Writing skills development in L1 and L2: Perspectives of Croatian learners of English

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Writing skills development in L1 and L2: Perspectives of Croatian learners of English

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Abstract

The acquisition of writings skills does not come naturally, it is a skill that needs to be taught, even in the mother tongue. An important question is whether pupils adopt the acquired practices in the second language once the writing skill is acquired in the first language. The aim of this paper is to compare the process of acquiring writing skills and common practices in L1 (Croatian) and L2 (English) from the student's point of view. The first part of the paper looks into the most important theories concerning the L1/L2 acquisition whilst the second part focuses on the findings of L2 writing theory and research. The third part is the study itself. The approach taken in this study is qualitative, using interviews to question five students, all advanced speakers of English. The analysis of the results suggests that pupils do not get enough instruction for writing in the L2 and therefore rely on the instructions given to them in the mother tongue. The results show that more research in students' perceptions and attitudes towards various aspects of writing is required.

Key words: writing process, L2 writing skills, learner's perceptions

1. Introduction

If the writing process could be examined under a microscope and we could dissect the thinking process that goes on in the mind of a writer or a student, what would the results of such a minutely detailed analysis be? The acquisition of writing skills does not come naturally, or to put it differently, it is a skill that needs to be taught, even in our mother tongue. However, this still raises the question whether we just adopt the acquired practices in the second language once we have acquired this skill in our first language.

In order to teach our students how to write, especially in an L2, we have to be aware of the processes that go on inside their heads while they write. Cumming lists three fundamental aspects of second-language writing: elements of the texts that people create, the composing processes that occur during writing and the sociocultural contexts in which writing takes place (Cumming, 2001). All these aspects must be taken into consideration when teaching students how to write.

There has been a significant amount of research on this topic and important conclusions have been drawn. However, more research from the student's perspective is required. Learning how to write and teaching students how to write should be of the outmost importance. Writing is important as it can develop one's personality and thinking skills, improve communication, and teach a person how to form logical arguments, offer the possibility of contemplating ideas and help prepare for school and job environment. People need to be able to write in order to communicate with other people in their lives. Also, the majority of professional communication is done via writing, especially in today's world (Frydrychova Klimova, 2013). Interestingly enough, Krashen says that we write for two reasons. The first one is to communicate with ourselves and others. The second one is that we write to overcome our problems and to become smarter. We stimulate our own intellectual growth by writing (Krashen, 2014).

The purpose of this thesis is to compare the process of acquiring writing skills in L1 (Croatian) and L2 (English) from the student's point of view. How similar or different is the process of acquiring writing skills in two languages, the L1 and L2? Likewise, do students adopt practices from their skills in L1 writing? What connection is there between writing skills in an L1 and L2? These are the questions that the first part of this paper is focused on. In the second part, the paper aims at presenting the findings of L2 writing theory and research. It also questions the way research into L2 writing should be conducted. The final

part of the paper is the study itself which tries to answer all of the already mentioned questions but from the perspective of a student, taking into account students' attitudes towards writing.

2. The notion of BICS and CALP

How does first language (L1) acquisition differ from second language (L2) acquisition? Primarily, first language acquisition is a process that begins in the early years when babies start to differentiate sounds, words and sentences very quickly. On the other hand, in L2 acquisition learners already have certain L1 knowledge (Altmisdort Gonca, 2016).
Following this, it can be argued that the first language influences the acquisition of a second language. Researchers call this "transfer", "interference" or "cross-linguistic influence" and the notion has been studied a lot.

Due to the cross-lingual relationships Cummins coined the "interdependence hypothesis" which puts forward the idea that at a cognitive level languages are not isolated, they are in fact linked together via a common underlying proficiency (Cummins, 2017). Following this, Cummins suggests the distinction between *basic interpersonal communicative skills,* or BICS, and *cognitive academic language proficiency,* CALP. BICS denotes the conversational fluency in a language whereas CALP is connected to the "students' ability to understand and express, in both oral and written modes, concepts and ideas that are relevant to success in school" (Cummins, 2008, p. 71). CALP evolves through social contact from birth and is set apart from BICS after the early years of education to make apparent the language that pupils attain in school. CALP is strictly connected to the social context of education and for this reason Cummins defines the academic language proficiency as "the extent to which an individual has access to and command of the oral and written academic registers of schooling" (p. 72). The importance of BICS/CALP differentiation for pupils' academic progress lies in the fact that, as shown by research studies by Cummins, educators fuse conversational and academic aspects of English language proficiency which then causes problems for pupils who are studying English as an L2 (Cummins, 2008).

The query is, as Cummins posits, whether there exists a notion of transfer or if each individual possesses fundamental cognitive attributes. However, he concludes that transfer and attributes are "two sides of the same coin" (Jim Cummins, 2017, p. 108). These attributes

are learned and as soon as they are present in the individual's mind, the transfer between languages is possible (Cummins, 2017).

In Cummins' view, L1 and L2 CALP are firmly linked together which would mean that the encouragement of L1 literacy in school should not pose any problem for the development of an L2. If they are taught properly, the languages can augment each other via transfer (Cummins, 1999).

In opposition to reading, speaking and listening, writing is a language skill that is not so easily assessed. The reason why writing is such an arduous task is that it is composed of several components like drafting ideas, content, vocabulary, organization, mechanics, cohesion, revising and editing. (Gonca, 2016). The question is which components of writing a person transfers from their L1 to an L2 and do the two languages in a mind of a one person augment each other or are in fact in conflict. This question is in fact the main goal of transfer research, in other words, being able to explain how the languages in person's mind interact with one another (Jarvis, 2015).

3. Approaches to writing – a historical outline

3.1. Environmentalist approach to writing

Up until the end of the 1960s writing was disregarded in the language learning studies due to the environmentalist ideas which were the dominant thought in regard to learning languages. These thoughts and ideas were grounded in structural linguistics and behaviourist psychology and therefore they viewed language as being similar to speech and illustrated the language learning process as "a mechanical process based on a stimulus-response-reinforcement chain" (Usó-Juan, Martínez-Flor, Palmer-Silveira, 2006, p. 384). Furthermore, writing was regarded as inferior to speech considering that it was seen as just its orthographic representation. It was considered that the proficiency in spoken language and its orthographic conventions foreshadowed the learning of the written language since "discrepancy between speech sounds and orthography could cause interference with the proper learning of speech" (Silva and Matsuda, 2002, as cited in Usó-Juan, Martínez-Flor, Palmer-Silveira, 2006, p. 384). Correspondingly, writing was regarded as a language skill that aids in learning and improving grammatical and vocabulary knowledge which consecutively aids in achieving oral accuracy. What is more, "the task of writing was tightly controlled to prevent errors

caused by first language interference" (Kroll, 2001, as cited in Usó-Juan et al., 2006, p. 384). The teacher's role was to introduce the concepts of accuracy and in that framework a written text was reduced to "a collection of sentences patterns and vocabulary items – a linguistic artefact, a vehicle for language practice" (Silva, 1990, as cited in Usó-Juan et al., 2006, p. 385).

3.2. Innatist approach to writing

Near the end of the 1960s, form became less important and attention was directed to the process of composition. This major shift occurred due to Noam Chomsky's innatist theory, which was set on the belief that children are innately inclined to study languages. This theory was boosted by psycholinguistics and cognitive psychology, which made it evident that children are active instead of passive participants in the language learning process because they deduce rules to examine the way a language works and that is how it became important to know the mental processes of writers (Usó-Juan et al., 2006).

The first researchers to call into question the efficiency of grammar instruction to enhance learners' writing were Braddock, Lloyd-Jones and Schoer (1963) and they also wanted teachers to be included in the investigation of the actual production of writing. Therefore, research shifted towards the writers' internal processes that were focused on the production of the skill of writing.

The first study that acknowledged the shift from product to process was Emig's study from 1971 in which she came to the conclusion that the stages of writing are recursive and creative. The most significant theory, however, was that proposed by Linda Flower and John R. Hayes in 1981. They suggested a cognitive model of recursive writing composed of three crucial elements (Usó-Juan et al., 2006) that are reflected in the three units of the model: the task environment, the writer's long-term memory, and the writing processes. The task environment refers to the rhetorical problem or assignment and ultimately the text produced up until a certain time. The writer's long-term memory includes his or hers knowledge of the topic, audience and writing plans. The last element, that is, the writing processes themselves, refer to the stages of planning, translating and reviewing (Flower and Hayes, 1981). This model was significant because it gave teaching instructions for writing (Usó-Juan et al., 2006).

From then on, researchers started to aim their attention towards the process of writing which was an approach that accentuated personal writing, fluency and the writer's creativity. "In

such a context, writing was viewed as a complex, recursive and creative process which was essentially learned, not taught" (Usó-Juan et al., 2006).

Prompted by such an approach, students were motivated to become active writers or to put it differently, the central role of the teacher was to nurture the learners' creativity and likewise to point them in the right direction in the process of drafting, revising and editing their writing. What is more, this approach considered errors to be normal and rectified in the final stages of writing.

It is important to point out that this was the first time that the written text was considered as an agent for generating thoughts and ideas and not an agent for practicing the grammar and vocabulary of a language (Usó-Juan et al., 2006).

