

EXPERIMENTAL STUDY: THE WRITING PROCESSES  
OF INTERMEDIATE/ADVANCED FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
LEARNERS IN THEIR FOREIGN AND  
NATIVE LANGUAGES<sup>1</sup>

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this article is to report on the findings of our experimental study conducted with freshmen students of English of the English Dept. in Poznań, Poland, whose writing of two compositions, one in their native and one in their foreign language, we observed for identification and measurement of the stages, substages and phases of the writing process.

Initial encouragement to conduct this study has come to us from the reading of reports of numerous studies carried out in the U.S.<sup>2</sup> in the past 15 years to investigate the writing processes of college and high school students. In order to gather as much revealing information as possible, we have decided to observe and analyze the writing processes of a randomly selected group of students and then, if possible, to identify among them good and poor writers, and analyze and describe their writing processes.

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<sup>1</sup> This is a revised version of the paper read at the 21st International Conference on Contrastive Linguistics held in Białejewsko, Poland. We would like to take this opportunity to thank Professor Waldemar Marton of the English Dept. of Adam Mickiewicz University for his valuable comments on the first version of this paper. His kind help has been most encouraging. Needless to say, the remaining flaws are our own.

<sup>2</sup> Janet Emig's (1971) case study of the writing process of 8 senior high school students gave impetus to at least a dozen replications and duplications of her experimental observation, of which we would like to mention those of Charles Stallard (1974), Mina Shaughnessy (1977), Sandra Perl (1979), and Sharon Pianko (1979a, 1979b).

Another source of encouragement was for us the lack of any reports of studies conducted on students of English as a second or foreign language. Likewise, we have not come across any study comparing students' writing in their native and foreign languages<sup>3</sup>. We engaged in our project to fill this gap.

Finally, since we are professionally involved in the teaching of composition skills to intermediate and advanced students of English as a foreign language, we needed verification for our strong belief that since our students are advanced enough in their foreign language to be able to express their thoughts and feelings as well as describe and explain reality in it, the findings of research as to how to teach writing to native speakers of English are applicable to those of our students who are entering the stage of near-native proficiency in English.

The project on which we report here has been preceded by a series of pilot studies<sup>4</sup> which helped us to work out the most effective and reliable procedure of gathering data.

Our report consists of the presentation of our objectives, subjects of our experiment, its procedure, sources of data, discussion of results including questionnaire analysis, and finally conclusions and implications.

#### OBJECTIVES OF THE EXPERIMENT

1. To observe, describe and compare the writing processes of intermediate/advanced foreign language learners (further on referred to as I/AFL's) in their native and foreign languages (further on referred to as NL and FL).
2. To find whether there is a correlation between the quality of writing in one's NL and FL.
3. To compare the writing processes of I/AFL "skilled" and "unskilled" student writers — both in their FL and NL.
4. By means of 1—3 to show that the findings of research on the writing processes of native composition students and on teaching composition skills to these students apply to AFL's.
5. To find whether there is a correlation between writing apprehensiveness and the quality of writing for both NL and I/AFL student writers.
6. To find whether there is a correlation between high school instruction in writing and the quality of writing of both NL and I/AFL student writers.

<sup>3</sup> We realize of course that reports of such studies may have been published; we are, however, unaware of their existence.

<sup>4</sup> Suggested to us by Dr. Henryk Krzyzanowski of the English Dept. of Adam Mickiewicz University, whom we would like to thank most sincerely for a number of valuable comments which have greatly helped us in the preparation of our experiment.

#### SUBJECTS OF THE EXPERIMENT

1. 21 freshmen of the English Dept. of Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, Poland; all native speakers of Polish, selected at random. Subjects' FL proficiency may be briefly described as follows: ability to receive in English all instruction in theory of literature, English literature and English linguistics; ability to read and understand literary and academic English; ability to communicate in English their thoughts and feelings as well as to describe reality, although often in a way falling short of the native speaker's performance.
2. Skilled writers — those of the 21 students whose Polish and English compositions have received one of the top 3 grades of the holistic scale of evaluation.
3. Unskilled writers — those of the 21 students whose Polish and English compositions have received one of the bottom 3 grades of the holistic scale of evaluation.

#### PROCEDURE

Each student wrote two descriptive compositions, each on a different day, on comparable topics — one in Polish, one in English<sup>5</sup>. They were then observed by the investigators for the variables discussed below. After the completion of each writing session they were asked to fill out interview questionnaires concerning their assignments. After the completion of both writing sessions each student was asked to fill out a history interview questionnaire. After all compositions had been written and all questionnaires filled out, two trained evaluators graded all the papers according to the holistic scale of evaluation used in our Department. The authors of papers remained anonymous for graders as their names were coded and the authors themselves were unknown to graders. Next, all the papers and questionnaires were analyzed for the variables discussed below. Finally, those papers that received one of the top 3 grades from both graders were grouped as written by skilled writers, and those that received one of the bottom 3 grades from both graders were grouped as written by unskilled writers. At this point we were ready to carry out our objectives.

#### SOURCES OF DATA

1. Observational checklist.
2. Analysis of the written products.

<sup>5</sup> Two English topics to choose from: "Have you ever met a truly wicked person?", and "Describe your future spouse"; Two Polish topics to choose from: "Have you ever met a truly noble person?", and "Your ideal roommate".



