the assumptions of this approach to writing, writers undergo a series of recursive steps before they finalize their writing products. In fact, while teaching students through this approach, teachers tend to ask writers “to understand their own composing process and to build their repertoires of strategies for prewriting (gathering, exploring, and organizing raw material), drafting, (structuring the ideas into a piece of linear discourse), and rewriting (revising, editing, and proofreading)” (Shih, 1986, p. 623).



**Characteristics.** There are several characteristic features of this approach. some of which are briefly discussed here. First, this approach assumes that writing is not just some of its components parts such as vocabulary and grammar. Rather, it is “a manifestation of complex and interactive cognitive, social, and cultural processes reflecting the literate meaning-making of writers” (Kennedy, 1998, p. 243). Kennedy (1998) further contends that such processes shape the texts, which, in turn, shape the processes as well. This means that the product to be achieved by the end of processes and the processes themselves are in constant interactions.

The second defining characteristic of process approach is that it brought about a “shift from a focus on the product of writing to its process” (Anson, 2014, p. 215). Before this approach became popular, there was a belief that good writers would produce texts which would be accurate in terms of grammar and appropriate in terms of organizations and stylistics. However, it is virtually impossible to produce such texts without going through various stages of process writing . With the emergence of this approach to writing, the processes of writing students have gone through before they are satisfied that certain products are their final products are the major focuses of this approach.

Third, process approach to teaching writing is a student-centered approach (Anson, 2014; Shih, 1986). They are the active participants and creators of knowledge; whereas their teachers are just facilitators and coaches. It is because this approach assumes that each student writer is required to be actively involved in various stages of writing such as generating ideas, drafting, and even reviewing their friends’ texts so that they all trade their feedback with one another in the class. Such exchanges of feedback

are supposed to be useful strategies for making writers reflective and critical of their own texts as well their classmates' texts. Thus, "students' ownership of writing is stressed, as is self-reflection and evaluation" (Graham & Sandmel, 2011, p. 396). While teaching, teachers try their best to create supportive and non-threatening writing environment so that learners can hone their writing skills. Usually, "personalized and individualized writing instruction is provided through mini-lessons, writing conferences, and teachable movement" (Graham & Sandmel, 2011, p. 396).

Next, according to this approach to writing, "... the thinking processes involved in writing are hierarchical and embedded" (Kennedy, 1998, p. 244). This means that as mentioned at the beginning of this sub-chapter, writing is not a completely linear process that begins with generating ideas and ends with the final draft, but it a recurrent process. Therefore, even if writers are in the drafting phase of writing, they can revisit their plans as per the ideas or insights that they have obtained after planning phases. However, most of the time, they might not be aware of the complexity of thinking process while they are writing.

Finally, while being taught following this approach, student writers at the early stages are provided with the opportunities to explore their personal experiences. So, they might not have any issues regarding the contents or information they like to express through their writings. However, gradually along with the development of their writing skills they are asked to write on academically oriented topics (Shih, 1986) because the goal of teaching writing is to help students become good writers.

**Stages of teaching writing in process-approach.** As stated in the characteristics of the process approach to writing, writing is a complex recursive process, which

involves various stages such as planning, writing, editing and finalizing. Kennedy (1998) maintains that there are three main stages: planning, translating and reviewing. According to him, planning includes generating ideas, goal setting, and organizing. Similarly, translating stage involves changing ideational plans into written language and reviewing mainly include evaluating and revising plans. Similarly, there are four basic stages - planning, drafting (writing), revising (redrafting) and editing and three optional stages- responding (sharing), evaluating and post-writing impose (Seow, 2002). More recently, Johnson (2016) also presents a five-step procedure that academic writers usually undergo while producing academic writings. This procedure includes gathering data, pre-drafting, writing the first draft, revising, editing and sharing or publishing. These phases of writing seem to have been prepared considering advanced writers who are inclined towards writing for publication. However, for teaching writing, the following recursive processes given by White and Arndt (1991) seem to be very significant because it clearly represents various recursive stages of writing processes that undergo while they are writing a text.

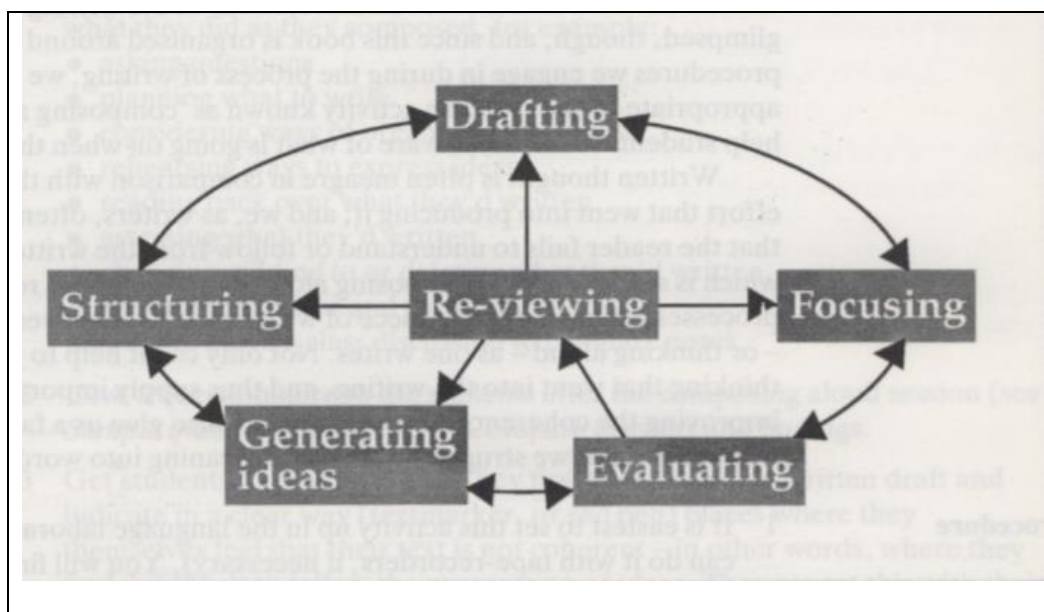


Figure 2.1 process writing. (White & Arndt, 1991, p. 17)

The figure 1 shows that there are six major steps or states of teaching writing, which are interrelated to one another. This interrelation indicates that writing is a complex recursive process which includes various skills and sub-skills. While writing, writers can keep on critically moving back and forth through these steps with a view to further improving their writing texts until they are satisfied with what they have produced. Clearly, this model indicates “dynamic and constantly fluctuating interplay of activities involved writing” (White & Arndt, 1991, p. 5). What follows the next has some descriptions of each of these stages.

**Generating ideas.** Usually, generating ideas is regarded as the first stage of writing essays, in which learners are required to gather the required information for the essay. It is normally done either by retrieving information from their long-term memory or by consulting new sources. According to White and Arndt (1991), this stage includes brainstorming, making notes, using visuals and using roleplays/simulations. It is a research conducted to gather data (Johnson, 2016) because academic writers need to collect information, ideas, insights, and data required to write on a topic. Therefore, for him, this process involves reading books, articles, monographs, reports, etc. Thus, it is evident that it is a very important stage in which writers basically decide what to write in their paper or essays.

**Focusing.** Another important task that writers should carry out while they are going through the various process of writing is to make a proper focus so that they can produce good writings. White and Arndt (1991) maintain that writers can focus their texts properly if they consider main ideas, purposes, viewpoints, audience and text type (genre). Once they identify all these points, it makes them easier to make the effective

focus on certain texts. Certainly, these are the main variables that determine the nature and characteristics of texts.

**Structuring.** It is the stage of writing in which writers “organize an amorphous mass of ideas, information and associations into coherent, linear text” (White & Arndt, 1991, p. 4). To be precise, the writers organize and sequence the generated ideas or collected information or data for writing papers or essays. In doing so, they consider the purpose for which they are writing, the audience who are likely to read the texts they create and the genre in which they are writing.

**Drafting.** From this phase, actual writing begins as the first three stages discussed in the preceding paragraphs mainly deal with pre-writing activities. While writers are in the drafting stage, they need to think of arresting the attention of readers, sustaining the same appeal through the texts and leading them to reach to a certain conclusion (White & Arndt, 1991). Additionally, they should not be preoccupied with grammatical accuracy or neatness (Seow, 2002) so that they can avoid writer’s blocks. Generally, it is believed that writers produce multiple drafts before they ready final drafts. During the time, they can revisit other stages such as focusing, structuring, idea generating or even evaluation.

**Evaluating.** After the students have prepared the drafts of their writing, writers can try to evaluate their own making certain checklists or criteria or have them evaluated by their peers or teachers through peer reviews, teachers’ feedback and conferencing. With the ideas and insights from their peers, teachers and even their own revisits, they can attempt to polish their writing products to better fit their purpose, audience, and genre.

**Reviewing.** As indicated in figure 1, it is crystal clear that writers receive information on how they should review their drafts from evaluation. In order to improve their essays, writers should be ready to review the steps in which they have found some mistakes.

The process approach to writing states that writers need to go through these stages of writing individually or collaboratively for developing their writing skills. This approach assumes that writers' abilities to write evolve overtime while they continue going through these steps and strategies in course of learning to write in academic institutions or out of academic institutions. However, the recursive or circular nature of these processes implies that at the certain stage of writing, writers should feel that their drafts are final. These stages of process approach are important for the participants of the study because the instructor who teaches them basic writing courses follow the similar types of stages. Usually, they begin with pre-writing stage such as brainstorming and outlining. After that, they write the first draft and submit. Once students submit their first draft, the instructor reads them and gives written or oral feedback on how they can improve their writing. Additionally, they can also consult to the writing center tutors as well before they submit their final drafts. Thus, this process recursive nature of writing.

### **L1-L2 Writing Relationships**

Generally, it can be assumed that there are interrelationships between L1 and L2 writing skills, given that thoughts, ideas and information are the same in all languages. The only difference is that of a means to encode them into texts. Therefore, it can be argued that if writers are competent in writing skills of their L1s, they are likely to be good writers in their L2s as well. Through this perspective, there seems to be a positive

correlation between one's writing skills in L1 and L2. Considering this phenomenon, Cummins (1979) proposed a linguistic interdependence hypothesis which posits that the extent to which bilingual children become successful in developing their literacy skills are dependent on their prior L1 literacy skills. That is to say, the stronger they are in their L1 literacy skills, the stronger they are in their L2 literacy skills. However, he warns us that L1 literacy skills are not positively transferred in the L2 writing in certain conditions only. He maintains that learners should have achieved critical/threshold level of L2 proficiency in order for their L1 literacy skills to play facilitative roles in L2 learning. He calls this hypothesis the linguistic threshold hypothesis because of the concept of threshold proficiency. This hypothesis informs my research in two ways. First, it offers me the ideas how proficient learners should be in order to use L1 in a facilitative way. Second, it provides the theoretical underpinning that the ways language users think are virtually the same in all languages, which is why many writers use their L1s to mediate their ideas with target language expressions.

After his proposition of this hypothesis, several studies were carried out within the framework of these hypotheses. A few of them that deal with L1-L2 writing connections are reviewed here. Carson, Carrell, Silberstein, Kroll, and Kuehn (1990) report that there exists a weak positive correlation between L1 writing proficiency and L2 writing proficiency among the Japanese L2 writers. They also suggest that L2 writing development is a complex phenomenon for already literate adult second language writers. Similarly, Carson and Kuehn's (1992) research also reveals that good L1 writers can become good L2 writers, but there can be L1 attrition along with their development in L2 proficiency. Additionally, it also suggests that it is the writer's writing aptitude that

significantly affects the development of writing. In the same way, Hirose and Sasaki (1994, 1996) concluding their empirical studies maintaining that L2 writing abilities are correlated with L1 writing abilities. In line with Cummins's (1979) belief that learners should have at least threshold level of language proficiency to properly deploy their L1 knowledge and strategies during L2 writing processes, they found L2 proficiency and L1 writing abilities are two most influential variables that determine the extent to which writers can develop their L2 writing proficiency. Another research by Ma and Wen (1999) also states that the L2 writers' writing ability can be predicted based on their L1 writing ability. They also maintain that L2 writing is indirectly affected by L1 writing ability but directly affected by L2 oral proficiency and L2 vocabulary. Likewise, Wang and Wen's (2002) finding corroborates with the findings of the research studies reported in this paragraph. One of their major findings is that there lies a strong positive correlation between students' writing abilities in their L1 and L2.

Like the research studies discussed in the preceding paragraph, Ito's (2009) findings reiterate the basic tenets of linguistic interdependence hypothesis. He examines the interrelationships between students' L1 and L2 writing skills, and L2 proficiency and concludes that students' L1 writing abilities can be a good predictor of L2 writing abilities. In the same way, Marzban and Zalali (2016) also state that L1 writing abilities and L2 proficiency are the two major variables that significantly determine whether their L1 writing abilities are transferred to L2 writing. It is because, like many other researchers whose studies have been reviewed here, they found that their L1 (Persian) writers with advanced L2 proficiency could successfully transfer their L1 skills and strategies of writing essays while writing essays in L2 (English). On the contrary, their



participant with low proficiency over the English language faced several challenges while transferring their skills and knowledge of composing essays in their L1 in course of writing essays in English. Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, and Humbach (2009) illustrate the strong connections between L1 literacy skills and L2 proficiency amongst the bilingual children in the US. They summarize their research study presenting the following five major points that further shed lights on the nature of the interrelationships between L1 and L2 writing.