3.3. Writing within an interactionist approach

Due to the interactionist approach to writing and the development of discourse analysis, the sociocultural context of the composing process, which was ignored before, came into focus by the late 1970s and beginnings of the early 1980s. This field of research cannot be connected to a specific school but to a number of approaches that believed that the study of language rises above the sentence level (Usó-Juan et al., 2006).

In linguistics, discourse analysis can be linked with the school of linguistics analyses like formal linguistics (text linguistics) or systemic linguistics (genre analyses). These researches enlarge the scope of the grammatical analyses with the functional objectives.

In the field of text linguistics, the research carried by Eugene O. Winter (1977) and Michael Hoey (1983) was significant because it was an attempt to systematize the diversification of discourse in language teaching by distinguishing three key patterns of textual organization (the problem-solution pattern, the hypothetical-real pattern, the general-particular pattern). Winter and Hoey gave importance to the cognitive approach to writing. According to this approach, writing is not coherent because of the text but because of the readers' previous knowledge of the structure of other kind of texts.

In opposition, regarding systemic linguistics, M. A. K. Halliday (1978) established a systematic way of defining language in regard to its functions within social contexts. What is fundamental in his theory is the notion of *register*, "which is a functional language variation and is analysed on the basis of three variables: *field*, or the social function; *tenor*, or the role of the participants; and *mode*, or what the language is doing" (as cited in Usó-Juan et al.,

2006, p. 387). Halliday's theory symbolized the theoretical premise for present contextual viewpoints on writing (Usó-Juan et al., 2006).

Furthermore, English for specific purposes (ESP) genre research had an enormous impact on L2 writing. This research brought into focus academic and professional genres and strived "to make the recurrent patterns of texts explicit in order to facilitate the task of learning to write for students" (Usó-Juan et al., 2006, p. 388). Swales' research (1990) is the most renowned research in ESP genre analysis. To boot, the significance of the cultural dimension of texts was likewise emphasised by the research area of Contrastive Rhetoric which studied L2 writing by focusing on the cross-cultural research (Usó-Juan et al., 2006).

Due to the text linguistics and contextual approaches, it became apparent that "writing itself was a dynamic, creative and contextualised process of communicating through texts" (Usó-Juan et al., 2006, p. 389). Moreover, what became known is that "writing is not just an individual process but also a social one" (Usó-Juan et al., 2006, p. 389).

Thereupon, writers learned about the importance of context and how language transforms and how it is consecutively altered by the context in which it occurs (Usó-Juan et al., 2006).

4. The most influential approaches in the teaching of writing

The development in the ESL composition had an effect on the development in the teaching of writing to native speakers of English. Nevertheless, this particular framework of ESL composition called for different perspectives, models and practices (Silva, 1990). According to Tony Silva (1990), the most influential approaches are the following: controlled composition, current-traditional rhetoric, the process approach, and English for academic purposes (Silva, 1990).

4.1. Controlled composition

Controlled composition, also known as guided composition, has its origins in Charles Fries' oral approach, the predecessor of the audio-lingual approach (Silva, 1990) that prevailed in the L2 learning in the early 1950s and early 1960s (Randaccio, 2013). Controlled composition is supported by the notions that language is speech, which came from structural linguistics, and that learning is a habit formation, which came out of behaviourist psychology.

From this point of view, "writing was regarded as a secondary concern, essentially as reinforcement for oral habits" (Silva, 1990, p. 12). Correspondingly, in his *Teaching and Learning English as a Second Language* (1945), Fries disregarded writing, acknowledging merely that "even written exercises might be part of the work" of the second language learner (Fries, 1945, as cited in Silva, 1990, p. 12). Other authors, for instance Edward T. Erazmus (1960) and Eugène J. Brière (1966), held the view that "these written exercises should take the form of free composition" (Silva, 1990, p. 12) in order to enlarge the language control of the student and to advocate fluency in writing.

Per contra, there were many others who were against free composition. One of them was Anita Pincas (1962), who commented that free composition was a "naïve tradition view… in direct opposition to the expressed ideals of scientific habit-forming teaching methods" (Pincas, 1962, as cited in Silva, 1990, p. 12). Her opinion was in accordance with the opinion of the majority who concentrated mainly on "formal accuracy and correctness, of employing rigidly controlled programs of systematic habit formation designed to avoid errors ostensibly caused by first language interference and to positively reinforce appropriate second language behaviour" (as cited in Silva, 1990, p. 12). The approach favoured a system in which discrete units of language were previously learned in order to talk of original ideas, organization, and style (Silva, 1990). Likewise, its methodology entailed "the imitation of model passages carefully constructed and graded for vocabulary and sentence patterns" (Silva, 1990, p. 12).

Thus, writing in controlled composition is viewed as "the handmaid of other skills" (listening, speaking and reading) (Silva, 1990, as cited in Randaccio, 2013, p. 2) "which must not take precedence as a major skill to be developed" (Rivers, 1968, as cited in Randaccio, 2013, p. 2) and should be "considered as a service activity rather than an end in itself" (Rivers, 1968, as cited in Randaccio, 2013, p. 2). As stated by Raimes, in controlled composition,

> "students are given a passage to work with; they do not, therefore, have to concern themselves with content, organisation, finding ideas, and forming sentences. They write the passage down, making a few specified changes, usually of a grammatical or structural nature" (Raimes, 1983, as cited in Randaccio, 2013, p. 3).

Therefore, the attention is directed towards "mastery of grammatical and syntactic forms, formal accuracy and correctness" (Randaccio, 2013, p. 3). In this case, the writer manipulates already learned language structures whilst the ESL teacher, who is the reader, has the role of an editor who focuses primarily on formal linguistic features, rather than on the quality of the

ideas or expression. The text becomes a collection of sentence patterns and vocabulary items (Randaccio, 2013).

4.2. Current-traditional rhetoric

During the mid -1960s it became evident that controlled composition was not sufficient for ESL teaching of writing and that a new perspective was needed. (Randaccio, 2013). Silva states that this gap was closed with the current-traditional rhetoric, an approach that was constructed on the key principles of the current-traditional paradigm from native-speaker composition instruction and Robert B. Kaplan's theory of contrastive rhetoric.

In Kaplan's view, rhetoric is a method of organizing syntactic units into larger patterns and he proposes that ESL writers "employ a rhetoric and a sequence of thought which violates the expectations of the native reader" (Kaplan, 1966, as cited in Randaccio, 2013, p. 4).

This approach is centred on the logical construction and arrangement of discourse forms. The paragraph is of the outmost importance. Attention is equally directed to its elements (topic sentences, support sentences, concluding sentences, and transitions) and to the many choices for its development (illustration, exemplification, comparison, contrast, classification, definition, causal analysis) (Silva, 1990).

Likewise, another focal point is essay development, or in Silva's words, "an extrapolation of paragraph principles to larger stretches of discourse" (Silva, 1990, p. 14). Larger structural entities (introduction, body and conclusion) and organizational patterns or modes (narration, description, exposition and argumentation) are in the centre of attention. Briefly, this approach viewed writing "as a matter of arrangement, of fitting sentences and paragraphs into prescribed patterns" (Silva, 1990, p. 14)

4.3. The process approach

Seeing as neither controlled composition nor the current-traditional approach nurtured thought and its expression, a new perspective was required (Silva, 1990). The common belief was that "both controlled composition and the linearity and prescriptivism of current-traditional rhetoric discouraged creative thinking and writing (Randaccio, 2013, p. 4). As stated by Zamel, the composing process was recognised as a "non-linear, exploratory, and generative process whereby writers discover and reformulate their ideas as they attempt to approximate meaning" (Zamel, 1983, as cited in Silva, 1990, p. 15). In the words of Ann

Raimes, composing was seen as a way of expressing ideas and conveying meaning (Raimes, 1983, as cited in Silva, 1990, p. 15).

Since this is an approach that should provide a positive and encouraging environment among the students, it is the role of their teacher to help them work out strategies on how to start (how to find topics, ideas and information and how to plan the structure and procedure) and how to proceed when it comes to drafting (encouraging multiple drafts), revising (adding, deleting, reshaping and restructuring ideas) and editing (dealing with vocabulary, sentence structure, grammar and mechanics) (Silva, 1990, p. 15).

Learning to write requires the development of the efficient and productive composing process. The writer is the focus of the attention whilst the reader should be focused on content and ideas, rather than on form (Randaccio, 2013). The text itself is not of a crucial importance and its form "is a function of its content and purpose and there is not particular context for writing in this approach" (Randaccio, 2013, p. 5). The writer is responsible for identifying and accordingly approaching the situation, discourse community and sociocultural setting (Randaccio, 2013).

4.4. English for academic purposes

The process approach was disapproved by the advocates for the English for academic purposes approach, which was a new effort at creating a new and different outlook on ESL composition. Particularly, Joy Reid has implied that the process approach disregards "to consider variations in writing processes due to differences in individuals, writing tasks and situations; development of schemata for academic purposes; language proficiency; level of cognitive development; insight from the study of contrastive rhetoric" (Reid, 1984, as cited in Randaccio, 2013, p. 5).