3. Interview questionnaires concerning compositions written during the experiment.
4. History interview questionnaires.<sup>6</sup>

### RESULTS

1. Chart I presents the stages, substages and phases of the writing processes of I/AFLL's in their NL and FL.
2. Chart II presents the stages, substages and phases of the writing processes of skilled and unskilled I/AFLL's in their NL and FL.
3. Chart III presents the distribution of grades. (All charts in the Appendix).

### DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

#### 1. Writing Processes of I/AFLL's in Their NL and FL

The first observation that we would like to make is that the writing process of FLL's consists of the same stages irrespective of whether they write in their NL or FL. Most stages, substages and phases are taken by all subjects, a few are employed only by some; there is, however, no stage or substage of the writing process which would be taken systematically by most subjects in one language and avoided in the other. In this sense the writing processes in the FL differ from the writing processes in the NL only in the employment of the phase of consulting dictionaries, which is much more often resorted to when subjects write in their FL, a natural phenomenon at their stage of FL proficiency.

Chart I reveals that there are basically no significant differences between the subjects' writing processes in their NL and FL. It seems to us that all the differences that we found can easily be explained, as most of the differences go in one direction:

- 1) Time of PRE-WRITING was slightly longer when our subjects were writing in their NL — probably because students were surprised at being asked to write a composition in their NL, for in the 6 months preceding the experiment they had been asked to write compositions in their FL only.
- 2) Actual writing time within WRITING, time of Composing within WRITING, number of rescannings during Composing, RE-WRITING time of those who rewrote their first drafts, time of composing within RE-WRITING, number of pauses during Composing of RE-WRITING, actual writing time of Composing during RE-WRITING, total time of actual writing, number of words, and actual writing rate of the finished product

<sup>6</sup> Because of space limitations we are unable to reproduce them here but will be happy to mail them to interested readers.

— are all virtually the same in value for both languages, which supports our original expectation that our subjects' writing processes are basically identical, in particular in the areas of the learners' cognitive ability to actually write equally fast or slow in both languages and to express themselves at the same length in both languages.

- 3) Time of WRITING, total time of the writing process, number of pauses during Composing of WRITING, number of stops within the writing process — were all slightly smaller in value for the NL (by 14–21%), which again proves the homogeneity of the writing process in both languages, with a natural tendency to be only slightly faster, or more efficient, in one's NL — a slightly greater (by 23%) overall writing rate of the finished product in the NL being the consequence.
- 4) Time of Written Planning, number of pauses during Written Planning, Rereading and Major Rewriting within WRITING, number of revisions made during Composing of WRITING, number of rescannings and revisions made during RE-WRITING, total number of revisions during the writing process — were all somewhat smaller in value (by 32–47%) in the subjects' NL, a fact suggesting that the subjects' monitor<sup>8</sup> was utilized a little less often when they were writing in their NL; on the one hand a natural phenomenon in one's NL; on the other, possibly a sign of less care given to a task which in light of the experimental context (investigators being after all the subjects' teachers of English, not Polish) was less probable to affect the subjects' future contacts with the investigators.
- 5) Finally, number of pauses during Rereading and Major Revising of WRITING, time of Rereading and Revising during RE-WRITING were about 2.5 times smaller in value in the subjects' NL, a fact which although seems to increase the probability of our explanation offered in 4. above, is more probably due to the overall paucity of pauses during Rereading and Major Revising of WRITING and due to the small number of subjects who engaged in RE-WRITING at all.

To a considerable extent the differences in value of some variables of the subjects' writing processes may originate from their frequent use of dictionaries when writing in their FL. These frequent dictionary consultations slowed down the students when they were writing in English, thus lengthening the time of Written Planning, Composing during WRITING, the total time of the writing process, as well as contributing to a greater number of stops made during the whole writing process.

<sup>7</sup> We did not observe any occurrences of pausing, rescanning or consulting dictionaries during this substage.

<sup>8</sup> Meant in the sense introduced by Krashen (1981) *Second language acquisition and second language learning*. Oxford: Pergamon Press.



What is the course of this, if not identical, then certainly very similar, writing process?

I. All subjects begin with a relatively short period of PRE-WRITING activities, which last several minutes, and which, as the questionnaires have revealed, center on comprehending what each of the two topics requires of the writer to do, which one to choose, and consequently on some form of mental planning.

II. The next stage, commonly referred to as WRITING, consists of several substages, each of which may be taken repeatedly and each of which is characterized by several behaviors. The whole stage of WRITING may last anywhere from a little over a half hour to a little over 3 hours. WRITING consists of:

1. an optional substage of Written Planning, taken up in our experiment by only one third of participants, which takes anywhere from about 3 minutes up to almost an hour. This substage is a setting of parameters and guidelines for the composition to be written. The longer and the more detailed it tends to be, the more often its authors return to its written product while composing, rereading and revising to make sure that their writing matches their plan, and sometimes to introduce into the plan changes generated in the time of Composing and Rereading. Written Planning consists of 5 recurrent phases (described at length under Composing):
  - a) writing — ranging from a little over 1 minute to almost 20
  - b) pausing — measured in number, ranging from 1 to 49
  - c) rescanning — undertaken 6 times by only one subject
  - d) revising — undertaken once by one subject
  - e) consulting dictionaries — undertaken once by one subject and 13 times by another
2. the substage of Composing is what occurs between the commencement of the first draft and the stopping of its writing. It ranges from below half hour to over two and a half hours, and is itself composed of several recurrent phases:
  - a) writing — the writing of the text of the first draft, measured in time — here ranging from 12 minutes to over an hour.
  - b) pausing — breaking the course of actual writing to generate further meaning and find appropriate linguistic expression for it, to provide diversion, and the like — of varying duration; measured in number, ranging here from 22 to 149.
  - c) rescanning — rereading of a few words or sentences, sometimes of the whole paragraph but never of the entire script; undertaken for the purpose of seeing what has just been written and how it reads; measured in number, ranging here from 16 to 134.