- Students' L1 skills are strongly related to their L2 learning.
- L1 and L2 learning depend upon the same language learning mechanism.
- There appear to be very strong connections between students' L1 and their L2 if both the languages share an orthographic system.
- Those students who have the low level of L1 skill are likely to have the low L2 aptitude, which can directly affect L2 proficiency.
- Both L2 aptitude and subsequent L2 proficiency appear to be strongly related to early L1 skills. (Sparks, Patton, Ganschow, & Humbach, 2009)

Based on the linguistic interdependence and threshold hypotheses, it can be said that L1 writing and L2 writing are interrelated and interdependent. Some of the research reviews under this sub-section report that learners learning to read and write in various socio-cultural contexts can positively transfer their L1 literacy skills while they are learning second languages. Regarding this phenomenon, Vrooman (2000) very eloquently argues that linguistic knowledge and skills that children have developed in their L1s prior their start of L2 acquisition can be extremely instrumental in enhancing L2 literacy skills.

L1 and L2 writing are inter-related and interdependent as one can influence another. According to the linguistic interdependence hypothesis, L1 and L2 writing are highly interrelated as it assumes that if L2 writers have strong literacy background in their L1s, they are likely to develop strong literacy skills in their second language as well. This hypothesis is complemented by linguistic threshold hypothesis that maintains that, in order for L2 writers to transfer their prior L1 skills in a facilitating way, they should have developed a certain level of L2 proficiency and they should also be motivated toward developing their L2 literacy skills.

### **L1 Use in L2 Writing**

There are numerous research studies which have revealed the various purposes for which multilingual writers use their native language in various stages of writing essays. Many kinds of research undertaken in diverse contexts have demonstrated that L2 writers employ their L1s for various purposes. The review of those studies indicates that the following are the reasons for which L2 writers use their L1s in the various stages of writing.

**Generating ideas, searching for topics and organizing information.** One of the most recurring purposes for which L2 writers utilize their L1s is to generate the ideas related to the topic on which they need to write essays. It seems to be a quite common phenomenon for which the multilingual writers who have strong literacy practices in their native languages while they were in their home countries. Since they might have experience of generating ideas while writing several kinds of texts in their native languages, naturally, they tend to think in their native languages even if they are writing in their L2s. So, they can easily retrieve the information they have stored in their long-

term memory. In this regard, Uzawa and Cummings (1989) report that English learners of Japanese use their L1 for generating ideas, searching for topics and organizing information. However, Friedlander (1990) maintains that whether or not L2 writers can generate qualitative ideas depends on the topics given to them. If the given topics are related to the L2 writers' L1 and culture, it will be better if they are engaged in generating ideas using their native language. Conversely, if the given topics are related to L2 or L2 culture, it will be beneficial for L2 writers to use their L2 for generating ideas. Based on Friedlander's finding, Lally (2000) studies on how effective the use of L2 writers' native language is in L2 writing if the given topics are related to neither culture. She concludes her finding with the mention that though there is not a significant difference in the use of vocabulary items, those writers who were engaged in using their L1 while planning their essays could outperform to their counterparts, who were engaged in L2 during the planning stage. This finding shows that multilingual writers use their L1s for generating ideas. Similarly, Qi (1998) suggests that L2 writers switch to their L1s while composing their L2 texts because it is rather easy to retrieve the information with the help of their L1s.

Similarly, Wen and Wang (2002) maintain that many Chinese learners of English utilize their L1 for generating the ideas on the topic in question. In other words, they are most likely to use their native language for collecting the information required for writing an essay. However, they have found that only 13.5% of the students use their L1 for this purpose. Wang (2003) and Van Weijen, Bergh, Rijlaarsdam, and Sanders (2009) also report that second language learners exploit their L1 for generating ideas. Likewise, Kim and Yoon's (2014) study posits that the way proficient and non-proficient learners make

use of their L1 differently. They have found that the proficient learners make use of their native language for global purposes such as generating ideas organizing the generated ideas in the texts; whereas the less proficient learners used their L1 for idea generation, direct and back translation, metacomments and lexical searching.

**Reducing cognitive load.** Another reason for which multilingual writers revert to their L1s is to reduce their load on working memory. Regarding this, Qi (1998) reports that second language learners automatically switch to their L1s, their most dominant language, to reduce the overload of their working memories. He found that “whenever the participant intuitively anticipated that the load of the task she faced would exceed the limit of her working memory span, she automatically switched to L1” (p. 428). Similarly, Cohen and Brooks-Carson’s (2001) study has found that the second language learners tend to think in their native languages and then translate the thought they have recently conceived into the target language. Although there may not necessarily be concrete evidence of translation, they might be engaged “in mental translation during ...the writing tasks” (Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001, p. 181). They write: “Translation serves to reduce the load on working memory since instead of going directly from concept to their L2 representation, the L2 writers are first expressing the concept in L1 and then translating into L2” (p. 181). Likewise, Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) conclude their research with the finding that the use of L1 even in the L2 setting could be useful because students tended to revert to their L1s when they had to do the tasks that demanded higher cognitive abilities than their existing abilities. In line with them, Bruen and Kelly (2017) suggest that the use of L1 in L2 classrooms can reduce cognitive overload and anxiety that students can have while they are carrying out the cognitively challenging tasks or

assignments. In the similar vein, Knutson (2006) postulates that second language learners tend to use their L1 to mediate what they have already learned and what they are required to do, thereby reducing their cognitive load of summoning the information required for the completion of certain tasks.

**Assessing their own texts.** Quite a few research studies have also found that second language learners resort to their L1s to assesses their own already written texts. This process is what Manchón, Larios, and Murphy (2000) call backtracking. According to them, it is one of the important composing strategies that involves two processes: rereading and back-translation. The former involves readings of what they have just written while composing their essays time and again so that they might avoid their mistakes, whereas the latter refers to the process of reverting to their native languages to assess whether the message they like to communicate has been communicated in the L2 texts they have composed. The interesting finding of this research is that language proficiency is not necessarily linked to back-translation using L1 because the most proficient English language user had participated in their study was found to be engaged in translating the already written text into their native language. As expected, another finding of the study is that the learners revert to L1 back-translation if they need to work on the topic that requires a heavy cognitive load. While writing the argumentative essay, all three participants of the study used L1 back-translation more times than while writing the narrative essay.

Similarly, Kim and Yoon (2014) have also found that Korean learners of English tend to back-translate while composing essays to make sure that the text they have recently created makes senses in English. They have found that 12.4% students use their

language for this purpose. Knutson (2006) is another researcher who also affirms the occurrence of this phenomenon in second language writing. She maintains that second language learners constantly use back-translation as a strategy that affirms them that they are writing well. “When students needed to step back and reassess, whether because they had run out of things to say, or because they had been preoccupied with local textual concerns, they tended to do so in their native language” (Knutson, 2006, p. 98).

Additionally, she states that such a process of back-tracking can be useful for both cognitive as well as affective levels. “In terms of cognition, rereading in L1 was an efficient way of retaining the intended message without processing overload. In the affective domain, it also appeared to provide a sense of security or accomplishment” (Knutson, 2006, p. 101).

**Searching lexical items.** Multilingual writers often use their L1s for searching lexical items in the L2 in which they are composing any kinds of text. Many studies conducted in various contexts have reported that the use of L1 for finding the appropriate words in their target language is an extensively used strategy by multilingual writers while they are writing. Kim and Yoon (2014) have found that some students exploit their mother tongue for searching the lexical items in the language they are learning irrespective of their L2 proficiency. The only difference is, of course, a matter of the degree to which they exploit their native language. Comparatively, less proficient learners tend to use their L1 as a tool for finding appropriate lexical items in their L2. For this purpose, the researchers report that the elementary, intermediate and advanced level students have used 11.2 %, 7.8 % and 10.9% of the total utterances of the think-aloud protocol respectively. Additionally, they have also found that the way they search

lexical items also differ in terms of their purposes. While the elementary level learners search lexical items for compensating the lack of their vocabulary knowledge, which might sometimes have caused difficulties for them to express their thoughts, advanced level learners use the same strategy for selecting appropriate words from amongst multiple words. Another comprehensive research on the lexical searching by L2 writers during text formulation or composing process is de Larios and Murphy (2010). Taking the data from seven highly proficient writers (C3 as per common European Framework) enrolled in a university in Spain, the researchers attempted to answer quite a few questions related to lexical searching. They found that even advanced learners utilize their L1s for searching the lexical items they search for both compensatory and upgrading purposes, let alone elementary level learners. They have reported that while producing 14 texts (two each student), they were engaged in 83 lexical searches, ranging from 4 searches by the least users to 25 searches by the highest users. Of these searches, the searches for the argumentative essay is more than the double (67%) of the searches for the narrative essay, which has just 33%. Since the difference in the use of lexical searches in these two tasks is significantly different, they attribute this difference to the cognitive complexity required for carrying out the argumentative essay. In other words, the more a task is cognitively challenging, the more L2 writers are more likely to use their L1 for lexical searches.

**Making online revision.** Wang (2003) reveals that high proficient learners make use of their L1s while they are composing their texts. During the time, they tend to go back to what they have written and revise their texts in the light of the ideas they generate and information they retrieve. This is how they constantly check their understanding of

what they write and “create a contextual and conceptual network for their next writing goals” (Wang, 2003, p. 367).

In conclusion, much research indicates that L2 writers use their L1s for various purposes while they are writing their essays. The literature reviewed in this section mainly discuss that they use for six major purposes which can be grouped into three types. First, some of the purposes are related to pre-writing such as for generating ideas and searching topics for the essay or paper. The next, during writing stage, they use their L1s for searching vocabulary items, reducing cognitive load and online revision. Finally, they also use their L1s during post writing sage for editing, evaluating their texts and backtracking.

### **Effects of Using L1 in L2 Writing Process**

Regarding whether multilingual writers get some benefits if they employ their L1s in course of writing in their L2s, there have been several studies, some of which especially undertaken with the sociocultural perspective have found that those who utilize their L1s while writing in their L2s have some advantages. However, some other studies conducted from other perspectives have cautiously maintained that the use of students’ L1s while writing in L2s can have beneficial or detrimental effects on L2 writing processes or products depending upon the purposes for which it has been used. What follows the next has some discussions on the research which represent both types of findings.

**Facilitative effects.** Swain and Lapkin (2000) researched on how the use of students’ L1(English) in French immersion program could be beneficial. Citing the sociocultural theory of human development, they maintain that L2 learners use their



native languages as a cognitive tool “to understand and make sense of the requirements and content of the task; to focus attention on language form, vocabulary use, and overall organization; and to establish the tone and nature of their collaboration” (p. 268). They further argue that without the proper use of their L1, what their informants had achieved “may not have been accomplished as effectively, or perhaps it might not have been accomplished at all” (p. 268). Thus, they argue for letting learners use their L1s judiciously. Similarly, Kim and Yoon (2014) speculate that the use of L1 in L2 writing can be facilitative as L2 writers can generate or elaborate ideas and compensate linguistic deficiencies by using their L1s. Another researcher who has studied the possible effects of the use of students’ native language while they are writing is Yigzaw (2012). In doing so, he collected the required data through pre-test, post-test and interview. The analysis of the quantitative data obtained from tests shows that the use of L1 during the planning stage of writing can help learners accumulate sufficient content information so that they can write well. What’s more, the analysis of the interview data also affirms what has been found in the analysis of quantitative data, because the subjects of the study believed that the use of their L1 in the pre-writing stage would help them compose good essays.

In a similar vein, Storch and Wigglesworth’s (2003) study also shows that there are benefits of using L1s while writing in L2s because L2 writers get some support in task management and task clarification and understanding new vocabulary items and difficult grammatical concepts. Based on their findings, they concluded their research claiming that the use of L1 even in the target language setting could be useful as students tended to revert to their L1s when they had to do the tasks that demanded higher cognitive abilities than their existing abilities. Likewise, Qi (1998) reports some beneficial effects of using

L1s during L2 composing processes. Like Storch and Wigglesworth, he claims the cognitive benefits that the L2 writers if they use their L1 in L2 writing. Based on the data of his case study, he asserts that learners can reduce the cognitive overload in their working memories if they switch to their dominant languages because it is rather easy to process the information in L1s. Another advantage that he highlights is that L2 writers can easily encode their ideas in their L1s as they can precisely record their thoughts or feelings in their native languages. Wang (2003) also points out that both high proficiency (HP) and low proficiency (LP) L2 writers get advantages of language switching (L-S) in course of writing in L2. However, the nature of benefits significantly differs between these two types of writers. He maintains that “the HP learners appeared to benefit extensively from switching to their L1 for rhetorical choices and discourse...On the other hand, the LP learners’ L-S seemed to provide opportunities for them to generate content and review their texts” (Wang, 2003, p. 368).

**Both facilitative and/debilitating effects.** Unlike the researchers who found that the use of L1 in various stages of writing can be beneficial for L2 writers, some research studies have reported that effect of L1 use in L2 writing depends upon some factors such as whether or not L1 and L2 are cognates, writers’ familiarity on topics, etc. Woodall (2002) found that language switching (from L2 to L1) by the writers whose L1 and L2 were cognates had positive effects upon their text quality. However, it was just opposite in the case of those writers whose L1 and L2 were not the cognates. In the same way, Friedlander (1990) reports that if the students use their L1s while they are writing on the topics on which they have obtained information in their L1s, they can write texts of high quality by using their L1s, but they do not get any advantages if they use their L1s while

writing on the topics they are not familiar. However, Lally (2000) says that the use of writers' L1s can have positive effects even if the topics are culturally neutral or writers do not have any prior familiarity with the topics on which they are writing their essays. He found that those writers who used their L1s during planning stages scored higher in the organization and global impression than those of their counterparts who used their L2s during preplanning stages. However, he reported that there was not any difference between both the groups in terms of vocabulary they had used in their texts.