Correspondingly, Daniel Horowitz carries on by stating that the process approach sets up a classroom situation "which bears little resemblance to the situations in which students' writing will be exercised" (Horowitz, 1986, as cited in Randaccio, 2013, p. 5). He also indicated that the process approach neglects some crucial academic writing tasks, like essay exams (Horowitz, 1986, as cited in Randaccio, 2013, p. 5).

The English for academic purposes approach views learning to write as a way of becoming socialised to the academic community (Randaccio, 2013). As Silva states:

"(…) the writer is pragmatic and oriented toward academic success… The

reader is a seasoned member of the hosting academic community who has

well-developed schemata for academic discourse and clear and stable views of

what is appropriate" (Silva, 1990, as cited in Randaccio, 2013, p. 6).

Therefore, the text is seen as a "conventional response to a particular task type that falls into a well-defined genre" and the context being the "academic community and the typical tasks associated with it" (Randaccio, 2013, p. 6).

5. How to research writing?

According to Hyland, it is crucial to notice that "writing research does not simply involve fitting suitable methods to particular questions" (Hyland, 2015, pp. 335-338). In order to understand writing, both theories and methods are necessary. There are those who believe that "writing is a product, an artefact of activity which can be studied independently of users by counting features and inferring rules" (Hyland, 2015, pp. 335-338). Others say that writing is "a kind of cognitive performance which can be modelled by analogy with computer processing through observation and writers' on-task verbal reports". Finally, there are those who see it "as the ways we make our social words and explore how writing connects us with readers and institutions in particular contexts" (Hyland, 2015, pp. 335-338). Research methods for studying writing can be divided between different areas of interest: understanding of texts, writers or readers (Hyland, 2015).

5.1. Text-Oriented Research

Text-Oriented Research perceives writing as a result of activity, "as words on a page or screen" (Hyland, 2015, pp. 335-338). It can be descriptive (showing what occurs), analytical (explaining why it occurs) and critical (studying the social relations which account for and are remade by what occurs). Texts can be analysed in a variety of manners, by taking a closer look at certain elements or their themes, analysing the text as an isolated unit or as a specimen from a certain genre, writer or time period. Furthermore, as Hyland points out, texts can be compiled "together as a corpus" (Hyland, 2015, pp. 335-338) and those elements can be gathered as a characteristic of other texts.

Historically, research into texts was in accordance with ideas passed on from structuralism and as it was suggested in Chomsky's Transformational Grammar. Texts were viewed as

langue, or a presentation of the writer's knowledge of grammatical rules and forms instead of efforts to communicate, and techniques were the way of showing the principles of writing separated from any contexts. From this point of view, the writing progress is determined by numbering additions in elements that are viewed as crucial to prosperous writing and estimating the 'syntactic complexity' of texts by numbering words or clauses per T-unit and numbering the T-units per sentence. Nevertheless, there is little to suggest that syntactic complexity or grammatical accuracy are the best way to confirm the writing progress or in general what constitutes good writing.

In essence, regarding texts like this disregards their position as communicate acts and how they operate as a writer's response to a specific communicative context. Considering that all texts comprise of what writers assume their readers will be aware of, and how they will make use of the text, neither text can be entirely straightforward. It is an equilibrium thing for writers, knowing what they can say versus what is supposed to be known (Hyland, 2015).

5.2. Writer-Oriented Research

Writer-Oriented Research highlights the activities of writers instead of elements of the texts. Supporters of this approach regard writing as a process, in at least as a system of activities from which all writing comes into being and that this is systemic across contexts of writing. What is important in this approach is the actions that good writers take when they write so all of that could be used in the students' education (Hyland, 2015). Some of the earlier thoughts on this matter were that writing was considered "more of a problem-solving activity than an act of communication" (Hyland, 2015, pp. 335-338). It was influenced by models of cognitive psychology and artificial intelligence in order to understand how people approach writing tasks "to create and revise personal meanings" (Hyland, 2015, pp. 335-338). Contemporary thoughts on the matter, on the other hand, focus more on the "actual performance of writing in a particular context" (Hyland, 2015, pp. 335-338), examining what Martin Nystrand (1987) names *the situation of expression*, to analyse the personal and social histories of particular writers as they write in particular contexts.

The objective is to depict the effect of this context on the ways writers portray their intentions in the kind of writing that is delivered. For Prior notices:

> "Actually writing happens in the moments that are richly equipped with tools
> (material and semiotic) and populated with others (past present, and future).
> When seen as situated activity, writing does not stand alone as the discrete act

of a writer, but emerges as a confluence of many streams of activity: reading, talking, observing, acting, making, thinking, and feeling as well as transcribing words on paper" (Prior, 1998, as cited in Hyland, 2015, pp. 335-338).

With detailed observations of acts of writing, studies of encompassing practices, participant interviews and other means, researchers try to establish more precise reports of local writing contexts.

In order to explore the composing process, a number of methods have been adopted, from text analysis to the qualitative methods of the human and social sciences. In this sense, case study research has been especially fruitful because it is more focused on the 'natural scene' as opposed to the experimental environments, "and often seeking to describe writing from an emic perspective, privileging the views of insiders or those participating in a situation" (Hyland, 2015, pp. 335-338). These studies benefited from 'think aloud protocols', retrospective interviews, task observation and writers' verbal reports while writing. Research is mostly longitudinal, tracking students over a period of time and it employs different techniques like recall protocols and analyses of multiple drafts (Hyland, 2015).

Although these reports emphasize the writers' experience "[and their understandings of the local features of the context they deal with as they write]" (Hyland, 2015, pp. 335-338), focusing on the local setting neglects to seize the culture and event within which the activity is rooted and which their writing must put forward. Texts call forth a social setting that interferes with the writer and triggers certain responses to recurring tasks and, consequently, a majority of the present writing research adheres to a reader-oriented view to examine the manners writers perceive their audience and take on cultural contexts. (Hyland, 2015)

5.3. Reader-Oriented Research

Reader-Oriented Research exceeds the individual writers and the surface structures of products in order to understand texts as cases of *discourse*, or language in use. Discourse approaches acknowledge that texts are always an answer to a specific communicative setting and try to uncover the objectives and functions which linguistic forms suffice in texts. This research does not see texts as "isolated examples of competence but the concrete expressions of social purposes, intended for particular audiences" (Hyland, 2015, pp. 335-338). The writer is considered to have a purpose, a particular relationship to his or her readers, and particular data to provide and the way a text is formed fulfils this agenda. Thus, writing is perceived as brokered by the institutions and cultures in which it happens and each text is

rooted in broader social practices which bear premises on the writer-reader relationship and how these should be constructed. These components show the analyst a greater paradigm which situates texts in a macrocosm of communicative purposes, institutional power and social action, pinpointing the ways that texts in reality operate as communication (Hyland, 2015).

Writers can create an audience by "drawing on their own knowledge of other texts and by exploiting readers' abilities to recognize intertextuality between texts" (Hyland, 2015, pp. 335-338). The founder of this view is M.M. Bakhtin who said that "language is fundamentally dialogic, a conversation between writer and reader is an ongoing activity" (Hyland, 2015, pp. 335-338). Writing mirrors trails of its social uses being that it is connected to the many texts that it precedes and foresees. The main thought here is that of a *genre*, an expression for categorising texts together which then can be referred to the repertoire of linguistic responses writers use to facilitate communication in familiar situations. Genre brings to mind that when we write we respect certain patterns because we want our readers to identify our objectives (Hyland, 2015).

6. Language transfer theory - previous research

Whether or not L1 has an influence in learning L2 has been an intriguing matter in the field of second language research and continues to be so. What is more, linguists and methodologists have opposite views about the effect of L1 on L2 learning (Muhammed and Ameen, 2014).

When it comes to L2 writing, transfer can be regarded either as learning instrument or as a method to find answers to problems. (Karim and Nassaji, 2013). Students might use transfer when they write in L2, either as a learning tool or as a way to communicate their meaning. They may even "use it to formulate hypotheses about the target language and to test those hypotheses" (Karim and Nassaji, 2013, p. 121). Even though it is an intriguing matter, the significance of language transfer has not been entirely appreciated (Karim and Nassaji, 2013). The beginning years of language transfer research were the 1940s and 1950s. At the time the field of linguistics was, as mentioned before, under the influence of the behaviourist school that considered learning to be a habit formation process. Therefore, transfer from the native language was thought to be a major factor in L2 learning. Fries (1945) stated that a major

problem in learning a second language was L1 interference. He thought that research of how L1 influences the target language is of the utmost importance for both the L2 theory and pedagogy. Moreover, Lado (1957) was of the opinion that second language learners almost entirely depend on their mother tongue in learning a second language (118).

In the course of the 1950s and 1960s, Ellis thought that L1 may be causing difficulties in L2 learning. Therefore, it was important that the teachers focus on discovering similarities and differences in both languages. At the time, this approach was called Contrastive Analysis (Muhammed and Ameen, 2014). Lado introduced this approach "as a way of explaining the role that L1 plays in L2 learning" (Karim and Nassaji, 2013, p. 118). Following the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, L1 patterns shape L2 learners' productive and receptive skills. Therefore, similarities and differences between L1 and L2 are good explanatory variables for better learning of the L2.