- d) revising — introducing changes in spelling, punctuation, and syntax; making single and multiple word changes as well as paragraph and global organizational changes. Revisions, measured in number, ranging here from 2 to 54, are introduced mostly during rescanning.
  - e) consulting dictionaries — undertaken to check the spelling, meaning, appropriate context and/or synonyms of words; measured in number, ranging here from 0 to 31, conducted mostly when writing in one's FL.
3. the substage of Rereading and Major Revising of the first draft was undertaken by virtually all subjects (only one did not when writing in his NL) and can therefore be treated as common for all writers. It is measured in time, which ranged from a little over 3 minutes to well over 30. During this substage writers reread the entire script to see what they have already accomplished and whether anything, and if so, what remains to be done; to revise the original wording of ideas; eliminate evident errors, and sometimes decide on a conclusion. Within Rereading and Major Revising writers engage into several recurrent phases, not all of them taken commonly;
    - a) rereading — reading of the text, a common phase measured in time, taking writers about 90% of the time of the whole substage
    - b) pausing — measured in number and ranging from 0 to 26
    - c) rescanning — ranging from 0 to 11 in number
    - d) revising — the most common of the optional phases, ranging from 0 to 55 in occurrences
    - e) consulting dictionaries — ranging from 0 to 8 in number (FL only)

Rereading and Major Revising concludes the writing process for many writers, and is only sometimes (in 4 cases) followed by a brief period of contemplation of the finished product.

III. RE-WRITING — a step taken by some students to produce a second draft which may differ from the first draft in the structuring and presentation of some of its ideas, and/or some of its linguistic expression, and/or in some of its syntax, punctuation and spelling. It is usually neater than the first draft. RE-WRITING is measured in time and lasted here from below half hour to over an hour (in our experiment employed approximately by every fifth subject). It is characterized by the following behaviors (substages and phases):

- I. Composing — ranging from below half hour to an hour
  - a) writing — ranging from a quarter of an hour to almost an hour
  - b) pausing — ranging from 11 to 27 in number
  - c) rescanning — ranging from 11 to 41 in number
  - d) revising — ranging from 1 to 14 in number
  - e) consulting dictionaries — ranging from 2 to 14 in number.



2. Rereading and Revising — extending in time from a little over 3 minutes to almost half an hour, encompassing five phases: reading, pausing, rescanning, revising, and consulting dictionaries. When this substage is taken, reading always takes place, and revising is the most common of the other behaviors.

Altogether, from beginning to end, the WRITING PROCESS lasted from about an hour to well over 3 hours (of which overall writing time ranged from below half hour to well over an hour and a half). During this time students made 67 to 284 stops, 2 to 98 revisions, and produced 388 to 1273 words. Their overall writing rate ranged from a little above 3 words per minute to almost 13 words per minute (actual writing rate ranged from 6 to almost 28 words per minute).

An obvious conclusion that can be drawn from the study of the writing processes of our subjects is that one's writing procedure is an extremely individual matter: Some writers are slow, some are fast, most of them take a varying amount of time along the time continuum to produce their compositions; some writers go through all the steps of the writing process in both languages, some take the minimum number of these steps. However varied writing processes may be, they follow a pattern when considered in pairs authored by one subject: Writers slow in English are slow or relatively slow in Polish, those fast in English are fast or relatively fast in Polish; if they plan in English, they tend to plan in Polish; if they are skilled English writers, they are also skilled Polish writers.

## 2. Distribution of Grades

- A 5 students were identified as skilled in English and skilled in Polish (students 2, 4, 14, 17, 19)
- B 4 students were identified as average in English and skilled in Polish (students 1, 3, 11, 21)
- C 3 students were identified as average in English and average in Polish (students 5, 9, 18)
- D 2 students were identified as average in English and unskilled in Polish (students 13, 16)
- E 3 students were identified as unskilled in English and average in Polish (students 6, 7, 15)
- F 4 students were identified as unskilled in English and unskilled in Polish (students 8, 10, 12, 20).

It is worth noting that we have not found a single student writer that would be identified as skilled in one language and unskilled in the other. The majority of students — 12 (57%) have been found to represent the same levels in both languages: they were skilled, average, or unskilled in both languages.

Of the remaining students (groups B, D, E) those average in English were either skilled or unskilled in Polish, those average in Polish were unskilled in English. In this sense we can say that the quality of writing in one language correlates with the quality of writing in the other.

## 3. Writing Processes of Skilled and Unskilled I/AFL's in Their NL and FL

Skilled and unskilled writers behave differently during their writing processes, which are very similar for a given writer irrespective of the language used.