However, van Weijen, van den Bergh, Rijlaarsdam and Sanders (2009) report that the use of L1 during L2 writing process has negative as well as positive correlations with the L2 text quality depending upon the purposes for which writers use their native languages. For instance, the use of L1 for goal setting, generating ideas and structuring is positively correlated to L2 text quality, whereas the use of L1 for self-instruction and metacomments is negatively correlated to L2 text quality. Similarly, Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) maintain that, though less proficient L2 writers get some benefits for collecting content information, organization and language use, the more proficient learners produced some awkward forms and faced some transitional problems. Likewise, Chelala (1981), one of the first researchers to study on second language writing process studies considers the use of L1 during prewriting and composing stages as an ineffective behavior because it has a negative effect upon composition coherence.

Cohen and Brooks-Carson (2001) also view the use of L1 in L2 writing gingerly as it can have both beneficial and harmful effects upon the text quality writers produce. Based on their findings, they claim that the students who directly write in their L2 would focus on their L2 expressions all the time and get ample opportunities to learn the L2.

Nevertheless, they also do not deny the belief that the use of L1 for idea generation, searching vocabulary and organizing the ideas might have been useful qualitatively as well as quantitatively. Arguing from the contrastive rhetoric perspective, Ye (2013) claims that Chinese writers of English often fail to organize their ideas in their texts as the way the native speakers of English structure their ideas in the texts because of the negative influence of their native language. Due to the influence of their L1, they often prefer the indirect way of expressing their ideas even if they are writing in English. They seldom make the subject clear at the beginning but reaffirm the viewpoints in many ways.

To sum up, the use of L2 writers' L1 during various stages of writing can have both beneficial as well as harmful effects upon both processes and products. Some research studies report that the use of L1 in L2 writing can be beneficial ( Kim & Yoon, 2014; Qi, 1998; Storch and Wiggleworth, 2003; Swain & Lapkin, 20000; Wang, 2003), whereas some research argue that the use of L1 in L2 writing can be sometimes beneficial and sometimes harmful depending upon many other variables such as purpose, context, proximity between students' native language and their L2s ( Cohen & Brooks-Carson, 2001; Kobayashi & Rinnert, 1992; Lally, 2000; van Weijen, van den Bergh, Rijlaarsdam & Sanders, 2009, Woodall, 2002; Ye, 2013).

### **Prior Knowledge and its Use in L2 Writing**

Educational psychologists believe that students construct their new knowledge based on their prior knowledge (Hailikari, Katajavuori & Linindblom-Ylanne, 2008). The implication of this belief is that the students with higher prior knowledge are likely to better perform in cognitive tasks than those of their counterparts who have low prior knowledge . As such, it is essential for teachers to take students' prior knowledge into

their account so that the input given them fits their level. As a result, students can learn easily and efficiently. Regarding this, Krashen (1982) suggests that the input teachers give to their students should be slightly beyond their present level of knowledge. Lest the input can be either beyond the students' comprehension capacity or too easy. In both the conditions, desired learning outcomes cannot be achieved. This means that students' prior knowledge plays a crucial role in students' academic achievement.

Like all other kinds of knowledge, prior knowledge can be either declarative or procedural relating to the memory systems involved for the storage and retrieval of the stored information (Gass & Selinker, 2009; Mitchell & Myles, 2013). Regarding the differences, Gass and Selinker (2009) mention that declarative knowledge is "concerned with knowledge about something and declarative memory underlies learning and storage of facts" (p. 242). For them, the procedural knowledge "relates to the motor and cognitive skills that involve sequencing information" (Gass & Selinker, 2009, p. 242). The former is explicit, whereas the latter is implicit. The phrases such as "the knowledge- about" and "knowledge-how" are often used to refer to declarative and procedural memory respectively. To associate to language acquisition, while the acquisition of words or meanings is supposed to be associated with declarative knowledge, using of language such as forming sentences or interpreting sentences is believed to be connected to procedural knowledge.

Given that multilingual writers have very strong literacy skills in their native languages as Hedgcock and Ferris (2014) mention they are likely to use their prior experience of writing as well as their native languages (L1s) while they are producing the texts in their target language in ESL contexts. It is because it is quite natural for them to

deploy their prior knowledge while they encounter writing tasks in the university contexts of the US (Yancey, Robertson, & Taczak, 2012). However, such a transfer may not necessarily have facilitative roles all the times as discussed in the preceding sub-section, because it mainly depends upon the similarities or differences between the prior knowledge and the new tasks they need to perform. Therefore, Matsuda (2014) rightly remarks that some of the genre-specific features that differ language to language might detract them from communicating through written forms. Nevertheless, he also agrees with the usefulness of the use of L1 literacy strategies (p. 269) for being able to communicate effectively through written forms of second or foreign language. While considering what writers need to develop to be successful writers, Beaufort (2007) says that they should possess process knowledge, rhetorical knowledge, genre knowledge, discourse community knowledge and content knowledge. Therefore, if multilingual writers might have already developed these domains of writing in their native language, the extent to which they become successful in writing in ESL contexts might depend upon the extent to which they can employ their prior knowledge developed in these domains of writing in the target language and unfamiliar writing contexts. Certainly, if they are conceptually clear on these four domains, the words and structures of the second or foreign language cannot be the barriers for them over a prolonged period.

In conclusion, it is quite common for L2 writers to use what they have already learned either in their L1s or L2s while they are creating texts in their second languages. In fact, all learners build their new knowledge based on their prior knowledge. Therefore, it can be believed that if they have sufficient related prior knowledge as given by Beaufort (2007), writers are likely to encounter few challenges while writing in their L2s.

## **Chapter Conclusion**

As the title of this chapter suggests, both theoretical, as well as empirical studies related to the topic in question, were reviewed. With a view to getting insights into the development of second language writing, some of the literature related to the history of the second language has been reviewed here. This review shows that the studies on second language writing emerged along with the increment of the number of international students in the higher education institutions in the US. From the 1990s, the studies in this area have focused on various aspects of L2 writing such as the use of L1 in L2 writing, writers' identities and rhetorical differences. Similarly, the comparison and contrast of L1 writing and L2 writing has been made to better understand the nature of similarities and differences between these two type of writing. Based on certain criteria set forth for the analysis of L1 and L2 writing, research studies have found the common premises though they are basically different in many respects. In the same way, the review of the literature related to the characteristics of L2 writers indicates that there are several common characteristics of L2 writers even if there can be several individual and contextual differences.

The discussion on the process approach to writing given by White and Arndt (1991) presents the various stages of writing that writers follow while they are writing. Next, to understand the common premises of the nature of L1 and L2 writing, some research studies undertaken particularly in the light of Cummins's (1979) linguistic interdependence and threshold hypotheses have been reviewed. This review is particularly relevant for this study in a sense that the L2 writers can make of their L1s effectively and efficiently if and only if they have a minimum level of L2 proficiency

required for writing. The review related to the use of L1 in L2 writing is the crux of the literature review as per the research question of this study. Several empirical studies on the use of L1 in L2 writing have been reviewed. From the review of the literature, it is evident that L2 writers make use of their L1s mainly for generating ideas, reducing cognitive load and finding appropriate words in the target language. It thoroughly reviews the literature from various contexts and countries that deals with the use of L1 in L2 writing. The reviewed literature comprises of the studies carried out either in foreign language context in which all learners have the common L1 or in immersion programs.



## **Chapter III**

### **Methodology**

This chapter deals with a set of procedures that were followed in order to find out the answers of the three specific questions: 1) In what ways do undergraduate students use their L1s in an L2 Basic Writing course in the US university context? 2) what are their perceptions regarding the effects of their use of L1s in L2 writing? 3) How do they utilize their prior experience of writing academic essays while they are writing the similar types of texts in L2? In order to find out the answers of these research questions, the required data were collected from the undergraduate students enrolled in a Basic Writing course of a university in the Mid-western part of the US. The details of the methodology are discussed in different sub-headings.

#### **Research Design**

Qualitative case study research design was used in order to achieve the objectives of the study. It is “an approach to research that facilitates exploration of a phenomenon within its contexts using a variety of data sources” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p. 544). This kind of research design is used, “if the purpose of the study is primarily to describe a problem, phenomenon, situation or event” (Kumar, 2011, p. 13). While carrying out a research within this framework, variables are measured using nominal or ordinal scales and “analysis is done to establish the variation in the situation, phenomenon or problem without quantifying it” (p.13). This design is appropriate for this study as the study focused on “the study of why and how questions” (Baxter & Jack, 2008, p.545).

#### **Research Setting**

The study was conducted during the fall semester of 2017 collecting the required data

from the students enrolled in one of the groups of the basic writing course for Multilingual Writers” offered in a state university located in a Mid-Western region of the US. It is the course which is offered to those students who score less than 78 in Accuplacer test or 110 in minimum ESL reading score and 5 in the minimum Writeplacer score (State University, n.d., English 101 Placement Testing, n. p.). They are also not required to take this course if they have scored 18 in ACT English sub-score or 480 in new SAT or 440 in old SAT or 88 in TOEFL ibt or 6.5 overall band score in IELTS. If they do not meet these criteria, they are required to take this course in order to be eligible to take ENG 101-Composition. Usually, the students learn to write genre-based essays in the basic writing course, develop their reading skills for enhancing academic writing skills and organize their essays as per the audience, purpose, and genre. Learning to write narratives, summaries, cause and effect essay, comparison and contrast essay and problem and solution essay, etc. are some typical tasks that the students enrolled in this course have to complete in order to be successful. At minimum, they have to score 73% to get through this course. Since it is a course offered for multilingual writers, it is quite common to expect students from many different language backgrounds. There were eighteen student participants in this study, who spoke eight different languages natively. Geographically, they were from Asia, Africa, and Europe. These two pieces of information clearly signify the fact that the class was linguistically, culturally and geographically diverse.

Throughout the semester, there were 32 classes. Each class was of 105 minutes. There were two classes in a week. While learning, the students would follow the principle of the process approach, collaborative pedagogy, and learner-

centeredness. Thus, a typical class would involve the group works, pair works, individual work, etc. They would read sample essays, observe the demonstration of their instructor's modeling on how to write essays or any other texts, choose the topic of their own interests, search information related to their topics, prepare outlines of their essays, write first drafts and have their drafts peer-reviewed. Additionally, their instructor read all those drafts and give written feedback for the further improvement. Optionally, they could also have writing center tutors read their essay drafts and obtain feedback for improving their essays. Based on the feedback from their peers, instructor and even writing center tutors, they tended to improve their first drafts and submitted them as final drafts.

### **Participants**

All eighteen participants of the enrolled in the Basic Writing Course entitled Introduction to Composition for Multilingual Writers in the 2017 fall semester of a state university of the Mid-Western part of the US are the participants of the study. They are from diverse backgrounds in terms of nationality, language, and education. The participants were from nine countries representing Asia, Africa, and Europe. They speak eight different languages as their native languages. When it comes to the time investment of the students, their average years of learning English is 10.77 years. Five participants have experience of attending to English medium schools from the beginning of their formal education, whereas the rest of the participants have their education in their home countries through their native languages. Six of them, have experience of attending intensive English language programs at various US universities. The following table presents the participants with their pseudonyms and their background information.

Table 3.1 Participants' Background Information

Name	NL	Country	Age (Years)	ELL (Years)	Schooling	Major	LSESC (Months)
Abdullah	Arabic	Saudi Arabia	21	13	Arabic	IT	10
Ali	Arabic	Kuwait	19	9	Arabic	El. Engg.	9
Amir	Arabic	Kuwait	19	9	Arabic	Co.Engg.	9
Carine	French	Ivory Coast	20	9	French	Maths.	33
Emmanuel	Frech	Ethiopia	20	10	Amharic	English	1
Hiroaki	Japanese	Japan	21	10	Japanese	Sports	1
Issac	French	Ivory Coast	22	12	English	Co.Engg.	8
Joo Won	Korean	South Korea	23	12	Korean	Ex. Sc.	1
Kaan	Turkish	Turkey	20	6	English	Me.Engg.	72
Khalil	Arabic	Kuwait	20	14	Arabic	Ci. Engg.	24
Liya	Amharic	Ethiopia	19	10	Amharic	Geography	1
Maimuna	Aku	Gambia	23	14	English	Nursing	1
Nessa	French	Ivory Coast	20	14	English	Economics	9
Omar	Arabic	Kuwait	18	8	Arabic	Ci. Engg.	60
Rabin	Newari	Nepal	21	10	English	IT	12
Saleem	Arabic	Kuwait	19	12	Arabic	Marketing	9
Seo Hyun	Korean	South Korea	22	10	Korean	Chemistry	1
Soo Jun	Korean	South Korea	22	12	English	Aviation	14

*Languages 8, Countries 9, Average age 20.16 years, ELL 10.77 years, Majors 15, LESC*

*9.78 months*

Table 3.1 shows the diversity of the participants in terms of their background information such as nationalities, prior educational background, average stay in the English speaking countries and their investment of time for learning English.

### **Tools for Data Collection**

An open-ended questionnaire was the main tool for data collection. It is a list of questions whose answers are not given, which is why the participants of a study are required to write down the answers to those questions in their own words (Kumar, 2011). Such questions “allow the respondent[s] greater freedom of expression and open up the possibility for more qualitative style data to be generated” (Henn, Weinstein, & Foard, 2006, p. 163). There were five questions in the list (see appendix II). In fact, these were the guiding questions given to the students for writing their reflective journal that they were required to write after they submitted their final draft of their essay. Based on the responses elicited by open-ended questionnaire, some further follow-up questions (see appendix IV) were also asked of them. So, these further probing type of follow-up questions were the supplementary tools to open-ended questionnaire. These follow-up questions were specific to individual participants. For bringing some variations in assignments, the participants were required to record their responses in MP3 format and submit them as their responses.