It was in the late 1960s that this approach met heavy criticisms, mostly by L2 acquisition researchers inspired by the Chomskyan Linguistics. As mentioned earlier in the paper, Chomsky widely advocated the view that children are born with an innate capacity to learn language. If this is true, then the same should apply with learning another language and there should be no external factors determining the learning of an L2. In accordance with this theory, Krashen (1984) and Dulay and Burt (1974) had second thoughts in the matter of negative transfer being a major component impacting L2 learning. They claimed that the L2 learning process takes place through a 'creative construction hypothesis,' meaning that learners "gradually and inductively reconstruct rules of the language as they are exposed to it in the course of acquisition" (Karim and Nassaji, 2013, pp. 118-119).

In 1986, Cummins came up with the already mentioned concept of a 'common underlying proficiency (CUP)' (Cummins, 1999, p. 5) which then served as a theoretical support for the thought that L1 lays as a foundation for L2 learning (Mukhopadhyay, 2015). CUP pertains to a set of higher order academic skills, that is, reading, inferential skills, summarizing skills, "and an implicit metalinguistic knowledge that is required for academic success" (Mukhopadhyay, 2015, p. 14). In Cummins's view, once these skills are acquired through one language, they are easily accessible when learning another language, that is "they can be drawn upon from the stronger to the weaker language" (Mukhopadhyay, 2015, p. 14).

Even though researchers had opposite views on the matter of the role of L1 transfer in the early 1970s and 1980s, language transfer theory has come to a stage of development in the last few years since the researchers placed the study of language transfer within the framework of a cognitive approach to language learning. A cognitive approach calls into

question "the interpretation of transfer as habits and gives an important role to the learner as someone who makes a decision as to what should or should not be transferred to L2 learning" (Karim and Nassai, 2013, p. 119). Selinker (1983) was one of the proponents of language transfer having a major role in L2 acquisition (Karim and Nassai, 2013).

6.1. Research into L1/L2 writing process

As already mentioned, the turning point of research into writing was Emig's study (1971), *The Composing Processes of Twelfth Graders* in which she shifted away from product - oriented to process - oriented research. With this study, she created the primary research design for carrying out research into the writing process (Krapels, 1990). Another important study was conducted by Zamel (1983) that goes in the line of Emig's study. In *The Composing Processes of Advanced ESL Students: Six Case Studies*, she quotes Hairston in reference to the importance of researching writing as a process:

> "We cannot teach students to write by looking only at what they have written. We must also understand how that product came into being, and why it assumed the form it did. We have to try to understand what goes on during the act of writing… if we want to affect its outcome. We have to do the hard thing, examine the intangible process, rather than the easy thing, evaluate the tangible product" (Hairston, 1982, as cited in Zamel, 1983, pp. 165-166).

Some studies distinguish different research writing approaches. According to Zare-ee and Farvardin (2009), studies that address L1 and L2 writing processes can be separated into three types. The first type of research focuses on linguistic and rhetorical patterns between L1 and L2 writing processes and the distinction between these patterns. The second type of research deals with the role of culture in discerning L1 from L2 writing. The last type of studies puts emphasis on the role of instruction on L1 and L2 writers (Zare-ee and Farvardin, 2009).

A controversial topic in L2 writing research is whether the writing processes acquired in an L1 are different to those acquired in an L2. This question is important as using L1 theory for developing a working theory for L2 writing is pointless if L1 writing processes are dissimilar to those of an L2. The comparison between L1 and L2 has some pedagogical implications, as stated by Zare-ee and Farvardin. First, it is crucial to ascertain relevant approaches to writing instruction for L2 writers in dissimilar contexts, secondly, the sociocultural and linguistic differences of L2 students need to be considered, and lastly the fundamental differences

between L1 and L2 writing need to be included in the assessment of L2 writing. They also mention the two different approaches to research comparing L1 and L2 writing. The supporters of the first type consider that L1 writing processes cannot be compared to L2 writing, while, on the other hand, others believe that the processes are very similar. In conclusion, it can be said that research findings have been conflicting and incomplete and that more research is needed (Zare-ee and Farvardin, 2009).

In their own study, Zare-ee and Farvardin came to the conclusion that L1 and L2 writing abilities have some correlations as well as some differences, mainly in structural complexity, erroneousness and some other morphosyntactic properties that are important to understand for better teaching and researching L2 writing (Zare-ee and Farvardin, 2009).

Furthermore, numerous studies have examined the similarities and differences between L1 and L2 writing strategies and came to interesting results. Raimes (1985) studied the use of writing strategies by 8 ESL students. The results from the verbal report data showed that the students used strategies, like planning, engaging in some prewriting and rescanning, from L1 writing and put them to use when writing in L2 (Karim and Nassaji, 2013). Nevertheless, the results revealed that "ESL students used more editing and correcting strategies than the L1 writer" (Karim and Nassaji, 2013, p. 122). Additionally, students used composing strategies that were more akin to the experience they had with the target language and with their writing instruction rather than with their language proficiency (Karim and Nassaji, 2013).

Similarly, Kubota (1998) tried to find out if students transfer the discourse patterns acquired in the L1 when they write in the L2. Her study consisted of 46 graduate and undergraduate students in Japan writing two essays, one in Japanese and one in English. Essays on an expository topic were written by twenty two students, while twenty four wrote their essays on a persuasive topic. Kubota wanted to assess one as well as the other language in regards to organization and language use. She came to the conclusion that writers employed similar patterns in L1 and L2. A positive correlation between Japanese and ESL organization scores was revealed. However, there was no negative transfer of culturally unique rhetorical patterns. In conclusion, this study indicates that L2 writers transfer L1 organizational and rhetorical patterns when they compose in an L2 (Karim and Nassaji, 2013).

There are some studies that explored whether L2 writers use their L1 in order to facilitate content, generate ideas or plan during writing. One study that deals with these issues was conducted by Uzawa and Cumming (1989). They compared the writing processes in Japanese and English. They tested expository essays in Japanese and English, on the same topic, by four intermediate learners of Japanese as a foreign language. The results showed

that the students used the L1, in this case, English, as a way of generating ideas, searching for topics, organizing information and developing concepts (Karim and Nassaji, 2013).

Beare's study (2000) also focuses on the writing strategies used by L1 and L2 students when they compose in both languages. Eight proficient writers in both English and Spanish were the participants, four of them being L1 speakers of English with Spanish as a second language. Beare wanted to uncover what writing strategies were used and whether L1 and L2 writing strategies were different when it came to generating and planning. The results showed that L1 strategies are indeed transferred to L2 (Karim and Nassaji, 2013).

Another case study by Cummins (1990) that consisted of twenty-three Francophone students, showed that students shifted from English to French repeatedly in the course of composing an ESL writing task aloud. The study showed that the students used their L1 knowledge for tracking down and evaluating suitable word ordering, form comparing cross-linguistic equivalents, and also in considering their linguistic choices in the L2 (Karim and Nassaji, 2013).

Other notable studies that obtained similar results were carried by Friedlander (1990) and by Kim and Yoon (2014).

Muhammed and Ameen's study (2014) deals with writing problems of Kurd EFL learners. Thirty participants filled out a questionnaire about the major and minor problems they are confronted with while writing in an L2. The results showed that students encounter difficulties with grammar rules which is why they transfer ideas from their mother tongue to the L2. They also have problems when it comes to punctuation and spelling and likewise with organizing and structuring. It was concluded that the reason behind these problems is the lack of practice and non-native environment (Muhammed and Ameen, 2014).

There are also studies that look into the differences between professional and novice writers. Sommers' study (1980) showed that professional writers tend to revise their text at length and spontaneously and that they make deep structural changes while revising. They also seemed to care about the way they formed their arguments but were also concerned for their readers. On the other hand, novice writers cared more for making changes in the vocabulary and did not view revising as an activity in which deep structural changes should be made (Kellog, 2008). In *The Composing Process*, Krashen says that good writers make plans before they start writing. It does not have to be a strict outline of how the paper should look like and what exactly it should contain, but they write down some guide notes to lead them through writing and change the plan as they go. This helps them not to stray away from

initial plans and maybe going into areas that they previously had no interest in going (Krashen, 2014).

Also, they delay the editing process until they write a draft that they consider to be good enough. While writing, it is more important to first focus on one's ideas and later worry about the form, which is one of the features of a good writer, in Krashen's opinion. Krashen also quotes Elbow:

> "Treat grammar as a matter of very late editorial correcting: never think about while you are writing. Pretend you have an editor who will fix everything for you, then don't hire yourself for the job until the very end" (Elbow, 1973, as cited in Krashen, 2014, pp. 20-30)

Munoz-Luna's study (2015) based her findings on "strong and weak writers". Skilled writers use the metalinguistic knowledge when they compose, their texts are cohesive and coherent. They like to write in English and their writing process includes textual comprehension and serious proofreading. On the other hand, unskilled writers have a simple lexicon and simple sentences, they do not revise or check their errors. They do not pay enough attention to coherence (Munoz-Luna, 205, pp. 1-13). Krashen says that revision is "perhaps the most fundamental strategy" (Krashen, 2014, pp. 20-30). During revision, writers come up with new ideas and implement them. They can also sense the discord of their own thought and find solutions to these problems (Krashen, 2014). In the already mentioned Zamel's study, she writes:

> "Through the act of writing itself, ideas are explored, clarified, and reformulated and, as this process continues, new ideas suggest themselves and become assimilated into the developing pattern of thought." (Zamel, 1983, p. 166).