I. PRE-WRITING. Although *unskilled writers* indicate in their questionnaires that during this stage they did some planning, it must have been rather some form of unstructured consideration of the topic, as in the questionnaire they admit they did not follow any pre-conceived plan when writing but planned as they wrote, proceeding by writing down what came to their mind and seemed appropriate. They did not know at the beginning of their writing what in essence they wanted to say. Interestingly enough, although their pre-writing activities were less "fruitful" than those of skilled writers, they lasted about 50% longer. *Skilled writers*, on the other hand, must have spent their pre-writing time planning the essence of their compositions as all of them<sup>9</sup> admitted in the questionnaire that before putting pen to paper they knew in essence what they wanted to say in their compositions; writing their descriptions they proceeded either solely by carrying out their plan or by executing their pre-conceived plan, occasionally writing down what came to their mind as they wrote but only when it fitted their plan.

II. WRITING. Polish time is virtually identical for both groups of subjects, English time is slightly longer for unskilled writers.

1. Written Planning is definitely uncharacteristic of *unskilled writers*. Out of 4 subjects identified as unskilled, only one planned when writing in his NL (and only for 30% of the average time of planning observed here) but in the questionnaire he admitted that he had done most of his planning during writing, that he had had only some of his description in mind before beginning to compose and that he wrote partly by carrying out his plan and partly by writing down what came to his mind and seemed appropriate. Characteristically enough, his plan takes up only two lines whereas the written plans of skilled writers take up the whole page. Written Planning is definitely characteristic of *skilled writers*: 3 of the 5 skilled writers planned this way in English ( $\frac{1}{3}$  more than the average planning time and 4 times the planning time of the unskilled writer), 2 of these 3 planned this way also in Polish

<sup>9</sup> With the exception of one subject when she was writing about the qualities of her grandfather; however, the nature of the topic suggests that she must have known in essence what she wanted to say about him as he was — after all — her grandfather.



(more than the average planning time). If skilled writers engaged in written planning, it took them about  $\frac{1}{5}$  of the total writing time. The questionnaires of skilled writers reveal that they proceed by carrying out their written or mental plans.

2. Composing in their FL takes *unskilled writers* approximately  $\frac{1}{3}$  more time than it takes *skilled writers*, mainly because unskilled writers pause more often (about  $\frac{1}{3}$  more) rescan more often (by more than  $\frac{1}{2}$ ), consult dictionaries more often (by  $\frac{3}{4}$  more) and introduce twice as many revisions. All in all, unskilled writers may be considered hesitant composers when writing in their FL; in terms of revisions the same is true of their composing in the NL (again they revised more than twice as much as skilled writers).

3. Rereading and Major Revising. The hesitancy that *unskilled writers* exhibit during Composing is also observable when they reread and revise their FL first drafts. This substage takes them almost twice as long as it takes *skilled writers*: They introduce about 50% more revisions, consult dictionaries twice more often, rescan almost 3 times more often and pause 4 times more often. When they proceed in their NL, however, this hesitancy is drastically reduced.

III. RE-WRITING is definitely uncharacteristic of *unskilled writers*: Only one of them produced a second draft when writing in his FL. However, careful analysis of his 2 drafts has revealed that the second draft differed very little from the first draft. A total of 16 revisions were made, only 4 of rhetorical nature. This second draft received the lowest grade from both graders. Re-writing is more characteristic of *skilled writers*: 2 of the 5 skilled writers produced a second draft when writing in their FL and one of these two also produced a second draft in her NL. Careful analysis of the first and second drafts of skilled writers has revealed that their second drafts differed significantly from the original drafts: on the average 35 revisions were introduced (more than twice as many as in the case of the unskilled writer) almost 15 of which were of rhetorical nature (almost 4 times as many as in the case of the unskilled writer). This time, these second drafts received the highest grades from both graders.

Passing on to general observations concerning the writing processes of both groups of students, *unskilled writers* take somewhat less time (about  $\frac{1}{5}$  less) actually writing throughout the whole writing process, producing however somewhat longer compositions (on the average by some 8% in English and some 22% in Polish), an observation leading us to the conclusion that they are somewhat less careful writers. Unskilled writers interrupt their writing process on the whole about 25% more often than *skilled writers*, introducing about 20% more revisions. This observation leads us to the conclusion that they are somewhat more hesitant writers. The most revealing difference between the respective writing processes of skilled and unskilled writers, however,

comes from a careful analysis of the nature of revisions that they made throughout their writing processes. Unskilled writers make about 0 more low level revisions (i.e., mechanical, grammatical and lexical), irrespective of whether they write in their NL or FL. On the rhetorical level, on the other hand, unskilled writers make 10.5 times fewer revisions when writing in their FL, and no rhetorical revisions when writing in their NL — when 1 out of every 4 revisions made by skilled writers improved the global organization or the rhetoric of their compositions. Concluding, unskilled writers hinder their writing processes by introducing numerous changes which have little if any bearing on the total effect that their writing makes on their readers; skilled writers, on the other hand, revise somewhat less often, concentrating on organizational and structural changes that greatly affect the reception of their writing by their audience.