### **Data Collection Procedure**

Data collection started after the participants submitted their final draft of each essay. As soon as they had submitted their final drafts of a type of essay, each of them was asked to write one reflective journal based on the five guiding questions. The participants were required to write the answers of these five questions for their complete

answer. However, they could also go beyond those questions if they wanted to include some other aspects that were not covered by those questions. They all submitted their tasks within the due date. Once the participants submitted their journals, teachers read and asked one or two questions either for the clarifications of their answers or for the additional information. The participants recorded their answers of such questions and uploaded in D2L within the due date.

Three different type of essay - cause and effect, comparison and contrast, and problem and solutions - were the main genre-based essays that the students enrolled in the Basic Writing course entitled Introduction to Composition for Multilingual Writers had to write during the fall semester of 2017. Each essay was taught using process approach to teaching writing following the steps such as generating ideas, structuring, drafting, focusing, reviewing and evaluation given by White and Arndt (1991). After the students submitted their final draft of each essay type to D2L, they were asked to write a reflective journal, particularly focusing on how they used their L1s and prior experience of writing the same or similar type of essays in their native languages. For their convenience, they were given some open-ended guiding questions. After they had submitted their reflective journal, their responses were read by the researcher/instructor and then they were required to respond to the further clarification questions. Each student had different further clarification questions as they depended on their responses. While responding to these further clarification questions, they were asked to record their voices in audio format (mp3 recording) and then submit to D2L as an assignment. In this way, the same process was followed for all essays. Since they

were asked to write three genre-based academic essays, each of them submitted three reflective journals and 3 audio responses. Thus, there were 54 reflective journals and the same number of audio responses as the data of the study. The following table shows the date on which data were collected.

Table 3.2 The Sequence and Due Dates for Assignments

Essay Type	Reflection Journal Due Date	Audio Response Due Date
Cause and Effect	10- 11- 2017	10- 17- 2017
Comparison and Contrast	11- 07 - 2017	11- 14 – 2017
Problem and Solution	11- 28 - 217	12- 05- 2017

### **Data Analysis**

After the students had submitted reflective journals, they were carefully read, and their coding categories determined based on the emerging themes. In case of the audio data, the responses were listened and transcribed orthographically. While transcribing, each response was listened at three times for achieving higher degree of accuracy in transcriptions. At first, those audio responses were listened for being acquainted with the contents the respondents were talking about. In the second attempt, the audio would be played for about 15 to 20 seconds and then paused. After pausing the audio, what was listened would be transcribed on a paper. After that audio would be listened again from the beginning and check whether or not the transcription is exact. Therefore, there would be back and forth movements in two or three times. When it was accurate, then the audio record would be played or 15 to 20 seconds again and the same process would be repeated. Once all the audio-response of a participant was completely transcribed, the

audio response would be heard once again from the beginning to the end checking if the transcript was accurate. This is how all the audio responses were transcribed.

After the transcription of audio data, both the data sets were read carefully read again and coded using MAXQDA 2018 based on the emergent themes following the principles and procedures of thematic analysis approach. Here, themes simply refer to units of analysis derived based on the patterns of ideas or information given by the participants. For Rubin and Rubin (2009), these are “summary statements, casual explanations or conclusions” (p. 194). Broadly, the themes were generated considering the purposes of using L1 in L2 writing, effects of using L1 in L2 writing and prior experience of writing. Regarding the writers’ belief about the effects of the use of their L1s while writing in L2, their opinions were categorized into facilitating and debilitating effects. Likewise, prior experiences were grouped as per the genres of the essays. Finally, the use of prior experiences was grouped in accordance with the stages to be followed in process approach to teaching writing.

### **Limitations of Research**

Each study has its own limitations as all the aspects or variables of a research cannot be taken into consideration while carrying out a research. So, the study was also limited to four factors. First, the number of its participants is delimited to the students enrolled in one of the sections of the English for Academic Purpose (EAP) 136 course during the fall 2017 semester, which was offered to those students who are not sufficiently proficient enough to take the English 101 Composition course. Second, it is also limited to the data collected from the open-ended questionnaire and audio responses of the questions asked for the further clarification of the answers to the open-ended



questionnaire given by the participants. The researcher believes that the in-depth interview with those participants who responded that they would use their L1s in L2 writing process could have enriched the data. Third, the data for the study were collected from the participants of a single semester. Fourth, the data were collected from the writing contents only, not participants content courses.

### **Chapter Summary**

This chapter dealt with the research methodology, which comprised a set of procedures that were followed for carrying out this research. Regarding the research design, qualitative case study design was followed as the main purpose of the study was to find out why and how multilingual writers make use of their L1s and prior experiences of writing essays while writing genre-based academic essays. The required data for the study were collected from the students who were enrolled in a basic writing course at a state university in the Mid-western part of the US during the 2017 fall semester. For the collection of the required data, open-ended questionnaire and further follow up questions were the major tools for the data collection. However, the biographic information was collected using the background questionnaire administered on the first day of the course. While collecting the data, after the students have submitted their essay, each of them was asked to write a reflective journal based on the five guiding questions (see appendix I) given to them. After they submitted the reflection journal, the responses were read and then one or two further follow up questions were asked to each participant. For responding these questions, they audio-recorded their responses and submitted to D2L. The data collected in this way were analyzed using recursive content analysis and then results and discussions were organized as per the themes found within each research

question. Mainly, they were findings were presented on the basis of the purpose fo which ESL writers used their L1s during the various stages of writing their genre-based academic essays and the effects of the use of their L1s in L2 writing processes.

## Chapter IV

### Findings and Discussions

The main purpose of the study is to explore the purposes for which multilingual writers make use of their L1s while they are writing genre-based academic essays in an ESL composition classes. Additionally, it also aims to find out the students' beliefs towards the use of L1 in L2 writing. To achieve these objectives, the data were collected from the students enrolled in a basic writing course entitled Introduction to Composition for Multilingual Writers offered at one of the state universities in the Mid-western part of the US during fall 2017 semester. The data collected using reflective written journal and audio journal were analyzed and the results were sorted out and presented as per the research questions. The research questions were: 1) In what ways do undergraduate students use their L1s in an L2 Basic Writing course in the US university context? 2) what are their perceptions regarding the effects of their use of L1s in L2 writing? 3) How do they utilize their prior experience of writing academic essays while they are writing the similar types of texts in L2? Regarding the purposes for which multilingual writers use their L1s in various stages of writing essays, it was evident that the multilingual writers used their native languages for generating ideas, planning their essays, finding the appropriate target language vocabulary, back-translating the L2 text into their native language, reducing the cognitive load, making a note of the ideas that emerge in course of writing and summarizing what they have read for writing and mediating the texts they have read for collecting information for writing and composing essays. Similarly, when it comes to the case of the extent to which second language writers benefitted due to their L1 use while writing in their L2, the responses are ambivalent as some of them believe

that they have been benefitted, but others think that they have some disadvantages because they have to undergo a long process of thinking in one language and then translating what they have thought into L2.

### **The Ways Undergraduate Students Use their L1s in an L2 Basic Writing Course in the US University Context**

The first research question is related to the purpose for which L2 writers employ their L1s while they are writing genre-based academic essays in English. Based on the analysis of the data collected using both open-ended questions and audio responses, only eleven participants out of eighteen reported that they had used their L1s while they were writing essays. Seven of them said that they were not in the habit of using their L1s since they were educated in English medium schools right from the kindergarten of their school. Some of them did not like use their L1s for the sake of improving their English. For instance, Amir wrote, “I didn’t use my first language because I want to focus on English and to think in English. Also, when I use my first language, I take a long time to write” (Written journal, 10-10-2017). Similarly, Nessa also does not like to use her L1 while writing in English. She responded, “I did my best to avoid using my first language in my essay of’ cause and effect”, because this method is not helpful to me to improve my English vocabulary” (Written journal, 10-10-2017). Those who used their L1s during their writing processes reported the following reasons for using their L1s.

**L1 for generating ideas.** One of the most common purposes for which multilingual writers use their L1s in course of writing academic essays in the ESL or EFL contexts is for generating ideas in the pre-writing stage of the essay. L2 writers mainly use L1s in order to generate the ideas related to the topic in which they are writing

(Cummings, 1989; Friedlander, 1990; Lally, 2000; Wen & Wang, 2002; Wong, 2003; van Weijen, Bergh, Rijlaarsdam & Sanders, 2009; Kim & Yoon, 2014). In doing so, they first think about the topic in their L1s and try to accumulate as much information as possible on the topic in question. Having collected information that they are seeking, they translate the information into English. Regarding this, Ali said,

As Arabic is my first language more ideas come to my mind while doing the work which I am given to do. So, I use Arabic to list all the ideas that comes to my mind in a piece of paper. (Reflective written journal, 10-10-2017).

He was not the only person in the class, who went through the process of translation while writing. Like him, Joo Won from Korea recalled his process of generating ideas while writing essays in English, "While I was writing a comparative and contrastive essay, I thought in many times in my first language and translated the thoughts into English" (Written journal, 11-07-2017). Similarly, Abdullah also maintained that he thinks in his native language Arabic and then translates his thoughts into English. The following is the excerpt of what he said.

I use my first language writing my outline and brainstorming because it's much easier and faster for me to write an essay. I think in my mind with my first language then i start translating the ideas and thought to perfect build up sentences to connect them together to make the perfect essay. (Written journal, 11-07-2017)

Like, Ali, Joo Won, and Abdullah, Rabin from Nepal who speaks Newari, his ethnic language and Nepali, the national language of Nepal also maintained that he thinks in his L1 in order to generate ideas on the topic of an essay. In his audio journal, he said,

“I mostly use my native language. What I actually did in the problem and solution essay was to think points in my language and actually converted it into English”. One of the interesting piece of information reported by the participants regarding the idea generation is that sometimes even if the writers might not like to think in his or her L1, thinking in L1 might sub-consciously take place as in the case of Nessa, who is using English from her Kindergarten school in her home country- Ivory Coast, and is very strongly motivated toward improving her English language proficiency for her academic prospects. For this reason, she intends to deliberately avoid using French, her L1, as much as possible. However, she cannot help thinking in French, her native language, which is crystal clear in the following excerpt of her answer to an open-ended question guiding question given for writing journal. Regarding this issue, she said,

I stop using my first language while writing an essay because it makes me waste time, and sometimes it is difficult for me to clearly translate my ideas in English. Therefore, I do my best to think directly in English even if few ideas of my brainstorming came in my first language. (Written journal, 11-07-2017)

Nessa’s reporting makes us aware that the use of L1, to some extent, can be sub-conscious, which is why multilingual writers might automatically think in their L1s even if they might attempt to avoid using them. Such a trend is evident in Seo Jun’s reflections as well. He asserted, “I didn’t use my first language at the writing process. But I thought about my essay in Korean” (Written journal, 11-07-2017). All these writers’ experiences clarify that the use of their L1s for gathering information or generating ideas. Regarding the use of L1s in L2 writing, Ferris and Hedgecock (2014) maintain that multilingual writers can have strong literacy background in their native language. Therefore, it is not

uncommon for them to use their L1s for retrieving information from their long-term memory while collecting ideas or information required for the essay. The experiences shared by multilingual writers clearly indicate that multilingual writers often use their native languages for accumulating the ideas or information required for writing.

**L1 for planning their essays.** When L2 writers come across the topic on which they need to write their essays, they tend to start to plan their essays focusing on what they should write and how they should organize their ideas in essays. It is quite evident in Ali's statement. He maintained that he had used his native language (Arabic) in order to organize his thoughts while writing a comparison and contrast essay. Like Ali, Hiroaki, who speaks Japanese as his native language, also reported that he had used his native language while writing the comparison and contrast essay for outlining his essay as he found essay to think in his native language. Regarding the use of his L1 for planning the essay, he wrote the following:

I used a lot of idea and some stages of the writing process like brainstorming and outlining in my native language. At first brainstorm all my idea as far as I can think and after that, I did some research on Internet websites and finally outlined my all writing contents. By using my outline, I wrote my "comparison and contrast" essay. I had difficulty at first as we do not give directly focus on our topic but goes side by side which is totally different in here as we have to write in a straight way about the topic without going round and round the topic. (11-07-2017)

Like these writers, Seo Hyun, who speaks Korean as her native language, also says, "When I wrote body paragraph, I used my first language. When I organized sub-

subject of presentation”. Similarly, Rabin uses his L1 for planning the overall structure of the essay. He says, “I use my mother tongue to structure and outline for writing body paragraphs and conclusion” (10-10-2018). He means to say that he uses his L1 in order to structure his essays as he does while writing in his Nepali. The reason he gives is that, despite few different things such as hook, thesis and topic sentences, all other things such as how the introduction, body parts, and conclusion are written are virtually the same in English and Nepali. Furthermore, he presumes that ideas to be expressed are the same, but the only difference is of words and structure in different languages.

**L1 for finding the appropriate target language vocabulary.** Another most common purpose for which multilingual writers use their L1s is for searching lexical items. Many researchers such as Wang (2003), Woodall (2003), Kim and Yoon (2014), etc. highlight that second language writers keep on solving their linguistic problems such as lack of target language vocabulary items with the help of their native languages. While writing in English, multilingual writers use their L1 for compensating the lack of vocabulary in English. In order to do so, they firstly think words in their native language and then attempt to translate those words in English using bilingual dictionaries. For instance, as a learner of English, I used to try to find out equivalent words in English from the Nepali language using Nepali to English dictionaries. It is one of the most common practices of bilingual or multilingual writers while they are writing in the target language. Regarding this purpose, Isaac reports, “I usually think words in French and then translate them into English like the word overcrowded I used in the previous questions which mean ‘encombrer’ in French” (Written journal, 10-10-2017). In the similar vein, another writer, Emmanuel, whose native language is also French,



maintained, “I used my first language by listing my ideas/words first, then I tried to find some synonyms for it” (Written journal, 11-07-2017). Here, by “synonym” he means to say the equivalent word in the target language. One of the worth noticing finding regarding this purpose is that even those who claim that they do not use their L1s while they are writing in their L2 were found to have used their L1s for this purpose. Amir, who insists that he does not use his native language while writing in English, also confirms that he uses his native language for finding equivalent words in English. He declared, “I use my language just to get a new vocabulary. I use a dictionary to translate Arabic words into English words” (Written journal, 11-28-2017). Like Amir, Omar also does not use his L1 (Arabic) because he believes that he is proficient enough to think in English. Yet when it comes to the case of finding L2 words, he too writes, “I just use it to get more vocabulary for my writing. By using a dictionary, I translate Arabic words to English words”. From these quotations, it is evident that multilingual writers extensively make use of their L1s for finding the target language words. Therefore, this finding implies that the use of bilingual dictionaries amongst multilingual writers is a common phenomenon.