There are also many studies that deal with the role of translation into L1 as a facilitative strategy in L2 writing. The results from those studies show that translation into L1 helps with the organization and the complexity of the target language essay.

Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) were interested to know if students write directly in their L2 or first write in their L1 and then translate it into their L2. In their study there was 48 participants, fourth-year Japanese university students of two L2 proficiency levels divided into two groups. One group wrote their essay in their L1, Japanese, and then translated it into the L2, English, and the second group wrote in English straightaway. The following day, the groups switched the tasks. The results that were obtained showed that the compositions written in the translation mode have a higher level of syntactic complexity. Areas of content,

style and organization also benefited from the translation. Nonetheless, it is important to point out that translation was more helpful to students at lower levels of L2 proficiency than higher level students. Another interesting question that the researchers asked the learners was to say how much Japanese they thought they were using at the time of composing directly in English. 55 % of the higher-proficiency students and 87 of the lower-proficiency students said they were using Japanese part of the time or more while composing directly in English. Kobayashi and Rinnert (1992) came to the conclusion that translation strategy can be useful, especially for students at a lower proficiency level (Karim, Nassaji, 2013).

In all of the aforementioned studies the emphasis is primarily on the writing process or writing strategies or language transfer. Not many studies address the subject from a students' point of view and attitudes towards various aspects of writing (Petrić, 2002). However, many researchers stress the importance of the students' point of view, like A.M. Johns who mentions 'personal theories' of writing and how they "influence how academic literacies are taught and learnt" (Johns, 1997, as cited in Petrić, 2002, p. 11). Hyland points out that a "major task of EAP teaching is therefore to address the perceptions and practices of writing that students may bring with them…" (Hyland, 2000, as cited in Petrić 2002, p. 11). Studies that deal with the individual L2 students and their writing experiences reveal "a complex inter-relationship between attitudes and beliefs, writing experiences, and academic writing development." (Petrić, 2002, p. 11)

Petrić's study (2002) addresses the attitudes and perceptions that non-native students have towards writing in English. This study confirms that attitudes are an integral part in writing, as well as in language learning in general. This kind of information is especially important when it comes to the teaching of writing and the interviews from Petrić's study showed that positive writing experiences are fundamental for positive attitude development (Petrić, 2002). Mihaljević Djigunović and Beli's study (2001) likewise deals with students' attitudes towards composition writing, writing strategies and success in writing compositions. This study offers insight into students as individual subjects which is another important thing to keep in mind when teaching writing (Mihaljević Djigunović & Beli, 2001).

Another significant study that deals with both student and teacher's perceptions of writing in Russian and English was conducted by Butler, Trosclair, Zhou and Wei (2014). The study shows how much students value knowing how to write in English. The emphasis is put on planning as one of the most important writing strategy which helps students to control and manage their processes of learning (Butler, Trosclair, Zhou & Wei, 2014).

Fogal's study (2016/2017) also explored, among other matters, the students' perception of L2 writing. The obtained results showed that students put more emphasis on studies of form for improving their academic writing. Likewise, the results also highlighted the need for more studies that explore students' writing process from their own perspective (Fogal, 2016/2017).

7. The Study

7.1. Aims

The main purpose of this study was to compare the process of acquiring writing skills in L1 (Croatian) and L2 (English) from the perspective of advanced speakers of English. The focus was on their attitudes towards writing in general, and in particular, how they acquired writing skills in L1 and whether they adopted those same practices when learning the L2.

7.2. Methodology

7.2.1. Participants

For the purpose of this study, five students from the English Department at the Faculty of Humanity and Social Sciences in Zagreb were interviewed. All the participants were females in their early to mid-twenties. The participants were all advanced speakers of English and at the time of the study were in the process of writing their M.A. theses, and up to that point had written various assignments in English. In the terms of their exposure to English, it should be noted that all the courses that the participants took as a part of the graduate programme at the Faculty of Humanity and Social Sciences in Zagreb were in English. The participants are referred to as P1, P2, P3, P4 and P5 in the study.

7.2.2. Instruments and procedure

The approach taken in this study is qualitative, using interviews as the main data-gathering instrument. Choosing interviews for caring out a study gives more interactive and unplanned answers from the participants. In general, interviews offer a different approach of comprehending human experience. Participant have more freedom in what they want to say,

they can discuss their views in more detail, "sharing what writing means to them rather than responding to preconceived categories" (Hyland, 2016, p. 117). Because of their flexibility and responsiveness, interviews are used extensively in writing research in order to gain more data about *writing practices* (to study about the genres people use in writing and in general how they go about writing), about *teaching and learning practices* (to study people's beliefs and practices about teaching and writing) and about *discourse-features* (to study in what way do the text users perceive and react to certain features of writing) (Hyland, 2015).

Another reason to choose interviews is that they can show issues that can be foreseen, "such as how students interpret teacher written feedback or the intentions of faculty tutors in marking undergraduate assignments" (Hyland, 2015, p. 340).

The interviews lasted from 30 to 50 minutes and took place in locations that were comfortable for the interviewees. They were all taped, with prior consent from the participants, and notes were taken by the researcher. Later, the interviews were transcribed and the data was analysed.

It is important to mention that the interviews were conducted in the participants' native language, Croatian. The reason behind this decision is so that the interviewees would be more comfortable answering in Croatian and their answers would be more elaborate.

The first set of questions in the study looked into participants' beginnings of writing in general and writing a structured text, in both L1 and L2. The next set of questions dealt with the formal instructions that participants had received and the difficulties they experienced while writing in both languages. Knowing whether the instructions were given in Croatian or English, or both languages, helped to determine the effect of the transfer and also the quality of instruction. In order to better understand the transfer that occurs between languages, the subsequent set of questions focused on the role of mother tongue when writing in an L2 and vice versa. Another set of questions looked into the participants' accounts of their own process of writing. Lastly, the final set of questions was focused on the participants' perceived quality of their written texts in both L1 and L2.

7.3. Results and discussion

As mentioned earlier, the first three questions in the study gave an overview of the participants' beginnings of writing in general and writing a structured text, in both their L1 and L2. The questions were as follows:

1. Do you remember when you started writing in your mother tongue? Was writing interesting to you, that is, did you like to write?

2. Do you remember when you first started writing in English? Did you have any trouble with it?

3. Do you remember the first time you learned about the way you structure a written text, both in Croatian and English?

P1 recalled starting to write just before or after she started kindergarten. However, she started composing simple sentences and consecutively letters in the first grade of elementary school. She did not struggle with it, what is more, she enjoyed writing.

As for English, she was most grateful to her family's friend who had been living in England for most of her life but would regularly visit P1's family and bring picture-books in English. With the help of those books, she learned how to write some words in English. She also recalled writing words like "hello, touch your nose, touch your toes…" in kindergarten. She did not remember having any difficulties with writing in English. On the account of the films she watched and pop culture in general, she started writing on her own, even before she started learning English in school.

P1 stated that, regarding her mother tongue, she first learned about the structure of a written text in elementary school. She remembered her teacher's instruction about how a text should have an introduction, body and conclusion. However, the teacher never elaborated on how this should be done. A similar situation happened with English. In this case, however, the English teacher from elementary school did not teach them at all about the ways in which a text in English should be structured.

P2 started writing in her religion class (R.E) in primary school because her teacher always encouraged their students to write. After she learned how to write, she started writing shorter essays. She remembered that both her R.E. teacher and Croatian teacher thought that she was talented for writing and due to their support she pursued writing.

P2 first came in touch with English in the fifth grade. In her opinion, those classes were not organized well and the teacher did not do everything she was supposed to. Vocabulary was always P2's strong suit due to films, TV and books but she struggled with grammar, or to be precise, with articles and choosing the right tenses. She explained that her biggest issue was that she could always articulate what she wanted to say using the right vocabulary but could not put those words together so that it sounded grammatically correct.

P2 started learning pretty early in elementary school about the structure of a written text since she was a part of a literature circle and also took part in competitions in the Croatian language. She never struggled with it. In English, she started learning about the structure of the written text in her second or third year of secondary school.

P3 started writing some larger texts when she was in the fifth grade of elementary school. Until then, she lived abroad and went to a British school there. However, she and her family talked in their L1, Croatian at home. She confessed that it was difficult and stressful because she always thought that her Croatian was not good enough.

She remembered that she started writing in English quite early on, at the age of five, because she attended the aforementioned British school. There, she had to write about how she spent her previous day or the weekend every day for her homework, so she learned from an early age how to express herself in written English. At the beginning that was difficult for her since she was just five years old but after a month it became completely normal and she did not struggle with it.

P3 learned about the way a text is structured in the fifth grade of elementary school. The reason for learning it quite late is because her family moved back to Croatia at that time. She remembered that the instructions were very simple, stating only how a text should have an introduction, body and conclusion. More detailed instructions were given to her in high school when their professor prepared them for the Matura exam but in P3's words, those instructions were quite specific because they followed a required form. She admitted that the best instructions were given to her at university, when she was a freshman.

P4 started writing when she went into the first grade of elementary school. Writing was really interesting to her, especially the part when they stopped writing capital letters and started with cursive letters. In the early grades of elementary school she developed a love for poetry, she loved to read poetry and write poems.