It is finally worth noting that word density of the writing of skilled and unskilled writers is identical. In both cases there is a considerable increase (by over 0) of word density in their NL compositions, an entirely understandable phenomenon in the light of the subjects' relatively low degree of vocabulary sophistication in their FL. This finding seems to strongly support our general belief that linguistic aspects of writing (one of which is the vocabulary used) do not affect the reader's reception of a given piece of prose as much as rhetorical aspects do (unless linguistic errors are so gross that they hinder communication).

#### 4. Questionnaire Analysis of Skilled and Unskilled Writers

The answers that the student writers entered in the questionnaires have already been mentioned when the subjects' pre-writing activities have been discussed. Now we would like to present our information on the writers admitted Sense of Purpose, Audience Awareness, Course of Writing, Writing Apprehensiveness, Writing Habits and History of Writing Instruction.

*Sense of Purpose.* *Unskilled writers* either had a weak sense of purpose, i.e., they were preoccupied exclusively with linguistic aspects of writing, or a very unfocused, self-centered sense of purpose, i.e., writing their assignments they wanted to investigate for themselves what they knew about the topic rather than to relay a personal message about the topic to their readers. Two out of the *skilled writers* had in both languages a stronger sense of purpose than their unskilled counterparts: their questionnaire statements went along the lines of "I wanted to create an explicit picture of an honest or wicked person, or of an ideal spouse or roommate, expressed in grammatically, stylistically and lexically attractive language." (This preoccupation with form weakened somewhat in our understanding their sense of purpose: some por-



tion of their concentration instead of being focused on the reader's appropriate reception of their viewpoint, went to linguistic deliberations.) Three of the five skilled writers had a very clear sense of purpose when writing in both languages: their questionnaire pronouncements went along the lines of "I wanted my reader to clearly and explicitly see what features are in my opinion essential for someone to be considered an honest or a wicked person, or an ideal spouse or roommate."

*Audience Awareness.* *Unskilled writers* either did not remember that someone would be reading their compositions or had a very vague and unclear idea that someone would do it (someone who would be looking for linguistic errors). *Skilled writers*, on the other hand, either wrote for specific readers (three of the five) or claimed that they did not remember that someone would be reading their writing (two of the five)—in these two cases, however, when answering the question about the reasons for their revisions they consistently admitted that they wanted either to make their writing as clear as possible, or to eliminate redundant sentences from their paragraphs, both statements presupposing an audience reading the subjects' prose.

*The Writers' Admitted Course of Writing.* *Unskilled writers* admitted that they stopped during writing first and foremost to plan what to write next, then to check the grammatical form of their sentences, to consult the dictionary or to rescan (but not very far back). One writer stopped to divert her attention from the assignment, another to relate the content of her composition to herself. When rescanning, they did not go far back, the currently written sentence or the preceding one or two sentences being the norm. Only one writer admitted that he read the whole preceding paragraph. *Unskilled writers* revised for handwriting, punctuation, spelling, grammar and vocabulary; only one subject admitted once joining two paragraphs into one. When revising, they proceeded by way of checking whether what they had written sounded "right" — when they encountered expressions that in their opinion did not sound "right", they replaced them with new versions which for them sounded better. For one unskilled writer revisions were a burden. *Skilled writers*, on the other hand, reported that they stopped first and foremost to consult their written or mental plans to remind themselves what was to come next; next they stopped to see what they had already written to make sure that what was to come would be coherent with what had been written; to think of the best way of carrying out their written or mental plan; to check the logic of their sentences, and finally to revise them so that grammatical conjunctions expressed real connections between ideas. Rescanning, they read preceding paragraphs and the paragraphs that they were currently producing. When revising they thought mainly about making their prose as clear and understandable as they possibly could, eliminating redundant sentences from their paragraphs; they introduced minor changes into their plans. As to linguistic revisions, they admitted that when writing

the first draft they concentrated on representing their opinions of the topic in the clearest way possible; they put off correcting linguistic errors until their second draft. Among reasons given for revisions the two most common were: following the plan, and making sure that they communicated well what they had intended to say.

*Writing Apprehensiveness.* Two of the *unskilled writers* admitted no writing anxiety but two turned out to be high apprehensives. As could be expected, not a single *skilled writer* showed a trace of writing apprehensiveness.

*Writing Habits and Exposure to the Writing of Others.* *Unskilled writers* admit in the questionnaire that they either have never written for pleasure or kept a diary, or that they rarely do it and then in only one of the two languages. They engage in either no or a minimal amount of self-initiated writing, and have been exposed to some — though usually little — writing at home and among peers.

*Skilled writers*, on the other hand, either write for pleasure and keep a diary in both languages, or at least do it extensively in one language. They engage in a considerable amount of self-initiated writing, and have been exposed to a lot of writing at home and among peers. A significant difference between these two groups can be seen in their understanding of the qualities of writing. *Unskilled writers* mentioned here communicativeness, grammaticality, appropriate vocabulary, proper understanding of the topic by the writer, avoidance of monotony in style (with the exception of the first quality, all these are basically linguistic standards). *Skilled writers* enumerated here structuring of ideas before beginning to write, comprehensibility of the writer's ideas by the reader, adequate answering of the topic, precision and explicitness in the formulation of ideas (all of which are basically rhetorical standards).