**L1 for back-translating the L2 text into their native language.** Back-translating, as its name implies, is a strategy of checking whether or not the sentences translated from their native language to the target language makes sense. With this regard, Wolfersberger (2003) mains that low proficient learners often translate L2 sentences into their native languages in order to verify that their L2 sentences make senses. He writes:

After writing words or sentences in English, sometimes these subjects wanted to

verify that the English they used conveyed the ideas they intended. They would do this by using an English to Japanese dictionary or asking the researcher for the Japanese equivalent. (Wolfersberger 2003, "Strategies for Dealing with L2 Language Issues", para. 4)

The multilingual writers who participated in the study were also found to have used their L1s for this purpose. With regard this type of use, Rabin recollected how he had used his L1 while writing his cause and effect essay, "I write sentences in English and then try to check if that makes sense translating into my language" (11-28-2017). Sometimes, some of the basic writers reported that they would use google translate as a tool for translating from English to their native languages and back to English.

**L1 for reducing cognitive load or for convenience.** The second or foreign language learners who are not sufficiently proficient enough in the L2 in which they need to write often tend to use their L1s to overcome the cognitively challenging tasks. In order to do so, they usually write their texts in their native languages and then translate into their L2s later on. Additionally, they often use their L1s to prepare notes of what they have read. remember while writing a text. In this regard, Joo Won mentions, "When I did brainstorming Since English is not my first language, I think it is easy for me to write first in Korean". Likewise, his colleague Rabin also uses his L1 for slightly different purposes. In fact, he uses his L1 in order to mediate between his comprehension and reading texts. He writes:

To be able to write well, I should have enough information. Also, our instructor told us to cite some authentic sources such as research articles or books. While I am reading, I write my understanding on either left or right-hand side of the

passage. That makes me feel easy to remember all I have read. When I start to write I see the notes taken in my native language. (Written Journal, 11-07-2017)

These quotations by the multilingual writers clearly indicate the multilingual writers who are not highly competent in the target language can use their native language as a “psychological tool” (Cook, 2001) to lessen their cognitive load. Here, Rabin seems to have used his native language to mediate between what he had read in English in order to gather information for writing essays and his writing process.

**L1 for searching information.** As multilingual writers have options to choose regarding the reading materials either in their native language or in the target language, sometimes, particularly when they try to find reading materials related to the topic on which they are writing their essays they tend to read books or articles available in their native languages so that they can better understand texts and accumulate the required information within a short period of time. Seo Hyun is one of the writers who reported that she had read articles available in the Korean language while writing cause and effect essay. In her audio response, she said,

Well, I used my native language while writing my cause and effect essay. I read an article in Korean language...I found that article related to my essay... I used the Journal of Korean. The topic was difficult. To me, it is easy for me to search journal and articles. (Audio journal, 10-17-2017)

Like Seo Hyun, Rabin also said that he had used the sources of information found in his native language. Regarding this kind of use of his L1, he reported that “First of all, I researched proper information in Nepali from websites and journals and then I paraphrased all to reflect my own idea” (Audio journal, 12-05-2017). These responses

indicate how multilingual writers make use of their L1s for searching information. When writers choose the topics, which are not quite familiar their own experiences, they might need to read books and articles related to their topics to gather information required for writing academic essays. Additionally, they are often required to cite certain sources in order to validate their ideas or critique on others' ideas while writing academic essays. So, for being able to fully comprehend the information related to her topic, they tend to seek relevant texts in their L1s.

**L1 for searching topics.** As L2 writers often think in their L1s while they are writing essays in their L2s, they use their native languages for selecting the topics. Issac, who speaks French as his native language, asserted that he used his L1 for finding the topic as he could find many topics in his native language. In his audio response, he rightly said, "Well, as I've already said I was already familiar with all types of essay we are studying. For example, I was looking topics. I know a lot of topics in French. It's hard in English" (Audio journal, 11-14-2017). In line with him, Kaan, whose native language is Turkish and who is a high school graduate from the US school, affirmed that he had used his native language for finding the topics. However, he said that he did not use his native language for other purposes. In his written journal he maintained, "With the use of my native language, it was much more easier to come up with a specific topic that would be a perfect fit for this cause and effect essay" (Written journal, 10-10-2017). These two writers' writing experiences indicate that L2 writers sometimes might use their L1s for the sake of choosing the right topics for their essays. This purpose is, of course, connected with the information available to them as the writers generally tend to choose

the topic for which they do not spend a substantial amount of time for gathering information by reading some sources such as books, articles, web pages, etc.

### **Multilingual Writers' Perceptions Regarding the Effects of their Use of L1s in L2 Writing**

The second research question is related to the L2 writers' perceived possible effects of using L1s in L2 writing in ESL setting. Regarding the possible effects of the use of L1, while writing in the target language, writers' opinions contradict. The L2 writers who participated in the study critically report the use of their L1s while writing genre-based essays have both facilitative as well as obstructive roles. What follows the next has the discussions of positive as well as negative effects of using L1 in the L2 writing process as perceived by the multilingual writers.

**Beneficial effects.** Multilingual writers reported that they had ten benefits of using their L1s in course of writing essays in their target languages. They include organizing ideas, convenience, thinking spontaneously, preparing effective outline and brainstorming, saving time, familiarizing on the essay topics, using precise and complex words, improving text quality, accumulating detailed information, and thinking clearly. All of them can be grouped into cognitive, meta-cognitive, linguistic, and informational benefits. The following sub-headings discuss these three benefits.

**Cognitive benefits.** One of the main benefits of using L1 in L2 writing, as reported by the participants, is that they can have cognitive benefits. Research studies such as Swain and Lapkin (2000), Qi (1998), Cohen and Brooks-Carson (2001) and Storch and Wigglesworth (2003) maintain that the use of L1 while writing in L2 can reduce the cognitive load of the learners. In line with the findings of these studies, participants

reported that they had some kinds of cognitive benefit. Reflecting her own experience of using her L1 while writing cause and effect essay, Liya said, “It makes me think and express very clearly” (Written journal, 10-10-2017). Here, Robin’s experience is also exactly the same as to Liya’s experience. He noted, “Mainly, the use of my prior language made me able to think clearly” (Written journal, 10-07-2017). Similarly, Ali reported that the use of L1 in L2 writing made him “think naturally and smoothly” (Written journal, 11-28-2017). In the same way Issac also reported that he could use the same concept that he had already formed in his L1. Considering the cognitive benefit, wrote, “There are many advantages of “deja vue” meaning already seen, no more waste of time when drafting my outline or when looking for ideas, I already understand the concept, so it is easy to work on it” (Written Journal, 11-07-2017). Like these participants, Abdullah, Joo Won and Seo Jun also reported that they could think about the topic smoothly and spontaneously after they had used their L1s. Thus, this finding further substantiates the findings by Swain and Lapkin (2000), Qi (1998), Cohen and Brooks-Carson (2001) and Storch and Wigglesworth (2003).

***Metacognitive benefits.*** Multilingual writers can have metacognitive benefits if they use their L1s strategically, because they can plan and organize their essays very well with the help of their L1s. Regarding this benefit, Rabin noted,

My first language helped me in organizing the ideas together in my essay. First of all, I use to think topic in the first language and convert it. By this way, I could be able to outline the essay very completely and comfortably. Outlining of the essay is really easy with the first language because I used to think on it.  
(Written journal, 12-28-2017)

Seo Hyun's statement is also the same to Robin's statement. He reflected, "In my case, I used my native language for outlining. When I outlining, I used my native language" (Written Journal, 11-07-2017). In the same way, Ali also stated that the use of his native language enabled him to prepare effective outlines of the essays (Written Journal, 12-05-1217).

***Linguistic benefits.*** This benefit is related to the acquisition of L2 vocabulary items with the help of L1s. A number of studies such as Kim and Yoon (2014) and Larios and Murphy (2010) observes that L2 learners make use of their L1s for finding the words in the target language. In line with their findings, the participants of the study stated that they used their L1s for finding suitable vocabulary in English. With regard to this kind of use, Ali says, "The advantage of the first language is that it helps me with the vocabularies. So that I can translate words from Arabic to English, and that helps me to use hard and exact words" (Written journal, 11-28-2017). Similarly, Amir, who does not like to use his native language so that he could learn English quickly, also accepted the use of using L1 for finding appropriate words in English. He revealed, "The advantage of using my first language is that help me with the vocabularies. So that I translate words from Arabic to English, and that helps me to use hard words in my essay" (Written journal, 11-07-2017). This finding of the study also further illustrates the sue of L1 for finding L2 vocabulary items.

***Informational benefits.*** The participants of this study reported that they had used their L1s for finding more information related to the topics on which they were writing their essays. Joo Won, Emmanuel and Rabin reported that they used their L1s for accumulating as much information on the topic as possible. In fact, they would try to find

the content information related to their topics in their native languages and then use the same information in their essays, translating from their native language to English.

Reflecting the writing their writing processes, Joo Won said, "...when I write essays, I try to think subjects and details in Korean" (Audio journal, 11-14-2017). His classmate named Emmanuel had also the same kind of experience. He reported that he had used his L1 for constructing ideas while he was writing cause and effect essay (Audio journal, 10-17-2017). Similarly, Rabin also stated, "It was really easier for me to brainstorm the entire essay in my first language because I used to get enough detail and ideas by thinking the essay with first language" (Written journal, 11-28-2017).

From the findings given above, it is clear that multilingual writers can have beneficial effects if they use their L1s strategically in their L2 writing processes. If we look at these facilitative roles that L1 can play in course of writing essays in L2, it can be said that mostly learners get cognitive, meta-cognitive benefits, linguistic and informational benefits. From findings given above it is evident that multilingual writers use their L1s as a cognitive tool to develop their writing proficiency by generating the required information, planning on how they should write their essays, organizing the ideas gathered for writing an essay and reviewing their writing products.

**Debilitating effects.** Even though most of the writers believe that there are some facilitating effects, some of the participants believe that the use of their L1s in course of writing essays in their target language can have some negative effects. They claim that they have to spend substantial amount of time in translation from their native language to English. Some of them even fear of making mistakes if they translate their ideas and information from their mother tongues. The participants reported that they had five



disadvantages of using their L1s in L2 writing processes. These include making grammar mistakes, creating Englishes, time consuming facing, difficulties in translation and delaying English learning. What follows the next present the finding relating to the possible debilitating effects that the writers can have if they use their L1s while they are writing in their L2.

*Fear of making mistakes.* The participant reported that they have a fear of making grammar mistakes if they use their L1s in L2 writing processes. Reflecting his belief, Omar said, “The disadvantage of using my first language is the grammar mistakes that might occur. Because using my first language is opposite than English in writing and the position subject” (Writing journal, 10-10-2017). Similarly, Kaan, who avoided using his native language, noted, “...if the first language is used...there can be confusing in grammar and the smoothness of the essay. What I mean by that is it could make sense in their first language but not in English” (Written journal, 11-07-2017). Unlike these two participants, Seo Hyun, who said that she had frequently used her L1 during L2 writing, also noticed some disadvantages of using her L1 because of the syntactic differences of her L1 and L2. She wrote, “...I sometimes confused structures of sentences. For example, I woke up early in the morning. And In the morning, I woke up early” (Audio journal, 11-14-2017). In the similar vein, her classmate named Seo Jun, who also share his L1 with her, reported the same kind of drawbacks of using his L1 in L1 writing. He commented, “It makes me be able to think smoothly and naturally. However, structures or sentences are made like Korean sentence structure” (Written journal, 10-10-2017). Like the other participants whose perceptions were reported here, contrasting the systems of his native language and L2 Ali remarked,

In Arabic, it is known that instead of placing periods throughout we would use commas and place a period at the end. This is known to be a run-on sentence when it is done in English. Another disadvantage is that Arabic uses a lot of phrases and descriptive language that would not work on translated to English. (Written journal, 11-28-27).

These reports by the participants clearly indicate that they had a sense of making mistakes if they used their L1s in L2 writing.

***Time-consuming process.*** The participants maintained that they had to spend for using their L1s during L2 writing. Some of their ideas are presented here. Recalling his own experience of writing, Khalil mentioned, “I tried to use my knowledge of writing from my first language, but it took me a long time to change it to English so I will count this as a disadvantage” (Written journal, 11-07-2017). Like him, Carine complained that she had to spend a lot of time for translating her ideas from French to English (Written journal, 10-10, 2017). Likewise, Abdullah’s experience of using his native language in L2 is by no means different from those of his classmates, whose experiences have been reported here. He said,

I tried to use my knowledge of writing from my first language, but it took me a long time to paraphrase it to English so I will count this as a disadvantage because it will be easier for me if I did the same thing in English (Written journal, 11-07-2017).

Among all those who said that they had disadvantages of using their L1s in L2 writing processes, Nessa had bitter experience of spending a lot of time for writing translating from her native language to English. She stated, “I do not see any advantages

by using my first language, because this way makes me write two essays instead of one. This is how I see the things now” (Nessa, 11-28-2017). All these reports evidence that the use of L1 can have harmful effects if writers cannot use their L1s strategically.