She started writing in English in the fourth grade of elementary school. She did not remember having any difficulties because her teacher from the fourth grade always wanted them to transcribe the entire lesson they were learning. It was not just transcribing all the unfamiliar words and their meaning but the entire lesson and that way they practiced writing in English.

P4 did not recall exactly the first time she started writing in English, but it was sometime from grades one to four of elementary school, when they started transcribing poems. In higher grades, she remembered being given clear instruction on "what the introduction should contain and which paragraph to indent so as to indicate that a new paragraph is coming." As for English, she mentioned secondary school where they learnt how to structure a CV, an

essay and a seminar paper, or more specifically they were presented with a model of how it should be done: explaining what an introduction, body and conclusion should look like. However, like P3, she said that she learned the most when she went to university.

P5 did not remember much about when she first started to write but she remembered writing a smaller essay in Croatian in elementary school and, in her opinion, the structure of the sentences, but also the structure of the text itself was ill-structured. For her, the problem was that there was always a barrier in reference to the topic she was writing about because she was afraid that she would not demonstrate that she knew enough about the given subject.

What she remembered next was writing some shorter texts in elementary school. What was difficult for her was that her ideas and thoughts would come to her in her mother tongue and she was very self-conscious about the possible errors as at the time her sentences in L2 resembled the sentences in her L1 in their structure. This was what held her back the most at the time but she concludes that "through time you learn how to think in the language you are learning."

P5 says that it was in elementary school that she received the instructions on how to write the introduction, body and conclusion, respectively in both languages.

It was important that these questions were asked at the very beginning of the interview as they offered insight into students as individual subjects, which is, as pointed out by Mihaljević Djigunović and Beli, a crucial thing to bear in mind when teaching writing. As indicated by the results, all the participants started to write in elementary school. All participants, except P2, mentioned being told that a structured text should have an introduction, body and conclusion. It was noticed that some received these instructions already in the elementary school while others learned it in the secondary school. It was interesting that P3 and P4 both said that they learnt the most at the university. P1 and P3 also said that instructions were very simple, while P4 said that the instructions were clear on sections the text should contain.

4. Which instructions were the most useful to you for mastering the skill of writing? Who gave you these instructions, in which language and in which stage of your education?

P1 was of the opinion that some people showed talent for writing quite early, they wrote more intuitively than others. That was why she mostly listened to the advice of her peers who

she believed were better writers than she was. She learned how to write by reading their essays. In those essays, she would notice that their thought was explained in a much organized and clearer way than hers was and she learned what her mistakes were. She also mentioned newspapers as a good example of structure, which she read extensively during secondary school and later at university. This helped her to understand that when she had to write something she would first need to have a draft, i.e. to clarify what is it that she wanted to say and she could not allow herself to follow her train of thought – this was a trap that she frequently entered during writing.

Advice on the cohesion and coherence of the text, on the functionality of the text on multiple levels in regards to the text as a whole, and ways of articulating one's thoughts, those were the things that, in P1's opinion, were lacking in their education.

Due to the previously mentioned competitions, P2 mentioned her Croatian teacher from elementary school as the one who gave her the best advice on how to structure a text considering introduction, body and conclusion. In English, however, she was never given any instructions so she mostly followed the instructions of her Croatian teacher.

P3 said that the most useful instructions for mastering the skill of writing were given to her by a literature professor during her first year of university. That was the first time she encountered some serious citing and texts that were not structured in the same way they had to be for the Matura exam.

P4 was given the best instructions on how to write in general in the first grade of secondary school, while the fourth grade was crucial when it came to essays and seminar papers. All the instructions were given to her by her Croatian teacher.

P5 also mentioned her experience at university, in her second year, where she had a course on academic writing skills. There she learned how to approach an argumentative essay: "you have to know exactly what your topic is and you cannot write generally what you know about it but you have that one idea that you have to support, you don't go beating around the bush." And this is what P5 struggled with the most, i.e. how to structure your thoughts in a text.

From the participants' answers, it was noticed that for P2 and P4 the most useful instructions were given by their Croatian teacher and P3 and P5, interestingly enough, mentioned their university professors. Curiously, P1 was the only one who mentioned that she learned from her peers.

The following set of questions dealt with the difficulties participants experienced when writing structured texts in both L1 and L2:

5. What do you consider to be the most difficult aspect of writing essays, seminar papers and similar texts in the native language? To put it differently, what do you believe to be your writing problems in the native language?
6. Which difficulties do you encounter when writing in English?

For P1, the greatest difficulty was figuring out what exactly she was trying to say in her text, as well as whom she was saying it to. She explained that the most important thing for her was that her thoughts were expressed as clearly as possible which included no digressions and also that everything she wrote had some logical sequence, that is, that each thought followed the previous thought. The same happened when she wrote in English. Though, the part that was more difficult in English for her was the register. She was not always sure she was using the right words, which in her mother tongue, came intuitively to her.

P2 said that it could sound egoistic but when it came to Croatian, she neither had the fear of writing, nor problems with expressing her thoughts because she truly loved to write.

The biggest problem for P2 was writing more complex language constructions with which she would be content with. She wanted the sentences she wrote in English to be equally as rich as those she wrote in Croatian: "I don't like to compromise, e.g. to break one long sentence into few smaller ones because it is not the same sentence anymore, it loses its meaning."

P3 admitted that when it came to writing in Croatian, she had many problems, especially with grammar (e.g. where to put the verb in the sentence in order to make it grammatically correct) and structuring sentences. She said that she had a fear of writing in Croatian because she did not consider herself to be "talented enough to write in Croatian". However, when it came to English, she did not encounter any difficulties. She had struggles in general whether she, as she put it, elaborated her thoughts intelligently enough. She never worried about the structure and grammar when she wrote in English.

For P4 the hardest thing in her mother tongue was actually starting to write or to pinpoint the main idea that she would further elaborate. Once she got through this, everything else would just fall into place and she did not struggle anymore, and "the conclusion [was] also extracted smoothly from the text."

P4 said that the fact that English was not her mother tongue tended to slow her down, she could not write as fast as she could in Croatian because she constantly went back to check on grammar and spelling, and she tended to repeat herself which also posed a problem. Likewise, when she started writing academic research papers, she had problems with articulating her main thesis. In time, the more she wrote, the better she got.

P5 believed that her biggest challenge was making her ideas and thesis easily understandable to the reader because that was not always the case: "Sometimes you think that one sentence is enough for one thought you had and you think that you elaborated something clearly and then you realize that actually you need to elaborate more on it, you need to elaborate it through the entire paragraph."

Also, she said her problems stemmed from the fact that she had to realize that she was not writing for herself but for somebody who was actually going to read it.

She worried a lot about the overlap between her mother tongue and English and this was something she sometimes struggled with. She still occasionally had problems with articles and with the flow of sentences in English because some ideas sounded better when written in Croatian to her. She also experienced difficulty in remembering all the synonyms as she did not like to repeat the same vocabulary.

From the participants' answers, it was evident that most of them had problems with pinpointing the main ideas of their paper but also with articulating them in a way that it was intelligible and intelligent. This is yet another reason why the aforementioned researchers like Petrić, Fogal, Beli and Mihaljević Djigunovic considered it important to focus research on students' own perceptions of writing as it gave insights into which parts of writing instructions should be upgraded. Sommers' (1980) study showed that professional writers tended to care about the way they formed their arguments and were concerned for their readers. P5 seemed much invested in wanting to make her ideas understandable to the reader. Moreover, all the participants cared a great deal on how to form their arguments and ideas.

The subsequent set of questions examined the role of the mother tongue when writing in an L2, and vice versa:

7. Does your mother tongue help you in generating ideas and planning during writing a text in English? In other words, can you closely describe in what ways does the

mother tongue aid you in writing essays, seminar papers and similar texts in the English language?

8. Did the opposite situation ever occur where you relied on English while writing a text in Croatian?

P1 stated that the mother tongue helped her in clearing her thoughts and figuring out exactly what her main idea was. It also helped her in drafting and structuring the text but when she wrote in English she did not think in Croatian and therefore, did not translate her thoughts into English. She thought and created the text exclusively in English. Croatian only aided her in figuring out the content of the text she had to write. As for writing in Croatian, she rarely relied on English. However, it did happen sometimes that an English expression popped up in her mind that would fit perfectly with what she had to say – "because sometimes the English language has a better or more precise notion than the Croatian language." Then she would try to find the equivalent word in Croatian. But when she wrote in Croatian, she thought and wrote in Croatian.

P2 functioned similarly, when she wrote in English, she thought in English. She had never written a text in Croatian and translated it into English because, for her, "that way the meaning gets lost, it is not the same text anymore and it is obvious that it was translated." She believed that one was good and successful at writing when one was able to think in the language the text was being written in. Of course, a certain level of proficiency was needed for this. On the other hand, when writing in Croatian, she often relied on English because, as she said, she talked and read English every day. What is more, she thought that English was richer in vocabulary than Croatian, "you can use one word to describe something in English whilst in Croatian you cannot, you have to describe it in more words." This was the reason she often found great words in English for saying something in Croatian and she wished she could translate them using only one word in Croatian, even though that was not possible.