*History of Writing Instruction.* Neither skilled nor unskilled writers remember having frequent writing instruction in their high schools in any of the two languages. In the *unskilled writers'* opinion linguistic instruction in English prevailed, followed by linguistic instruction in Polish, only then came rhetorical instruction in English and Polish (but judged as received sometimes, rarely or never). *Skilled writers* remember that rhetorical instruction in Polish prevailed, followed by rhetorical instruction in English; the least emphasized was linguistic instruction, with both languages treated in approximately the same manner.

#### CONCLUSIONS — IMPLICATIONS

1. The writing process in one's FL does not differ from the writing process in one's NL. There is a certain increase in the number of pauses, revisions and dictionary consultations made when writing in the FL, which we do not attribute to the fundamental differences between the respective writing pro-



cedures (as we believe that they do not exist) but rather to the relatively low proficiency in English of our subjects, who were — after all — only freshmen and not junior or senior English majors.

2. The ability to write well seems to be independent of the particular language one is composing in — it depends more on the writer's mastery of what we consider to be rhetorical skills (acquisition of the sense of purpose and audience in writing; willingness to produce a plan which is a product of hierarchical structuring of previously generated ideas and then composing by way of following the plan; concentration on eliminating from the text structural and logical inadequacies at the time of rereading and revising).

3. As to the course of the writing process itself, our study has confirmed some but rejected other observations made about the writing procedures of skilled and unskilled student writers by other investigators (cf. Stallard 1974, Pianko 1979a, 1979b, Shaughnessy 1977, Perl 1979 — for a summary of this research see L. Skibniewski 1985). In contrast to the findings of these investigators, in our study *skilled writers* did not spend more time pre-writing than unskilled writers but they did think much more about their purpose and audience at this stage. Our skilled writers did not spend more time writing (in particular, they did not pause, rescan or revise more frequently) than unskilled writers. They did, however, concentrate on executing their mental or written plan proceeding by filling in with substance general guidelines laid out before beginning to write. Skilled writers did not revise more frequently but they revised definitely much more extensively than the unskilled writers, concentrating on global and rhetorical changes, i.e., they were large scale revisers. Contrary to what was found by most researchers, in our study *unskilled writers* spent more time pre-writing but they did not use this time to plan, or consider their purpose or audience. They revised more frequently but solely lexicon, syntax, spelling and punctuation. They hunted for grammatical errors and thus they proved to be ineffective small scale revisers.

4. Writing apprehensiveness seems to correlate with the quality of writing. We identified three high apprehensives—two of those turned out to be unskilled writers in both languages and one — unskilled in Polish and average in English. We identified six low apprehensives—five of whom turned out to be skilled writers in both languages, and one — skilled in Polish and average in English. Our questionnaire placed all the other subjects in the middle of the continuum extending from low to high apprehensiveness.

5. Past writing instruction seems to correlate with the quality of writing in the sense that all of those who remembered having received primarily rhetorical instruction in both languages or in their NL<sup>10</sup> proved to be skilled

<sup>10</sup> Which suggests a possibility of transfer of rhetorical skills from one language to another.

writers in both or at least in their NL. All those who remembered receiving little or no rhetorical instruction but an overwhelming amount of linguistic instruction, proved to be unskilled in both languages or unskilled in one and average in the other.

6. When we teach writing to I/AFL's we should attempt to fill the gap that separates them from near-native competence in a given language, but our primary goal should be to continually prompt our students to take all the stages, substages and phases of the writing process characteristic of skilled writers, i.e., we should insist that they:

- a) reflect on their purpose in writing a given assignment and make it the driving force of all their writing stages;
- b) keep their audience in mind throughout the whole writing process, i.e., plan, compose, and revise for them;
- c) generate ideas for writing and structure them hierarchically before beginning to write the text proper;
- d) when writing, proceed by filling with substance the previously constructed plan;
- e) when revising, concentrate first on eliminating structural and logical weaknesses and making their prose clear, explicit and appropriate for their audience, and only then on polishing their language.

## APPENDIX

Sub- jects	Grader I		Grader II		Sub- jects	Grader I		Grader II	
	English	Polish	English	Polish		English	Polish	English	Polish
1	3	4	3+	4	12	3	3	3	3
2	4	4+	4	4+	13	3+	3	4	3
3	3+	4+	3+	4	14	4	4	4+	4+
4	4	4	4+	4	15	3	3+	3	4
5	3+	4	4	4	16	3+	3	3+	2+
6	3	3+	2+	3+	17	4	4	4+	4
7	3	3+	3	4	18	3+	4	4	3+
8	3	3	3	3	19	4	4+	4+	5
9	4	3+	3+	3+	20	3	3	3	3
10	2+	3	2	3	21	3+	4+	3+	4+
11	4	4	3+	4					