***Difficulties in translation and delaying learning English.*** The participants of the study also reported that the use of L1 in L2 writing process could be very successful, because all thought in L1s could not be translated into L2. Regarding the untranslatability Emmanuel remarked, “Hard to translate back to English. Many words cannot represent the right meaning for the word” (Audio journal, 11-14-2017). When it comes to the delaying the learning process, Nessa said, “I do not see any great advantages, contrary this manner could make people late, and then increase their English learning phase” (Written journal, 11-07-2017). In the similar vein, Khalil reported, “I did my best to avoid using my first language in my essay of” cause and effect”, because this method is not helpful to me to improve my English vocabulary” (Written journal, 10-10-2017). These quotations from the participants indicate that the use of L1 can delay the process of L2 acquisition.

The foregoing three consecutive paragraphs possible drawbacks that the L2 writers can have if they use their second language while writing essays in English. It seems that learners have the fear of making errors because of syntactic as well as rhetorical differences that exist between their native language and English. From the possible disadvantages that L2 writers have perceived, it can be said that they do not seem to use their L1s for strategic purposes; rather for common process of translating the ideas or whole texts from their native language to English.

## **Use of Prior Experience of Writing in L2 Writing**

prior experience of writing essays in their L1 languages, and if they had that kind of experience how they deployed their experience of writing in L2 writing in ESL setting. Regarding the use of prior knowledge, Hailikari, T., Katajavuori, N., & Lindblom-Ylänne, S. (2008) and Yancey, K. B., Robertson, L., & Taczak, K. (2014) maintain student's build on their new knowledge based on their prior knowledge. Yancey, K. B., Robertson, L., & Taczak, K. (2014) maintain that, while writing in the first-year composition classes build their new knowledge drawing on their prior knowledge, but the prior knowledge may not necessarily be facilitative all cases. For this reason, they need to remix their prior knowledge with the new knowledge. They argue that the students' prior knowledge might match the requirement of new task, which makes them do task easily. In some cases, it might not fit well. So, they need to reconstruct their prior knowledge to meet the requirement of the tasks. Sometimes, it is also possible that their prior knowledge can be at odds. In such a situation, they need to completely learn in a new way. Therefore, the first part of this sub-heading deals with what kinds of prior L1 writing experience they brought in their L2 writing classes and the second part discusses how they had used their prior L1 genre knowledge in writing genre-based essays in ESL setting.

**Prior experience of writing genre-based essays.** It is generally expected that the students who are enrolled at a university bring their prior experience of writing various kinds of texts such as essays, letters, and narratives from their schools. In this study, the students were asked to write whether or not they had written genre-based essays. As expected, all the students were found to have had the experience of writing genre-based

essays such as “cause and effect”, “comparison and contrast” and “problem and solution” either in English only or both English and their native languages. The results are presented below.

*Prior experience of writing cause and effect essays.* Regarding their prior experience of writing cause and effect essay, nine out of eighteen had the experience of writing this type of essays in their native languages. Recalling her experience of writing this type of essay, Carine wrote, “I think my first experience of cause and effect written essays was from high school, in a French class. We learned the methodology and the different steps” (Written journal, 10-10-2017). Like her, some other participants also reported that they had started to write this type of essay in their native languages from as early as grade four. With this regard, Robin wrote, “Firstly, in 4<sup>th</sup> grade I learned to write some simple essays in my mother tongue. There were describing types of essays, but also cause and effect paragraphs such as what happens when there is the destruction of forests” (Written journal, 10-10-2017). Another participant of the study- Emmanuel reveals that he started to learn this genre of an essay from the very beginning of his school days. He wrote,

My first “cause and effect” writing was not an essay it was simply text and I was 2<sup>nd</sup> grade at that time we just mention an effect and bring the cause. it was my Amharic class which is my first language. (Written journal 10-10-2017)

Other participants such as Nessa, Seo Jun, Seo Hyun, Horaki, Ali, and Liya also maintained that they had learned to write cause and effect essay in their native languages while they were in middle and high schools. However, seven participants reported that they have never written in essays in their native languages as they were not required to

write in their schools because of the English medium of instruction in their schools.

Reflecting his learning processes, Kaan said,

I did not learn to write cause and effect essays first in Turkish. When I came to United States of America for high school, my English teacher, Mrs. Blue, gave my class cause and effect essay every other two weeks to get good at it (either for homework, quiz or just for fun). (Written journal, 10-10-2017)

Like Kaan, Maimuna's experience of learning to write cause and effect essay is by no means different though she learned to write essays in her home country. She reported that she had not had opportunities to write in her native language-Aku as she attended English medium of instruction right from the beginning of her schooling.

Regarding her experience of writing, she said the following:

The official language of my home country is English, so the medium of learning for me has always been in English language. I first learnt to write cause and effect essay in high school and it was in my English language class. English language is a subject that every student in my country is obligated to take. It was in that subject that I first learnt about "cause and effect" essay. (Written journal, 11-07-2017)

Some of them also reported that they learned to write genre-based essays in their intensive language programs and while preparing TOEFL and SAT exams.

*Prior experience of writing comparison and contrast essays.* The prior experience of writing a comparison and contrast essay is much the same as in the case of cause and effect essay type. The participants reported that they had learned to write this type of essay in their schools and intensive language programs. Those who learned to

write this genre of the essay in schools had opportunities to write in their native languages. Some of them who went to English medium schools had experiences of writing in English only. Similarly, those participants who came to the US for language learning purpose for being proficient enough to pursue their studies in the US universities also had the experience of writing this kind of essay in English. Some of the representative responses by the participants are as follows:

Among those who learned this genre in schools are Issac and Seo Hyun, Ali, Amir, Joo Won, Robin, Emmanuel, and Horaki. These participants said that they had learned to write this type of essay in their native languages. Recalling the experience of writing comparison and contrast essay, Issac wrote, “When I first heard about comparison and contrast essay that was in my French class. In my third or fourth year in high school, our instructor introduced another type of writing to us “the comparison and contrast essay” (Written journal, 11-07-2017). In the same way, Seo Hyun said,

I learned to write “comparison and contrast” essays in my first language when I was a university student. When I was a freshman, I took “speaking and writing” course. In this course, I could learn several essays. One chapter of essays was comparison and contrast essay. (Written journal, 10-10-2017)

Like them, there are other participants who have learned to write this type of essay in English either in school or in intensive language programs. Maimuna, Seo Jun, Kaan, Omar, and Abdulla are participants who practiced this genre of essay while they were in schools. Recollecting the writing practices that she had, Maimuna maintained,

I have never written comparison and contrast essay in my first language, but in terms of other subjects or courses, I think I started learning how to compare and

contrast things in a text in junior school when I started studying science courses in depth and also literature course where I got to write papers on different characters in a novel. (Written journal, 11-07-2017)

Similarly, one of the participants named Omar said that he had learned this genre of the essay only after he came here for the intensive language program. He wrote, “I learned to write “comparison and contrast” essay last year when I was studying in ESL program at University of Southern California international academy”. Likewise, another participant, Nessa, reported that she had learned the essay in a writing course of a University preparatory program of her previous American University at Ivory Coast.

From these statements of these participants, it is evident that they have experience of writing the essays of this genre in their native languages. The rest of the participants who learned to write comparison and contrast essay in their schools have roughly the same narratives.

***Prior experience of writing problem and solution essays.*** Compared to the other two types of essays, only fifteen participants reported that they had had the experience of learning to write this kind of essay in their previous schools and colleges. Three participants said that they had never written this kind of essay before. Like in the case of two types of essays, those participants who had experience of writing this kind of essay reported that they had learned in their native languages and English. Those participants who attended English medium schools right from kindergarten had experience of writing in English only. Regarding the experience of writing this genre of essay, Ali said, “I learned to write problem and solution essay when I was in middle school. In my Arabic



course, also problem and solution essay was a popular kind of essay that we as a student would write about". Likewise, Kaan wrote,

I have first learned how to write problem and solution essay in high school in English, but since I was young I have always been trying to solve any kind of solutions that appeared in my life. Cannot say that I learned how to write the proper essay from that, but it helped me when I first started writing problem solution essays. (11-28-2017)

These statements by Ali and Kaan show that the participants had the experience of writing problem and solution essays as well.

**Use of prior genre knowledge in L2 writing.** The results presented in the previous sub-heading show that multilingual writers bring experiences of writing diverse types of essays in their EAP writing classes. Therefore, it is assumed that they usually utilize their prior learning experiences while writing the same or similar types of essays. In fact, they are supposed to build on what they have already learned. The following paragraphs present the finding of this study on this issue.

The analysis of the data from the written journals and audio journals, the participants were found to have used their prior genre knowledge in two main ways. First, they attempted to use the knowledge of how to structure their essays and organize their ideas or information. While doing so, those participants who tried to use their L1 genre knowledge noticed that the ways in which the essays are structured in English and their L1s can differ. In this regard, Amir said that he had used the same style of structuring his essays as he had learned in his schools. In his audio response, he said,

I used point by point style. I remember that when I was in high school, the second year in high school. I my Arabic teacher, our teacher taught us how to write an essay. And in this essay, we used this point by point style. I used the same style in EAP 136. (Audio journal 12-05-2017)

However, some of the persons who tried to follow the rhetorical organization of their mother tongues, they noticed that there exist differences. Regarding this issue, Hiroaki identified the rhetorical differences between English and Japanese. He said, “In English, all ideas in the first paragraph but the Japanese people including me put the main ideas in the last of a paragraph”. Similarly, though “introduction”, “body” and “conclusion” are the common components of the essay, which are taught in whatever language they plan to write their essays. However, the concepts such as hook, thesis statement and topic sentences are new to many of them.

Another use of their prior genre knowledge is in the use of information or ideas they have already accumulated while writing their essays. Given that the students can write well if they choose the topic of their own interests, they selected the topics on their own. Therefore, some of them reported that they had just tried to translate the ideas and information from previously written essays in their L1s. In this regard, Robin says,

I have used my prior experience of writing essays. Normally, I have usually used prior language while drafting, outlining ... While I was writing problem and solution essay, in my first draft I normally used my prior experience. What I actually did was to recall my experience of writing in health, population and environment education course of my high school and get the ideas about the topic... (Written journal, 11-07-2017)

Those writers whose words have prior experience of writing have been cited here indicate that multilingual writers can have general knowledge on how they should organize their essays or writings in their native languages, which may or may not necessarily be the same in the L2 they have been writing.

### **Discussions**

This makes discussesbased on the finding of the research in detail in the light of the available literature related to the topic in question. Like in the case of findings, the discusses is organized in terms of three major points: the use of L1 in L2 writing processes, participants beliefs toward the use of their L1s while writing in L2 and the use of prior genre knowledge in L2 writing. Each of these themes is discussed below.

**L1 Use in L2 Writing.** The findings of the study confirm that writing in a second language is “a bilingual event” (Wang & Wen, 2002 p. 239) as the multilingual writers have at least two languages at their disposal while they are writing. Therefore, it is not quite uncommon for them to employ their L1s while they are writing essays in their second languages. Multilingual writers make use of their L1s in course of their writing processes for several reasons (see Cummings, 1989; Friedlander, 1990; Lally, 2000; Wen & Wang, 2002; Wong, 2003; van Weijen, Bergh, Rijlaarsdam & Sanders, 2009; Kim & Yoon, 2014). Villamil and De Guerrero (1996) found that “the L1 was an essential tool for making meaning of the text, retrieving language from memory, exploring and expanding content, guiding their actions through the task and maintaining dialog” (p. 60). Thus, it is obvious that the use of their L1s by multilingual writers is an obvious phenomenon. The findings of the present study showed that the participants used their first languages from pre-writing, writing and post-writing stages for various purposes.

One of the main findings of the study is that multilingual writers use their L1s for generating the ideas related to the topics on which they are writing their essays. Recalling his own experience of writing essays, Ali, an Arabic native speaker, says, “Many ideas comes to his mind in Arabic whenever I think. So, I list all my ideas that come to my mind in my native language” (10-10-2018). This finding corroborates the findings by Cumming (1989), Qi (1998), van Weijen, Bergh, Rijlaarsdam & Sanders (2009) and Kim and Yoon (2014). While writing their essays, multilingual writers feel comfortable to think in their native language because of two major reasons. First, when they think in their native language, they do not need to worry about words and structures to manifest their ideas as the lexicons and structures to represent the ideas are readily available. Second, they usually have prior knowledge of writing the same or similar kinds of essays in their native languages. Even if they have not written the essays of a particular genre, they might have developed the sub-knowledge required for writing a particular genre. For instance, even if they have not written cause and effect essays in their native languages, they might have written several answers relating to cause and effect in their science, social studies or health population and environmental education courses. This experience might cause them to switch to their native languages while they are thinking. One of the interesting findings is that even if a participant likes to stop thinking in her native language, she unknowingly thinks in her native language. This kind of feeling is reflected in Nessa’s statement. She remarks,

I stop using my first language while writing an essay because it makes me waste time, and sometimes it is difficult for me to clearly translate my ideas in English.

Therefore, I do my best to think directly in English even if few ideas of my brainstorming came in my first language. (Written journal,10-10-2017)

Some of the learners do not like to use their native languages in the ESL contexts such as the US as they are in the country where English is spoken natively. Pandey (2017) reports that Even though she likes to avoid using her L1 while writing in English, it is difficult for her to do so. For L2 learners, it is difficult to think through their L2s if they are sequential bilinguals (Lantolf & Thorne, 2006). Therefore, they use their L1s to mediate their thoughts even if they are using their L2s. Here, Nessa's statement signifies that second language learners consciously or sub-consciously make use of their L1s while they are using their second languages.