P3 said that her mother tongue did not help her at all because she never used it. When she wrote in English, she thought in English. But, the opposite did happen when she wrote in Croatian. She often thought of English phrases: "If it were a text in English, that would look amazing and I would be proud of myself for coming up with that word." This was why she tended to struggle with how to find that exact phrase in Croatian. She concluded by saying she was better at English vocabulary than the Croatian one.

P4 also said that when she wrote in English, she tried to think in English and stick to it because, as she mentioned earlier, if she started to write quicker, she would get into the trap

of inserting Croatian structures of the sentences. She tried to steer clear of Croatian whatsoever. On the contrary, she never relied on English while writing a text in Croatian.

P5 said that her mother tongue did not really help her because of Croatian and English being two diametrical languages. However, she did mention how recently she had to write a paper in Croatian and the English word "counterpart" kept popping up in her mind and she could not recall how to say it in Croatian. She believed that the reason for this is that people, and her generation especially, were bombarded with English phrases all the time via social networks and all sort of different content from pop culture and media. She said:

> "English phrases are quite dominant and everybody understands them and then
> you have to write a formal paper in Croatian where it is expected that you will
> use the language correctly but then comes a word like "prequel" and "sequel"
> and you do not know how to say it in Croatian, the English words just come
> more naturally to you. The impact of the English language is strong."

She mentioned another example where she had to write a review in Croatian. In the paper she had to write that "the plotline unfolds" and the word "unfold" came instantly and naturally to her and unlike the Croatian counterpart "radnja se odvija", she believed that "unfold" was just more meaningful of a word and more revealing than the Croatian version.

From the given answers, it was noticeable that the participants did not use their L1 when writing in their L2. However, all of them, except P4, mentioned that sometimes English words came to their mind when writing in Croatian which was another important observation as well as an indicator of the influence of the English language in today's world. It is also important to point out that all of them said that when they wrote in one language, they tended to think in that language. The results from Uzawa and Cumming' study (1989) showed that students used their L1 in order to generate ideas and plan during writing a text in English which was evident in the case of P1's answer.

In Kobayashi and Rinnert's study (1992) researchers asked their participants how much L1, Japanese they thought they were using at the time of composing directly in the L2, English. It was interesting to notice that the reverse process happened to the participants of this study, how they thought in their L2 while composing in the L1. Future research should focus on how this process occurs in the mind of an individual. However, the answers supported the "interdependence hypothesis", that is, that at a cognitive level languages were not isolated but linked together via a common underlying proficiency.

The following questions revealed the participants' own process of writing:

9. In the process of writing in Croatian, are you more focused on the structure of the text itself and development of your ideas or do you worry about other issues like orthography and grammar?

10. And while you are writing in English?

11. What is your approach to writing an academic piece, i.e. writing essays, seminar papers and similar texts in Croatian? For instance, do you write drafts or something else?

12. Likewise, what is your approach to writing an academic piece, i.e. writing essays, seminar papers and similar texts in English?

13. Taking into account both Croatian and English, and with regards to the structure of a written text, when do you write the introduction and when the conclusion?

14. Moreover, considering both the L1 and L2, when do you revise your written text: during the writing or after you are finished? How many times do you re-read your work after it is finished?

P1 said that she was more focused on the structure of the text itself and the development of her ideas because orthography and grammar were easily checked. The structure of the text was not something that came intuitively to her and she did struggle with it. The same was with English. However, when it came to orthography, grammar and register she invested more of her time checking everything than she did in Croatian. She also worried more about these issues in English.

For P1, it was important that she took notes on what she was going to say in the introduction, body and conclusion and how many paragraphs the body would consist of. She did not have a rough draft that she gradually improved.

For her, the process of writing could go two ways. The first one was that she wrote the introduction, body, and conclusion chronologically. However, when she had a deadline, then she wrote the body first because she knew exactly what she was going to say in the introduction – the only problem was how to structure the introduction, how to organize her thoughts into sentences. So, the other option was that she wrote the body and conclusion and wrote the introduction at the very end.

P1 said that when she wrote in Croatian she always revised after she was finished because she was more confident in her knowledge of Croatian. However, when she wrote in English, she

revised during writing mostly because it was easier to notice an error in grammar or spelling. She also felt like she had to devote special attention on how to connect the text as a whole and also how to connect one sentence with the next one using specific expressions. She believed that she did this more easily in Croatian because, as she emphasised again, Croatian was her mother tongue.

After she was finished, she would re-read both the texts in English and Croatian at least two times.

P2 equally worried about the structure and development of her ideas and orthography and grammar because in her opinion, one did not go without the other. The same was in both languages. P2 also mentioned how she was careful that the sentence from the previous paragraph lead into the next one, that everything was connected, she cared about cohesion and coherence greatly.

After she would read the required literature, she had to make a draft. She wrote the exact order of chapters and based on that she could further generate her idea. She always needed to have everything structured.

When it came to her writing process, P2 said that in the past she would always write the introduction first but then she started writing both the introduction and conclusion at the end, for both languages. She did it at the end because, from the instructions that had been given to her, she would know what an introduction required and that "in the introduction you need to mention some theoretical framework which is later elaborated" so for her, it did not make sense to write the introduction at the beginning, let alone the conclusion.

She was of the opinion that the right way was to write everything down and then revise it. However, it regularly occurred to her that she could not leave something without revising it. She was afraid she would forget about it later and that she would not know what it was she wanted to say in the first place. That is why she revised while she wrote, to make it all immediately as correct as possible. Of course, while she later revised the text, she would find things she wanted to correct, but generally 90 % of the things she wrote she considered to be good. She re-read her work "a hundred times and more". Sometimes she would write something before the deadline but could never send it to her professor. She would always send it the day of the deadline and in those days prior to the deadline, she would read the paper a hundred times and each time she would find new errors. The same was in English and Croatian.

P3 worried more about the grammar and the structure of the sentences because she believed to be a bit behind with these areas in her mother tongue since for the last five years she had

been studying two foreign languages. With English, she struggled more with the development of the idea.

She always had a draft. First, she looked for the right references and planned ahead what could be useful. Then she structured the content in a way so that she knew what her titles, subtitles would be and so on. After this, she would follow the titles and elaborate the topic accordingly.

P3 said that she was the kind of person for whom everything had to go in the right order. Of course, after she was finished she would go back to the introduction to check if she had introduced the topic correctly, and even add something if necessary. The same went for both languages.

She admitted that she was a perfectionist, which could be a flaw but also a virtue when it came to writing. When she wrote a paragraph, she would usually read it immediately after she wrote it so that she could alter it if needed and she would also leave comments for herself on what could be added later. She always tended to go back because everything needed to be connected, each paragraph needed to end as an introduction for the next paragraph. That was why she constantly re-read the paragraph that was already written so she could see its flaws and automatically correct it. It was the same in English and Croatian. Like P2, she also said that she was never truly ready to send the written paper, she always saw room for improvement.

In contrast, P4 said that she did not make drafts when she wrote in Croatian. She would always write a text that she counted was going to be done there on the spot, she always tried to make it a done product in one go. However, when writing in English, she made a draft, she either wrote it in her notebook or typed it on her laptop. The draft was a sort of mix between English and Croatian because she would try to write fast to put all her thoughts on paper and not lose her train of thought. So, in the draft there were bound to be some Croatian words for expressions she was not sure how to say in English. Later she would check all the phrases, words and sentence structures to make sure that everything was correct and exactly as it should be.

She was more focused on the structure of the text and development of her ideas because as far as grammar was concerned she had excellent teachers and professors of Croatian language who instilled in her mind, for example, the difference between ije/je, letters č/ć and other matters of the language. As far as grammar and orthography was concerned, she felt complete freedom when writing in Croatian. On the other hand, with English, she worried more about

the orthography and grammar because sometimes it occurred to her that she would use Croatian sentence structures.

P4 also had the same process in both languages. She wrote everything in chronological order (the introduction, body, and conclusion). She could never write the conclusion at the beginning or in the middle of the writing process because she needed to have the entire text written in order to know what she was going to write. The same went for the introduction which was the starting point of the entire work and without the introduction she could not go into writing the text further. The introduction was always the starting point and the conclusion the finishing one.

As far as writing in Croatian was concerned, P4 automatically saw possible errors because, as she said, she had excellent teachers. Nevertheless, after she was done, she tended to go back to re-read it. As for English, she said that she would always do it after she was finished, rarely during the writing process because she was so involved with the process that she did not have time to look at it. She would re-read the Croatian text one or two times, and the same applied for the English text – firstly she checked the grammar in English and then the second time she read it to see whether the structure of the sentences is correct.

P5 says that she was more focused on the structure and development of ideas in her mother tongue and in English she worried about both issues. For her, writing in both languages came in stages. First she would just put her words on paper, write down her thoughts. Then, in the second stage she tried to connect it all as to be meaningful, for example, she would shift paragraphs: "Sometimes, when I write, I realize that something I wrote at the end would fit better at the beginning and stuff like that." The third and final stage was ruminating on the whole text. She checked her grammar, articles, and punctuation marks. She worried whether her sentences were too short or too long, if they had a rhythm and also about replacing some words with the corresponding synonyms because, as she put it, "you do not want to repeat yourself so you will choose something that sounds better, nicer."