Stages of the Writing process	Chart I				Chart II				
	All subjects		Unskilled writers		Skilled writers		Unskilled writers		
	English	Polish	English	Polish	English	Polish	English	Polish	
I PRE-writing variable: time (mean)	3 min 6 sec 100% min 45 sec max 6 min 32 sec 2 lowest 3 out of 5 highest	4 min 23 sec 141% min 45 sec max 12 min = 2 lowest = 3 out of 4 highest	2 min 20 sec 75%	2 min 52 sec 92.5%	3 min 33 sec 114.5%	2 min 20 sec 75%	2 min 52 sec 92.5%	3 min 33 sec 114.5%	4 min 14 sec 136.5%
II Writing variable: time (mean)	97 min 20 sec 100% min 37 min 30 sec max 184 min 10 sec 5 out of 6 lowest 3 out of 4 highest	80 min 25 sec 83% min 48 min 55 sec max 132 min 50 sec = 5 out of 6 lowest = 2 out of 4 highest	95 min 44 sec 98%	79 min 13 sec 81%	111 min 40 sec 115%	95 min 44 sec 98%	79 min 13 sec 81%	111 min 40 sec 115%	87 min 11 sec 80%
1. Written Planning variable: time	9 out of 21 16 min 6 sec 100% min 3 min 20 sec max 54 min 40 sec 5 out of 9	6 out of 21 9 min 9 sec 57% min 2 min 41 sec max 17 min = 5 out of 6	3 out of 5 21 min 16 sec 132%	2 out of 5 15 min 45 sec 98%	Noone	3 out of 5 21 min 16 sec 132%	2 out of 5 15 min 45 sec 98%	Noone	1 out of 4 4 min 54 sec 30%
a) writing time	7 min 3 sec 100% min 1 min 41 sec max. 19 m. 39 s.	5 min 44 sec 81% min 1 min 11 sec max. 12 m. 30 s.	9 min 1 sec 128%	9 min 31 sec 135%	4 min 54 sec 19%	9 min 1 sec 128%	9 min 31 sec 135%	4 min 54 sec 19%	4 min 54 sec 19%
b) pausing number	12.9 100% min 1 max 49	7.5 58% min 4 max 13	18.3 142% min 3 max 49	9 70% min 5 max 13	4 31%	18.3 142% min 3 max 49	9 70% min 5 max 13	4 31%	4 31%
c) rescanning	one subject: 6 times	noone	6	—	—	6	—	—	—
d) revising	one subject: once	noone	1	—	—	1	—	—	—
e) consulting dictionary	one subject once one subject 13 times	noone	1	—	—	1	—	—	—

2. Composing variable: time (mean)	79 min min 25 min max. 152 min. 6 out of 7 lowest 3 out of 6 highest	100% 71 min 6 sec min 42 min 3 sec max. 123 m. 49 s. = 6 lowest = 3 out of 4 highest	72 min 22 sec 92%	66 min 40 sec 84%	96 min 46 sec 122%	72 min 22 sec 92%	66 min 40 sec 84%	96 min 46 sec 122%	69 min 12 sec 88%
a) writing time	38 min 48 sec min 12 min max. 61 m. 15 s. 2 out of 4 lowest 2 out of 5 highest	100% 40 min 27 sec min 24 min 55 sec max. 64 m. 31 s. = 2 lowest = 2 out of 4 highest	40 min 5 sec 103%	31 min 38 sec 82%	39 min 45 sec 102%	40 min 5 sec 103%	31 min 38 sec 82%	39 min 45 sec 102%	38 min 51 sec 100%
b) pausing number	71 min 22 3 out of 5 lowest 4 out of 5 highest	100% 61 min 25 max 114 = 3 out of 4 lowest = 4 out of 6 highest	53.2 75%	42.8 60%	85.75 120%	53.2 75%	42.8 60%	85.75 120%	58.25 82%
c) rescanning number	58 min 16 2 out of 5 lowest 3 out of 5 highest	100% 59.4 min 25 max 100 = 2 out of 3 lowest = 3 out of 5 highest	54.6 94%	57.8 99%	84.25 145%	54.6 94%	57.8 99%	84.25 145%	72.75 125%
d) revising number	20 min 3 7 lowest 2 out of 3 highest	100% 13.3 min 2 max 32 = 7 lowest = 2 out of 4 highest	13.8 69%	7.6 38%	33 165%	13.8 69%	7.6 38%	33 165%	19 95%
e) consulting dictionary	20 out of 21: 13 min 1 max 31	100% 1 out of 21: 2 to check spelling	8.4 65%	noone	15 115%	8.4 65%	noone	15 115%	noone
3. Rereading and Major Revising time	11 min 53 sec min 4 min 22 sec max 32 min 10 sec 4 out of 5 lowest 2 out of 4 highest	100% 20 out of 21 7 min 5 sec min 3 m 22 sec max 18 min 10 sec = 4 out of 7 lowest = 2 highest	10 min 33 sec 89%	7 min 59%	19 min 40 sec 165%	10 min 33 sec 89%	7 min 59%	19 min 40 sec 165%	7 min 46 sec 65%
a) reading	about 90% of the total	time of the whole substage							