Another reason for which multilingual writers use their L1s while writing in English is to plan and organize ideas in their essays. Regarding this, Woodall (2002) reports that L2 writers make use of their L1s for organizing and structuring the information to be conveyed in their texts. Similarly, Karim and Nassaji (2013) maintain that "L2 writers...make use of their native language when planning and organizing their essay by talking to themselves in their L1 or by getting engaged in various forms of L1 private speech" (p. 122). Usually, the multilingual writers who are not sufficiently proficient enough in English tend to plan their essays in their native languages and then they often attempt to translate the texts from their native language into English. Sometimes, they make their mistakes as they attempt to view the target language text through the perspective of their native languages in both organization patterns and meanings. For instance, unlike in English, their native languages might not have the rhetorical system in which they should write thesis statement clearly stating the

controlling ideas based on which the subsequent paragraphs are developed. For this reason, they often have difficulties in familiarization themselves with the rhetorical patterns of the English language. Perhaps, Joo Won was indicating this issue while he said,

In the beginning, I was trying to apply the same process as in my first language for organizing ideas, but I really noticed that it was not the same. So, with time I really changed the way I write an essay according to the English principle of writing. (Audio journal 10-17-2017)

Here, Joo Won's statement clearly indicates that L2 writers are likely to organize their thoughts or ideas in the target language in the same way as they do in their native languages, which is why they might have issues with the organization of ideas. However, it is good that Joo Won's has realized that his native language and English do not allow the organization of ideas in the same way. In the same way, Hiroaki says that he uses his native language for generating ideas and organizing them. Like Joo Won, Hiroaki has also noticed some differences between the organizing of ideas in his native language and English. Regarding this issue, he says,

...I had difficulty at first as we do not give directly focus on our topic but goes side by side which is totally different in here as we have to write in a straight way about the topic without going round and round the topic. (Written journal ,11-07-18)

Hiroaki's words indicate that, in English, the essays are organized using a deductive framework- hook, thesis with controlling ideas, topic sentences based on the proposed controlling ideas in the thesis statement. However, native language is one of the

factors that might have influential roles in the acquisition of the rhetorical organization of words. The writers' experience of writing genres and the contexts in which they have learned to write also play significant roles in the acquisition of ideas on how ideas are structured in the target language. The use of SCOBAs, a type of teaching material in the concept-based instruction, for helping writers on how various kinds of information are organized in a particular genre-based essay or text can help them better understand how various genres are structured in English. It is because SCOBAs can function as "second order mediation" (Lantolf & Poehner, 2014, p. 58) in the acquisition of concepts.

Another finding of this research is that multilingual writers often use their native languages in order to find out appropriate target language words to express their ideas or thoughts in a particular paragraph. Regarding this finding, Issac maintained, "I usually think words in French and then translate them into English like the word overcrowded I used in the previous questions which mean "encombrer" in French". In the same way, another writer-Emmanuel, whose native language is also French, maintains, "I used my first language by listing my ideas/words first, then I tried to find some synonyms for it." These two quotations illustrate that L2 writers utilize their L1s for finding suitable words for expressing their thoughts. This finding is completely in line with previous studies such as Roca de Larios and Murphy (2010), Kim and Yoon (2014), etc. These studies affirm that L2 writers, irrespective of their language proficiency, continue using their L1s for searching lexical items. As they utilize their L1s as cognitive tools, they try to find appropriate words using their native language. Most of the times, they feel that they can express their ideas precisely in their native language. Additionally, the words needed for them to express certain kinds of meanings are spontaneously available in their native

languages. Because of these reasons, they think in their native languages and then try to find the exact words that might express their thoughts. In order to do so, they often use bilingual dictionaries and google translate. Also, they ask their colleagues whose native language is the same to theirs, which is why there are several instances of code-mixing or language switching (Woodall, 2002; Wang & Wen, 2002; Eun- Young, 2010) in multilingual classrooms.

The fourth finding of this research is that multilingual writers sometimes translate the text they create in English back to their native language with a view to checking whether or not the text they have created makes sense. In other words, it is the process through which they evaluate their L2 texts using their L1s. Quite a few research studies such as Manchón, Larios, and Murphy (2000), Knutson (2006), Kim and Yoon (2014) have reported that L2 writers often translate their target language texts in order to confirm whether the texts created by them makes sense, assuming that if those texts make sense in their native language, they are acceptable in their target languages as well. Like in the case of finding appropriate words to express their thoughts, L2 writers use bilingual dictionaries, google translate, and ask their colleagues with whom they share their native language. Going through this process, they build their confidence in writing and consolidate their ideas on how they should write genre-based essays in English.

The other main finding of this research is that multilingual writers use their L1s in order to reduce their cognitive load. When they use their L1s, they might feel comfortable to express their ideas or to collect the information that is necessary for writing essays.

With regard to the reduction of cognitive load, Robin said,



While I am reading, I write my understanding on either left or right-hand side of the passage. That makes me feel easy to remember all I have read. When I start to write I see the notes taken in my native language. (Written journal, 11-28-2018)

Bruen and Kelly (2017) maintain that the effective use of L1 in L2 instruction can be useful “to reduce cognitive load or learner anxiety” (p. 378). As discussed in the finding section, they use their L1 because if they think in their native language, it is easier and faster for them to write an essay. In addition, they do not need to worry about retrieving information from their memories. Neither do they feel that their words cannot express what they have thought to express in a particular text. Due to this advantage, even the highly proficient learners continue using their L1s as Wang (2003) found that, unlike many other research findings, proficient writers kept on using their languages not for the lower-order concerns, but for the development of higher-order concerns. In this sense, they were using their mother tongues to for convenience.

**Effects of L1 use in L2 writing.** The discussion above shows that it is quite natural for multilingual writers to make use of their L1s while performing certain tasks. Therefore, such a use certainly exerts upon the process as well as products of writing. Based on the data from questionnaire and audio responses, it can be said that participants believe that they can have both facilitative and debilitating effects. Now let us discuss each of them here.

***Facilitating effects.*** Many research studies such as Woodall (2003), Kim and Yoon (2014), Van Weijen, den Bergh, Rijlaarsdam, and Sanders (2009), Wang (2003), Yigzaw (2012) and Eun- Young, (2010) report that the use of L1 in L2 writing can be beneficial those who have lower proficiency over the target language though they have

also argued that the strategic use of L1 in L2 writing can be very useful even for the advanced learners. As these studies mention, the participants of the study have reported that they get ten types of benefits if they use their L1 in various stages of L2 writing. However, all of them can be grouped into three types: planning, text generation, and cognitive benefits. Each of them is discussed below:

The results show that multilingual writers can have four different type of benefits such as cognitive, metacognitive, linguistic and informational benefits by using their L1s in course of writing in L2. The participants affirmed that they can think smoothly and spontaneously. Often, maintained that use of their L1s they could think easily and retrieve the information form their long-term memory. These are related to cognitive benefits. Often, they get metacognitive benefits as well. For instance, they use their L1s for planning, outlining and organizing their ideas or information for writing essays. Similarly, multilingual writers find suitable words to represent their ideas. So, with the help of their L1s they get the benefits of finding precise words in the target language. For this purpose, they can use bilingual dictionaries, google translate. Sometimes, they also get informational benefits as they can easily and quickly gather information by reading literature available in their native languages. With these benefits, it can be said that multilingual writers who have learned to acquire their L2s after they have become communicatively competent in their native languages generally tend to utilize their native language the dominant means of expression.

***Debilitating effects.*** The studies particularly done through the perspective of contrastive rhetoric perspectives, have found that the use of L1 in L2 writing has some debilitating effects. Woodall (2002) maintains that the use of L1 can have negative

effects if the writer's L1 and L2 are non-cognate languages. However, van Weijen, Van Vergh, Rijlaarsandsdam and Sanders (2009) maintain that whether or not multilingual writers get beneficial effects depends upon the purpose for which they use their L1s. They report that the use of L1 for self-instruction and meta comments are negative effects upon the text quality they produce. The participants of the study have also reported the use of L1 can have negative effects, particularly through contrastive rhetoric perspective. They maintain that they can write awkward sentences if they use their mother tongues. For instance, sometimes, their L2 sentences are like their L1 sentences. Another most discussed disadvantage is that the use of L1 can be time consuming.

When it comes to the effect of the use of writer's L1 in L2 writing, what kinds of benefits writers get depend upon how they use languages. If they use their native language strategically as an additional cognitive tool it can have positive effects upon their texts, but if they tend to intend to translate all their ideas directly they might have negative effects. One of the fundamental requirements as proposed by linguistic interdependence hypothesis proposed by Cummins (1979) is that learners should have minimum level proficiency level of L2 in order to use their L1s strategically.

### **Chapter conclusion**

This chapter presents that analysis and interpretation of the data collected for the study. The analysis of the data shows that multilingual writers make use of their L1s for various reasons such as generating ideas, reducing cognitive load, finding information related to their topics, finding target language vocabulary items and backtranslating. One of the interesting findings of the study is that multilingual writers' use of L1 automatically comes to play roles even if they do not desire to use it. It is because while

learning a word or concept in a foreign language, “a connection between the words and its object is not direct, as it is in one’s native language; rather it is mediated by the meanings already established in the native language” (Vygotksy, 1986 as cited in Lantolf & Poehner, 2014, p. 68). Regarding the use of L1 in various stages of writing, it is evident that multilingual writers use their L1 for all stages of writing. However, compared to other stages, they mainly use their L1s in pre-writing stages. When it comes to their beliefs regarding to the use of their L1s in L2 writing, they believe that there can be both facilitating such as reducing cognitive load, finding appropriate words and collecting much information required for writing essays, and debilitating effects such as making mistakes or varieties of English and spending much amount of time.

## Chapter V

### Pedagogical Implications, Suggestions for Further Research, and Conclusions

#### Introduction

As the title suggests, this chapter includes pedagogical implications drawn based on the findings of the study, suggestions for the further studies and some concluding remarks. The present study attempted to explore why and how multilingual writers studying at the undergraduate level of a university in the U. S. make use of their L1s in course of writing academic essays, collecting the data from the students enrolled in a Basic Writing course at a state university in the Mid-western part of the US. Additionally, it also aimed to find out the effects of such a use based on the beliefs and perceptions regarding the use of L1s in various stages of writing processes such as pre-writing, while writing and post writing stages. As stated in chapter three, there were eighteen participants from nine different countries who would speak eight different languages. The analysis of the data gathered using open-ended questionnaire and further follow up questions shows that they use their L1s for generating ideas on the topic, planning essays, finding appropriate vocabulary items, online editing and reducing cognitive load. Regarding whether they experienced benefits, the writers' opinions contradict. Some of them believe that the use of their L1s while writing essays in L2 can have some beneficial effects such as clear thoughts on the topic in question, accumulation of enough information required for writing essays, use of appropriate words in the essay, and organization of ideas. Additionally, they also believe that the quality of the texts they produce can also be improved if they use their native languages strategically. Nevertheless, some of the participants also had beliefs and perceptions that the use of

their L1s in L2 writing may not have facilitative effects because of time, fear of making mistakes and time-consuming process as they need to think in their L1 and then translate the thoughts into L2. What follow are some pedagogical implications of the study, suggestions for the further studies and conclusions.

### **Pedagogical Implications**

The findings of the study reveal that multilingual writers consciously and sub-consciously make use of their L1s during various stages of writing. For instance, Seo Jun deliberately made uses of her L1 reading texts available in her native language for seeking the information required for her essay, but Nessa does not like to use her native language, yet she accepted that thinking automatically took place in her native language while she was writing in L2. This information affirms that L2 composing process is a bilingual event. Therefore, it would be worth knowing for teachers on how their students can best utilize their L1s so that their L1s can be a useful resource for acquiring writing competency in L2. Based on the results of the study, the following pedagogical implications can be drawn.

One of the most important implications is that instructors of L2 basic writing courses should provide space for students to use their L1s and prior L1 writing knowledge in the writing stages of planning, outlining, drafting and editing. During the planning phase, the participants of this study reported that they had used their L1s for generating ideas, searching relevant information and outlining their essays. Considering these ways of using L1s while planning, instructors can group or pair their multilingual students who share their L1s so that they can generate and gather sufficient information required for writing essays on the topics on which they are writing. Such a work can be

particularly useful in those classes where students are free to choose the topic of their own interests. Similarly, during the drafting stage, multilingual writers are likely to shuttle between their L1s and L2s for finding appropriate words to express their thoughts. The participants of the study reported that they used their L1s for finding precise words for expressing their thoughts. Therefore, the instructors can advise multilingual writers to use bilingual dictionaries and online tools such as Google Translate and check their words with their peers who speak the same language natively. This study found that this way of using language is perhaps the most widely used purpose of L1 in L2 writing, because the participants who denied the use of their L1s for some reasons also reported that they had used their L1s for finding the appropriate vocabulary items in the target language. While writers are engaged in the discussions using their native language, writing teacher should be tolerant to such activities. However, it does not imply at all that they should always be talking in their native languages, but for carrying out specific tasks and purposes. In the same way, they can ask the students to make notes of what they have read in their native language texts or target language texts in their L1s so that they can have comparatively lesser cognitive load while they are writing. It is because one of the findings of the study was that multilingual writers had used their L1s for reducing their cognitive loads.

Other implication of the study is that multilingual writers should be assigned some reflective writing assignments such as journal writing in which writers are required to reflect critically on their writing processes. Castellanos (2008) reports that students develop a reflective tone towards the topic on which they write their essays. Ho (2003) also states that the use of journal can not only help students develop their language

proficiency and confidence, but also reflective practices on how they carry out certain tasks. Such tasks can provide them with ample opportunities to write about their writing and thereby increase their awareness of how and why they use their L1s for various stages of L2 writing. Additionally, they also become aware of the possible benefits and disadvantages they can have by using their L1s while they are writing their academic essays. Such awareness can make them find some suitable ways of deploying their knowledge and experience of writing in L1s for writing academic texts in their target language. Another benefit of such assignment is that the students do not need to worry about the contents of a writing because they just need to critically narrate what they did in course of writing certain genre-based academic essays. So they build confidence (Mahn, 2008).