P5 explained that she had a few stages and working drafts when she wrote. In the first phase she outlined the ideas, then in the next stage she would develop those ideas and decided on what exactly her thesis was. After the drafting, she would then go into the development and forming of introduction, body and conclusion. She tried to follow the rules of academic writing in both Croatian and English, e.g. in an English text, she would not put abbreviations like "don't" etc. She was more formal in the way she expressed herself.

P5 also had the same process for both languages. She always thought about the introduction but always dedicated more of her time to the main idea and how she was going to elaborate it.

Only after she had written the body she proceeded to writing the introduction. The hardest thing was writing the conclusion, she struggled the most with it, and sometimes it just did not come to her naturally, and she always wrote it at the end.

P5 revised both during and after she was finished writing. She would do most of the revising at the end when she re-read it multiple times. Sometimes, she said, she would go back and look at some paragraphs mostly to see how she elaborated some of her thoughts. Other times, she would go back because she forgot what she wrote or to remain true to herself because she did not want to outline some contradictory ideas. She would sometimes go back to see how she formulated something in order to make sure that the next paragraph followed the thesis etc. She also mentioned that she had received a great piece of advice which was that after you write a text you should read it aloud:

> "I think that this is really helpful because sometimes some sentences sound
> like they are well-thought out and they make sense to you while you read them
> in silence but they are much more awkwardly written when you read them
> aloud."

She had the same process for both languages, only maybe she read it fewer times in Croatian because she was more certain in her knowledge of Croatian but it mostly depended on the format and formality of the text she was writing rather than it having to do with the language in which she was writing.

These answers gave invaluable information about the writing process of each participant. In their paper, Flower and Hayes wrote about the composing process and asked similar questions and they cited the work of Odell, Cooper and Courts:

> How do writers actually go about choosing diction, syntactic and
> organizational patterns, and content? Kinneavy claims that one's purpose -
> informing, persuading, expressing, or manipulating language for its own sake -
> guides these choices. Moffett and Gibson contend that these choices are
> determined by one's sense of the relation of speaker, subject, and audience. Is
> either of these two claims borne out by the actual practice of writers engaged
> in drafting or revising? Does either premise account adequately for the choices
> writers make? (Odell, Cooper and Courts, 1978, as cited in Flower and Hayes,
> 1981, p. 365)

The answers concluded that the participants used pretty much the same composing processes in the L1 and L2. It appeared that participants learned some strategies, like planning,

prewriting, writing drafts and revising in their L1 and transferred them to the L2. Similar results were obtained in Raimes's study (1985). Kubota's study (1998) too showed that writers employed similar patterns in L1 and L2. Raimes' study also revealed that when it came to L2 writing, students used more editing and correcting strategies. This was evident in P1, P4 and P5's answers which showed that they put more emphasis into correcting a text written in an L2. Students that learned how to plan, form ideas, revise and edit in their L1 writing, used the same techniques when writing in L2 (Karim & Nassai, 2013). These results seemed to go in line with Cummins' (1999) view that L1 and L2 CALP were linked together and that languages could in fact enrich each other via transfer. However, for this to happen, teachers need to encourage L1 literacy as well, which was most evident in P4's answers. She mentioned her Croatian teacher a few times and was grateful for everything she had learned from her.

The last two questions examined the participants' perceived quality of their written texts, in both Croatian and English.

15. According to everything that was previously said, do you find it easier to write in your mother tongue or in English and why?
16. Can you briefly compare your ability to write structured texts in Croatian and English?

P1 said that it must be easier to write in one's mother tongue just because it is your mother tongue. Still, because she read a lot in English online, the two languages got intertwined in her mind and for some topics she had more to say in English since English structures came to her more easily. She said that she did not have an explanation for this and that was why this question was difficult to answer. However, she felt equally competent to write in either language without problems. She believed that language was not an issue for her, she was not afraid of not knowing some terminology in English because she could easily learn it. The only reason why English might be difficult was choosing the right register, but that was the only reason.

P2 said that she did not know in which language it was easier to write but she preferred to write in English because she simply adored the language and the way she could express her thoughts in it. She was self-conscious and said she was aware she did not know a lot and "for a language you can ever say that you know a language because they are all fluid and each day

you learn something new." She enjoyed learning new words and truly preferred to write in English.

She also felt she was equally competent to write in both of the languages "as long as everything is well and nicely connected, that there is coherence and cohesion."

P3 said that it is definitely easier for her to write in English because the biggest obstacle for her in Croatian was that she did not believe herself to be talented enough for writing in Croatian but when it came to her capability, she also believed she was equally competent to write in both of the languages.

P4 said that it was easier for her to write in Croatian considering that it was her mother tongue and the skill of writing had been fostered from the very beginning. That, however, did not mean that she did not like writing in English. It was mostly due to years of experience, it had nothing to do with the love of the language. The only difference when writing in Croatian and in English was that in Croatian she felt more certain about the language. As for the structure of the text, it was the same for her in which language she wrote.

P5 said that for her it was not so much about the language as it was about the topic she had to write about. For example, if she read about a certain topic in Croatian it would be easier for her to write about it in Croatian and vice versa. Sometimes perhaps it was easier to write in English because she was more exposed to the language and some things came to her naturally in English. For example, she said that she studied History entirely in English and she had a better knowledge and better register in English than in Croatian because she learned those facts in English and had to master them in English and that was why it was easier to write about it in English. Grammatically speaking, she thought she was better in Croatian than in English. However, she was quite proficient in English because she studied it but she was not at the same level as some native speakers. She did not find writing in either language to be problematic.

Based on the findings, it seems that the participants believed to be equally competent to write in either language. However, they answered differently in relation to their capability to write with ease. They all seemed to enjoy writing in English, but worried how much they were actually good at it. Writing in the L2 sometimes caused anxiety for the participants precisely because they were missing some crucial information relevant to register, coherence and cohesion, grammar, and other issues mentioned in the previous answers. In P4's words, she "felt more certain" when she wrote in her L1. This is why it is of the utmost importance to create a positive environment around learning how to write in an L2. Consequently, this sort

of experience can in fact change student's possibly negative attitudes or anxiety towards L2 writing into positive ones which is also discussed in Petrić (2002).

8. Conclusion

The aim of this study was to look into the attitudes students have towards writing and to compare the processes of acquiring writing skills of advanced students of English in their L1 (Croatian) and L2 (English) from their point of view.

The study dealt with a number of issues: when and how students learn about the structure of a written text, what are the most useful instructions for mastering the skill of writing, what are some difficulties students encounter when writing structured texts in both languages, what is the role of mother tongue in writing and does the L2 interfere with L1 writing. Students were also asked to describe the writing process in steps and to compare their abilities of writing structured texts in Croatian and English.

The results showed that pupils do not receive an adequate amount of instruction for writing in the L2, and, thus, have to depend on the instructions given to them for writing in their mother tongue. Of course, this can be both a curse and a blessing, depending on the quality of the given instructions. The instructions can appear to be limited and not applicable to L2 writing due to the differences between two languages when it comes to sentence structure, form, citation styles and so on. Croatian and English are two different languages with different sentence structure and patterns, they have different rules when it comes to writing. If one applied one rule from Croatian to English, some of the meaning could be lost or interpreted differently than intended by the writer. These are the things that must be considered when learning how to write in either language, but especially if one already has one set of rules in their mind. It is important then to know the similarities and differences of two languages in order to teach new set of rules in a way that it enriches both of the languages, without either of it suffering in quality and meaning. Following this, the encouragement of L1 literacy could possibly bolster L2 literacy, as noted by Cummins (1999).

Furthermore, when it comes to the use of their mother tongue in L2 writing, they agreed that they do not use it. However, it is important to mention that sometimes the reverse process happens, they think of English words when writing in the L1 because they consider

that English sometimes has more suitable words and phrases than Croatian. This can be explained by their proficiency and by the influence of the English language in general. This issue is an important one and should be thoroughly addressed in future studies. Moreover, the study showed that the participants use almost the same composing processes for both languages.

In the past, writing was viewed as a handmaid to other language skills whereas nowadays it is considered to be a creative and dynamic process of conveying meaning (Usó-Juan et al., 2006). The teaching of writing is not an easy job. The participants' answers highlighted some of the weakest points that should be taken into account when teaching how to write. Participants were mostly worried about the register they were using as they did not want to repeat words and they wanted to get their meaning across. They were also worried about the complexity of the language construction, that is, they worried if they made their ideas understandable to the reader depending on the language construction they used in their papers. Also, what was missing from the instructions, especially when it came to the L2, was the exact way a text should be structured. The amount of anxiety about all these issues shows, as indicated by Petrić's study (2002), the importance of creating a positive environment when teaching how to write. Positive writing experience could yield positive attitudes towards writing which would in return benefited and enriched the writing process itself. From the given answers, it is clear that instruction on how to write in general, but also how to write structured texts is missing and that must change. Furthermore, more research has to be done from the student's point of view in order to improve the teaching process of learning this important human skill.

9. Limitations of the study

Even though the study offers insights into the students' perception of writing, it still has many limitations. Having more participants, both male and female, taking into account particular age groups and also different levels of proficiency as well as using mixed methods would give more information for the improvement of learning instructions for writing.

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