Chart II

Stages of the Writing process	Chart I				Chart II			
	All subjects		Unskilled writers		Skilled writers		Unskilled writers	
	English	Polish	English	Polish	English	Polish	English	Polish
b) pausing number	16 out of 21 5.56 min 1 max 26	12 out of 21 2.08 =min 1 max 8	3 out of 4 12 216%	3 out of 4 12 216%	3 out of 4 12 216%	3 out of 4 12 216%	3 out of 4 12 216%	3 out of 4 4 72%
c) rescanning	13 out of 21 4.38 100%	9 out of 21 2.33 53%	3 out of 5 2.3 53%	2 out of 5 1 23%	3 out of 4 6 137%	2 out of 4 1.5 34%	2 out of 4 1.5 34%	noone
d) consulting dictionary	12 out of 21 3 min 1 max 8	2 out of 21 =3 min 2 max 4	3 out of 5 1.7 57%	1 out of 5 4 133%	3 out of 4 4 133%	noone	noone	noone
e) revising number	20 out of 21 11.43 min 2 max 55 7 lowest, 3 highest	17 out of 21 =7.76 min 2 max 20 =7 lowest, 3 highest	10.4 98%	7.7 67%	15.7 137%	9.75 85%	9.75 85%	85%
III. RE-Writing time	6 out of 21 50 min 54 sec min 28 min 50 sec max 69 min 40 sec	3 out of 21 48 min 15 sec =min 41 min 20 sec max 53 min 12 sec	2 out of 5 59 min 25 sec 117%	1 out of 5 53 min 12 sec 105%	1 out of 4 53 min 26 sec 105%	noone	noone	noone
I. Composing time	42 min 58 sec min 25 min 25 sec max 59 min 5 sec	44 min 25 sec min 37 min 25 sec max 49 min 17 sec	44 min 25 sec 103%	49 min 17 sec 115%	49 min 46 sec 116%	noone	noone	noone
a) writing time	35 min 3 sec min 15 min 35 sec max 55 min 40 sec	40 min 6 sec =min 35 min 31 sec max 49 min 7 sec	36 min 47 sec 105%	49 min 17 sec 141%	36 min 46 sec 105%	noone	noone	noone
b) pausing	16.5 min 11 max 27	16.5 min 11 max 22	19.5 118%	noone	19 115%	noone	noone	noone

Chart I

e) rescanning	23.5 min 11 max 41	15.5 min 11 max 20	24.5 104%	17 72%	41 175%	noone	noone	noone
d) consulting dictionary	4.66 min 2 max 14	noone	9 193%	noone	3 43%	noone	noone	noone
e) revising	11.75 min 2 max 17	7.33 min 1 max 16	6 51%	7 60%	5 43%	noone	noone	noone
2. Rereading and revising	5 out of 21: 9 min 31 sec min 3 min 25 sec max 25 min 40 sec	3 out of 21: 3 min 53 sec =min 3 min 50 sec =max 3 min 55 sec	15 min 118%	3 min 55 sec 41%	3 min 40 sec 39%	noone	noone	noone
a) reading	about 90% of the time	of the whole substage						
b) revising	3.2 min 1 max 6	2.3 min 1 max 3	3.5 101%	1 31%	2 62%	noone	noone	noone
Total time of the writing process I+II+III	116 min 58 sec min 60 25 sec max 187 min 4 out of 5 lowest 4 highest	92 min 8 sec min 50 min 45 sec max 141 min 30 sec =4 out of 5 lowest =4 out of 5 highest	122 min 104%	93 min 40 sec 80%	128 min 30 sec 110%	82 min 25 sec 70%	82 min 25 sec 70%	82 min 25 sec 70%
Total time of actual writing in I+II+III	52 min min 27 min 15 sec max 94 min 25 sec 4 out of 5 lowest 2 highest	48 min 38 sec min 27 min 25 sec max 96 min 53 sec =4 out of 6 lowest =2 highest	60 min 12 sec 116%	50 min 14 sec 97%	48 min 58 sec 94%	39 min 16 sec 75.5%	39 min 16 sec 75.5%	39 min 16 sec 75.5%
Total number of stops	164.6 min 88 max 284 2 out of 4 highest 3 lowest	130.9 min 67 max 222 =2 highest =3 out of 4 lowest	154.4 94%	109 66%	192.25 117%	135.5 82%	135.5 82%	135.5 82%



Chart I		Chart II					
		Skilled writers		Unskilled writers			
Stages of the Writing process	All subjects		English	Polish	English	Polish	
	Total number of revisions during the Writing Process	English	Polish	30.2	40%	51.5	83%
34.43 min 10 2 out of 3 lowest 2 highest		21.2 min 2 = 2 lowest = 2 out of 4 highest	87% 13.8	40%	149%	28.75	
Number of words	English	Polish	720	88%	784	107%	
	675 min 388 2 out of 3 lowest 2 highest	661 min 450 = 2 out of 5 lowest = 2 highest	107% 592	88%	116%	723	
Overall writing rate of the finished product	English	Polish	6.4	110%	6.4	103%	
	6.2 min 3.2 3 out of 5 lowest 3 highest	7.6 min 4 = 3 lowest = 3 out of 4 highest	103% 6.8	110%	103%	9.275	
Actual writing rate of the finished product	English	Polish	12.4	86%	17	118%	
	14.4 min 5.9 2 lowest 5 out of 6 highest	14.6 min 6 = 2 lowest = 5 out of 8 highest	86% 13.1	91%	118%	18.7	
		Character of revision		Character of revision			
		English		English		English	
		mech gram		mech gram		mech gram	
		30.8		45		47.7	
		39.8		51.9		52.3	
		29.4		26		2.8	
		%		%		%	
		107%		88%		116%	
		100%		110%		103%	
		100%		101%		130%	
		1273		925		150%	
		12.7		12.8		2.87	
		5 lowest		4 highest		2.87	
		3 highest		4 highest			
		27.7		23.9			
		6 highest		8 highest			
		4.32		4.36			
		4.32		4.36			
		4.32		4.36			

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