One of the findings of the study is that not all multilingual writers are readily willing to use their L1s during L2 writing processes as they are from different academic, cultural and geographical backgrounds. Therefore, writing teachers should neither force nor discourage them to use their L1s, but they should keep the option open as per the convenience of the students. If multilingual writers have the practices of using their L1s as one of their cognitive tools to mediate their thoughts and L2 writing, they should be allowed to do so; rather than recommending the use of the target language exclusively. Conversely, they should not be told to use their native languages either. What's more, they often have different attitudes and motivations toward the use their L1s in ESL setting. Therefore, the truism that multilingual writers use their native languages in various stages of writing should generally be abandoned and the treatment should be made as per individual cases. However, Cummins (2008) is of the opinion that teachers



should “ provide opportunities for students to develop ideas in their stronger language and then work collaboratively towards expressions of these ideas in their less proficient languages” (p. 73). In some cases, there can be writers who might not have experience of writing in their L1s. With this regard, CCCC (2014) statement clearly articulates that “[m]any second language writers are highly literate in their first languages, while others have never learned to write in their mother tongues. Some are even native speakers of languages without a written form” (CCCC Statement on Second Language Writing & Writers, “Part One”, para. 2).

Several studies such as Qi (1998), Woodall (2002), Wang and Wen (2002) and Kim and Yoon (2014) reported that those writers who have low proficiency over their L2 are more likely to switch to their L1s in course of various stages of writing compositions. Cumming (1989) calls such writers as unskilled writers, who often tend to use their L1s for searching vocabulary, checking grammar and generating ideas; rather than organizing and evaluating their ideas. In other words, these are the learners who mostly struggle while they are writing essays in their L2s. Therefore, writing teachers should encourage such writers to continue their writing so that they will not lose their confidence. Consequently, they can sustain their motivation levels toward the acquisition of their writing skills and abilities in their L2s.

Another important pedagogical implication is that the multilingual writers can be asked to think through their native language while they are in the pre-writing stage such as reviewing reading materials for gathering information on the topic in which they write their essays, generating the ideas and organizing the ideas. This indirectly suggests that multilingual writers should be made aware of the fact that their L1s are dominant

cognitive tools with the help of which they can reduce their psychological loads while performing cognitively challenging tasks. Finally, multilingual writers had better be informed that they avoid a sense of fear of committing errors while they use their L1s. It is because errors are not the sins, but the indicators of how much they still need to learn. The other facet of this implication is that the writing instructors should focus on messages or meanings their students want to communicate; rather than focusing on grammatical accuracy. In fact, the writing instructors should give what Mahn and John-Steiner (2008, p. 46) calls “the gift of confidence” to ESL writers by building on their students’ experiences.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

Even though the researcher attempted to explore the use of L1 in L2 writing as effectively as possible, still there existed quite a few limitations as stated in the methodology section of this thesis. Therefore, the suggestions for further research studies have been made taking those limitations into researcher’s considerations. First, if the same type of study is to be carried out in ESL setting, I suggest that the collections of the data using multiple tools can better unveil how L2 writers make use of their prior L1 knowledge as well as writing experiences while they are writing genre-based essays. While studying only a set of open-ended questionnaire and follow up questions were used as the tools for data collections as the tools had to be confined to the type of assignments to be given to the writers. In-depth interview with those writers who would maintain that they had used their L1s might provide detailed information related to the phenomenon under investigation. However, it was not done with the assumption that multilingual writers might feel indirect pressure because the researcher himself was the instructor for

the participants. Next, the inclusion of the analysis of the texts produced by those writers who claimed that they had beneficial effects after they used their L1s can possibly unfold many unknown aspects of L1 use in L2 writing. Finally, categorization of L2 writers in terms of their English language proficiency such as their writing scores in the Accuplacer test before the study was conducted can be very instrumental in the determination of what types of learners are actually inclined to the use of their L1s in L2 writing. Although the participants in the study were broadly labeled as basic writers, there were writers who had various English language proficiency because they were from various contexts in which the study of the English language is not the same. For instance, there were participants who were high school graduates from the US, from the countries where English was their official language and from the countries where English as a foreign language. Nevertheless, the question such as whether high proficiency learners or low proficiency learners switched to their native languages could not be answered.

The next suggestion for the further research is related to the use of different research design than that of the ones used in this study. If an experimental research is carried out considering L1 as an independent variable and their writing products as a dependent variable might reveal exactly whether participants have positive effects upon the texts they create. Similarly, the study of this phenomenon taking data from multiple groups of the same or similar types within the same institutions or inter institutions can also be very useful to determine why and how multilingual writers make utilize their native languages during various stages of writing. In the same way, there can be different results in the product-based approach to teaching writing, for instance, if students are asked to write certain essays within a specified time and then asked to report why and

how they used their L1s while writing in L2 might unfold the same reality through different perspectives.

Finally, carrying out a research taking the essays of various genres such as argumentative, comparison and contrast, narrative can be useful to determine whether the task difficulty determine whether or not students use their native language. As many studies such as Kim and Yoon (2014) and Woodall (2002) carried out in EFL contexts report that the use of L1 depends on the difficulty level of the tasks given to them. As per those studies, the more the tasks are difficult, the more L2 writers deploy their L1 knowledge while they are writing in L2.

### **Conclusions**

This study attempted to explore how and why multilingual writers utilize their L1s while they are composing their academic essays for EAP 136 course, an introductory course offered to the students who are not sufficiently proficiently enough to take composition 101 course. Additionally, I also endeavored to figure out those writers' perceptions regarding the effects of the use of their L1s during the various stages of the process approach to teaching compositions. The findings of the study drawn based on the data collected using open-ended questionnaire and audio responses of few further follow up questions show that some of the writers use their L1s extensively; whereas others use them strategically. However, some of them deny the use of their L1s for their strong instrumental motivation toward learning English for improving their English. Those participants who reported that they would use their L1s were found to have been using their L1s for idea generations, structuring their essays, reducing cognitive load, searching target language words and searching for the content information required for writing

essays. Another important finding of the study is that some writers opine that they have benefits such as they can make comprehensive plans, organize their ideas well in their essays, etc., but some of them do not see any advantages arguing that the use of L1 can cause grammar mistakes, investment of more time and delays in the acquisition of English.

One of the interesting things is that even those who deny the use of their L1s in composing processes believe that the use of their L1s for finding vocabulary items can be beneficial. These are the participants who have their prior education in the US or in those contexts where English is either their official language or language of instructions in schools. Additionally, this group of participants also include those writers who have studied in the intensive English language program for at least one semester in one of the universities in the US. However, the majority of the multilingual writers who participated in the study were found to have used their L1s for various purposes.

For many multilingual writers composing essays in English is a bilingual event, because they are likely to use their L1s consciously or subconsciously while writing academic essays as they tend to view their L2 through the perspectives of their L1s. This fact can be deduced from Nessa's remarks regarding the use of her L1 (French) while composing essays in English. She says that she stops using her first language while writing an essay because it makes her waste of time, and sometimes it is difficult for her to clearly translate her ideas into English. Therefore, she often attempts to think directly in English even if few ideas come to her mind in her native language.

Finally, based on one of the findings of the study it can be said that the multilingual writers who are enrolled in the undergraduate levels at US universities bring

their experience of writing in various contexts in different languages. Certainly, along with their experiences of their writing, they do bring their writing traditions that differ language to language. Therefore, multilingual classrooms in the US university contexts are the pluralistic sites in which we can observe linguistic, cultural and ideological differences. Such differences as Canagarajah (2011) claims should be taken as resources rather than deficits. Therefore, different linguistic practices in which students are knowingly and unknowingly involved while constructing their academic discourses should be taken as cognitive means to achieve academic ends.

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## Appendices

### Appendix I: Participant Consent Form

Dear Student,

My name is Lal Rana. I am a Teaching Assistant in the English Department at Minnesota State University Mankato and your current EAP 136-01 instructor. As a current EAP 136-01 student, you are invited to participate in a research study titled *The Effects of Prior L1 Genre Knowledge on L2 Academic Writing: A Case of Multilingual Undergraduates in a Basic Writing Course*. This research seeks to understand the effects of multilingual undergraduates' prior first language (L1) genre knowledge on the development of their second language (L2) academic writing in a basic writing course.

If you choose to participate in this study, you will not be expected to complete any additional tasks beyond those required for EAP 136-01. I am seeking your consent to use your class assignments in my research.

Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw from the study at any time. The decision whether or not to participate will not affect your relationship with Minnesota State University, Mankato, and refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits. You can withdraw from the study at any time by contacting the Faculty PI, Dr. Henderson Lee, at [sarah.henderson-lee@mnsu.edu](mailto:sarah.henderson-lee@mnsu.edu) or (507)-389-1359.

The potential risks you may encounter as a participant do not exceed those experienced in everyday life. There are no direct benefits to participating in this study, as participants are only giving permission for their completed course requirements to be used as data. The findings of this study, however, will inform basic writing pedagogies, particularly for undergraduate multilingual writers.

Consent forms will be collected by the Faculty PI, Dr. Henderson Lee, and kept in a locked file cabinet in her office (AH 229 C) until the end of the semester. Because I am in the role of both instructor and researcher, I will not have access to the consent forms until all final grades have been posted. At no time during the semester will I know whether or not you decided to participate in this study. After grading is completed, all collected data will be kept in a locked file cabinet or on a password protected computer. In dissemination of this research, pseudonyms will be used to ensure confidentiality of participants. All consent forms and collected data will be retained for a minimum of three years before being destroyed, as per federal regulations.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact Dr. Henderson Lee at [sarah.henderson-lee@mnsu.edu](mailto:sarah.henderson-lee@mnsu.edu) or (507)-389-1359. If you have any questions about rights of research participants, please contact Dr. Barry Ries, Administrator of the Institutional Review Board, at [barry.ries@mnsu.edu](mailto:barry.ries@mnsu.edu) or (507) 389-1242.

If you would like more information about the specific privacy and anonymity risks posed by data stored online, please contact the Minnesota State University, Mankato Information and Technology Services Help Desk (507-389-6654) and ask to speak to the Information Security Manager.

Initials: \_\_\_\_\_

A copy of this letter will be provided for you to keep. If you are willing to participate in this study, please initial the bottom of the first page and sign the second page before returning it to Dr. Henderson Lee. Your signature indicates that you are at least 18 years of age, and you have read and understand the information above and willingly agree to participate. Thank you for your consideration.

Your name (printed): \_\_\_\_\_

Your signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**MSU IRBNet LOG #: 1105429**

**Date of MSU IRB approval: 08-08-2017**

## Appendix II: Guiding Questions for Journal 1

### Guiding questions for reflections

**Answer each of the following question separately. Be as informative and detailed as possible.**

1. When did you learn to write “cauae and effect” essays/texts in your first language? If not in your language course, in which subject did you learn (e.g., science or social studies)?
2. Describe your experience of writing “cauae and effect” essays/texts in your first language? (Focus on how brainstorming, collecting information required for the essay, outlining, drafting, editing and finalizing.)
3. How did you use your first language knowledge of “cauae and effect” essays/texts to write the “cause and effect” essay in EAP 136?
4. How did you use your first language at various stages of the writing process of “cauae and effect” (e.g., brainstorming, outlining and drafting)?
5. What effects (advantages or disadvantages) did you have when you used your prior first language knowledge of writing?

## Appendix III: Guiding Questions for Journal 2

### Guiding questions for reflections

**Answer each of the following question separately. Be as informative and detailed as possible.**

1. When did you learn to write “comparison and contrast” essays/texts in your first language? If not in your language course, in which subject did you learn (e.g., science or social studies)?
2. Describe your experience of writing “comparison and contrast” essays/texts in your first language? (Focus on how brainstorming, collecting information required for the essay, outlining, drafting, editing and finalizing.)
3. How did you use your first language knowledge of “comparison and contrast” essays/ texts to write the “comparisona contrast” essay in EAP 136?
4. How did you use your first language at various stages of the writing process of “comparison and contrast” (e.g., brainstorming, outlining and drafting)?
5. What effects (advantages or disadvantages) did you have when you used your prior first language knowledge of writing?

### Appendix IV: Guiding Questions for Journal 3

#### Guiding questions for reflections

**Answer each of the following question separately. Be as informative and detailed as possible.**

1. When did you learn to write “problem and solution” essays/texts in your first language? If not in your language course, in which subject did you learn (e.g., science or social studies)?
2. Describe your experience of writing “problem and solution” essays/texts in your first language? (Focus on how brainstorming, collecting information required for the essay, outlining, drafting, editing and finalizing.)
3. How did you use your first language knowledge of “problem and solution” essays/ texts to write the “comparisona contrast” essay in EAP 136?
4. How did you use your first language at various stages of the writing process of “problem and solution” (e.g., brainstorming, outlining and drafting)?
5. What effects (advantages or disadvantages) did you have when you used your prior first language knowledge of writing?

#### **Appendix IV: Some Sample Follow up Questions**

1. In your reflection, you have mentioned that you use your native language while writing essays in English. Could you tell me how and why you used your native language while writing essay in English?
2. While writing reflection, you have stated that you don't like to use your native language. Could you tell me some possible reasons?
3. You have said that you use your prior experience of writing essays in your native language. What benefits did you get after using it? Give some specific examples.
4. What benefits do you think you have got after reading your native language texts related to your topic of the essay?
5. You have said that you used your native language for finding vocabulary. Can you be specific how you actually used your native language to find words in English?
6. You have mentioned that you have experience of writing in your native language (French/ Japanese/Korean/ Nepali). How did you use that experience while writing comparison and contrast essay?